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Abstract: The construction of the Other – be it in terms of race, gender, class, Easternness – is essential for the construction of Western hegemony. The paper proposes a critical reading of the formation of the Other, with a specific focus on the production of Easternness. In reference to the master/slave dialectic, we can locate through Achille Mbembe the constitution of the colonial, primitive form of life as the creation of the most perfect Otherness in which Otherness is fundamental both for the subjugation of the Other and for the formation of the master. It is within the master/slave dialectic that we see a form of representation that allows not only the seclusion of the colonial subject within the limits of coloniality, but also the structuralization and reproduction of the master/slave dialectic within capital.

Key words: Politics, Aesthetics, master/slave dialectic, bare life, Easternness

Radical Critical Politics/Aesthetics

Madina Tlostanova in *Towards a Decolonization of Thinking and Knowledge: A Few Reflections from the World of Imperial Difference*, confronts us with the concept of the Second World as an archetypical product of Western modernity. What Tlostanova makes visible and arguable is the revision of the Second World and its Otherness in relation to the colonial matrix of power. Namely, too often we are confronted with the idea of the so-called vanishing Second World from the hierarchical structure First World/Second World/Third World as a result of the collapse of communism and socialism. Instead, we must read the construction of the Second World within the capitalist/colonial matrix of power. Tlostanova thus rightly asks why we should talk about the Second World as a concept if that concept vanished long ago. The answer is that the real place of the inhabitants of the Second World in relation to the human taxonomy of Western modernity remains largely unchanged. This real place is the place of second-class citizens, defined at times as honorary human or not quite human (Tlostanova, 2009, 4).

Which is why we must understand the production of Easternness in strict relation to racial classification. Aníbal Quijano defines that racial classification was invented in order to legitimize the relation of superiority versus inferiority between the dominant and the dominated (2000). Quijano speaks of an introduction of the racial classification that surpassed patriarchal/sexual domination and produced a new systematic racial division of labour. Within the racist distribution of labour and the forms of primitive accumulation and later, the capitalist expropriation of the colonies, we see established a new form of control as well as a new form of representation. Through this representation, the idea, body, and notion of Western man, knowledge, politics, and culture were proposed as the dominant universal discourse. In this regard, Ramón Grosfoguel writes of the imposition of the colonial matrix of power through the Eurocentric perspective of knowledge into what he describes as being embraced in the concept of Westernized university. With Westernized university, Grosfoguel (2012, 81) presupposes an expansion of eurocentrism that is “characterized by privileging the Western male canon of thought and the study of the ‘other’ as an object rather than as a knowledge-producing subject”. This logic of coloniality of the mind is what constitutes the continuation of colonialism along with coloniality. Colonization through knowledge production, or to be precise, the coloniality of knowledge, continues its march in subordinating knowledge outside the white, male, heterosexual, and universal perspective.

According to Grosfoguel, the reason that non-Western, non-Euro-centred knowledge is taught and present in the curricula of the Westernized university is the direct consequence of the political struggles of the 1960s and 1970s in the US. Those struggles let “subjects from racialized minorities study themselves as subjects who think and produce knowledges from bodies and spaces” (Ibid., 82). This act of inclusion is far from being a de-universalizing process, since the inclusion of non-Western, non-Euro-centred knowledge is a fictitious process and does not transform the master/slave dialectic in place. This implies that their integration in the curricula derives from their inclusion through exclusion, signifying that, physically, they are included in the curricula and taught at universities under the categories of ethnic studies, gender studies, Slavic studies, and Asian studies; but epistemically, they are excluded from the dominant Western, universal, theoretical discourses.

Grosfoguel suggests that non-Western, non-Euro-centred knowledge is banalized,

inferiorized and kept under the never-decreasing power of the capitalist/colonial matrix of power. He accuses the Westernized university of being a machine in the “global mass production of Eurocentric fundamentalism” (Ibid., 83). The diversity of knowledges that does not derive from this perspective is categorized as inferior and not worthy of serious consideration inside the Westernized university. This reality of concealing speaks of a form of racism that Grosfoguel names as the most hidden mechanism in the production of epistemic racism and sexism.

Thus, when we talk about the Second World we talk about the world and the subjectivities that inhabit it, that has a precise, submissive role in relation to the First World. Bojana Kunst in *Performing the Other Body* discusses the role and position of the Eastern body in relation to the West. She locates and articulates this division in Western humanism and universality. According to Kunst, the Western gaze remains hesitant when it comes to attributing the autonomy and potentiality of the body to the Other, and rather perceives it as unarticulated and confused, reduced to a special context in terms of tradition, ethnicity, and locality (2003). Kunst challenges the matrix of Western domination in contemporary dance within the difference exposed in the Western and Eastern body. In her opinion, Western contemporary dance institutionalised its dominant and exclusive right over contemporariness, urbanity, and autonomy. This exclusive right of domination obviously demands a production of Otherness.

It is on such terrain that the paper draws a critical analysis of the production of Otherness through the study of four interrelated artworks, which are: *I Bite America and America Bites Me* by Oleg Kulik, *I Like America and America Likes Me* by Joseph Beuys, *Movement. Privatized* by Ana Hoffner, and *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeters of a Square* by Bruce Nauman.

The Other-Animal

Victor Misiano in *Oleg Kulik's Animality* describes the performances of Kulik as provocative actions that attract public attention through the element of shock. Those performances are characterised by strong expressions, where Kulik assumes the role of an *artist-animal*, and with this questions on the one hand the very essence of being human, and on the other the consequences that come with transformation back to the original animal state (Misiano, 2008, 25, 26). The starting point provided by Misiano of the transformation from *bios* to *zoē* is what this analysis seeks to investigate further. The performance under analysis is among the most notorious of Kulik's works. Kulik performed *I Bite America and America Bites Me* at the Deitch Projects in SoHo in New York in 1997. The performance consisted of Kulik performing as a dog uninterruptedly for 14 days. Viewers were allowed to enter the cage (one at the time) and had to wear specific dresses for protection, much like that used in dog training. Kulik's reaction to individual visitors varied, from his licking of shoes and ferocious bursts of angry barking to attacking and biting. The construction of the performance – the way Kulik was brought to the gallery and then back to the airport, is directly connected to and closely resembles the performance *I Like America and America Likes Me* that Joseph Beuys performed at the René Block Gallery in 1974 (and which dialectical relationship is investigated further herein). Let us first analyse those crucial elements present in Kulik's performance that are connected to the master/slave dialectic and the production of the Other in terms of Easternness and bare life.

In terms of the master/slave dialectic, the transformation into a dog that Kulik describes as a transformation into *artist-animal* that is hereby for the purpose of the research renamed into *Other-animal*, makes visible the process of subjugation within the master/slave dialectic, where as defined by Frantz Fanon the slave has to be identified with the master. According to Ethan Kleinberg (2003, 126) “the colonial master laughs at the slave in the way that one laughs at a circus animal wearing clothes. For the colonial master, the consciousness of the slave is that of an animal”. Kulik is that animal that Otherness performing the role of the slave. This performed role should be reflected on further, since the *Other-animal* in the cage is at times docile and at other times hostile. Here we are compelled to draw a parallel with Malcom X's speech entitled *The House Negro and the Field Negro*, in which we are confronted with two forms of slavery: the submissive one, where the slave is overidentified with his master, and the revolutionary one where the slave challenges his master. According to Malcom X, these two realities are not solely the realities of the plantation but are those realities that were vividly present in the 1960s and that still define this division. The house negro, meaning the black slave living in the house of his master, was the one that loved his master more than the master loved himself. If the master got sick, he would say we got sick (Malcom X, 1990, 10). Contrary to this particular reality was that of the field negro, in which the black slave working on the plantation hated his master and wanted to be separate from him. “When the house caught on fire, he didn't try to put it out; that field Negro prayed for a wind, for a breeze. When the master got sick, the field Negro prayed that he would die” (Ibid., 11). Malcom X intentionally uses these two diametrically opposed realities in order to exemplify the distinction between an unconditional form of submissiveness and the emancipatory potential to produce struggle.

Kulik performs within those two realities, where on one side we have the representation of the dog that is gentle and cares for his master – he licks his shoes and is completely devoted to him – and on the other hand we have the representation of the dog that hates his master, attacking and biting him. In Kulik's performance we do encounter the submissive and rebellious reality reproduced within Otherness. Kulik (2008, 34) was well aware of this reality since in an interview published in *Antennae* in 2008 he stated that “there is an opinion in the West that everything that is not the West is wild. I faced it repeatedly. Wild Arabs, Wild Russians, Wild Blacks, Wild Asians, etc.” It is within this wilderness that Kulik makes visible the Other from the Second World.

The second element within the performance lies in the exposition of the production of bare life that we should read in reference to Giorgio Agamben's definition of bare life as neither simply natural productive life, the *zoē* of the Greeks, nor *bios*, but as a zone of indistinction and continuous transition between man and beast or, as defined by Ewa Płonowska Ziarek (2008, 90) in discussing bare life from the race and gender perspective, “[...] bare life is the remainder of the destroyed political bios.” Kulik is not *zoē* but bare life, since he is not a dog, a natural animal but he is an Eastern artist performing being a dog. He is exactly what Ziarek calls destroyed political bios. This destroyed political bios is the outcome of the construction of the Other coming from the East. His life is not devaluated like the life of the black man, but it is still differentiated in regard to the white Western man. He embraces the Eastern body, which is only partially civilized, partially educated, and partially Universal. And it is exactly within the embracement of the body that we must read the Eastern body as a specific body with a specific place in racial classification. Thus, Kulik's transformation into a dog is not solely characterized within the emergence of a dog as a metaphor for the borderline state of the human being positioned between nature and the *socium* (2008, 34). Beyond that, Kulik is a destroyed political bios whose subjectivity is defined within that same body politics of knowledge that Tlostanova (2009, 4) defines as “the concrete local conditions (religious, historical, cultural, linguistic and other, always marked by coloniality) in which knowledge was and is produced.”

Here we need to introduce into the analysis the performance *I Like America and America Likes Me*. Beuys flew to New York where he was picked up by an ambulance and taken to René Block's Gallery where for three days, he performed eight hours a day in a room in close proximity to the coyote. After the performance, he was driven back to the airport in an ambulance and flew home. As defined by Kulik, his own performance was conceived as a polemic in relation to the performance of Beuys and the coyote. Although Kulik declares that as soon as he turns into a dog this polemic disappears, what actually happens is exactly the contrary. In that precise moment when Kulik transforms the Eastern Other into the *Other-animal* he initiates a dialectical relationship with the performance *I Like America and America Likes Me*. The performances are not connected just on the formal level of their executions, but within the radical critical politics/aesthetics used to structure and mediate the performance. We must not forget that Beuys was very critical toward the US and its role in global warfare and its perpetuation of violence globally. Beuys's performance explored the mystical elements in relation to Native America, with the coyote representing the spiritual, sacred element of nativity, along with the domestication of the wilderness and the subsumption of the coyote to Beuys. From the perspective of radical critical politics/aesthetics we must further reflect on Beuys's performance in relation to coloniality, the master/slave dialectic, and the production of the Other. One of the crucial transformations in reading Beuys's performance beyond Beuys is not just the transformation toward global capital and coloniality, but the transformation of Kulik into the *Other-animal*. By the very fact of Kulik performing a dog in relation to *I Like America and America Likes Me*, he transforms the latter and actualizes it. Beuys and the coyote not only represent the dichotomy of civilized Western man versus nativity, but they also appeal to the relationship *bios/zoē*. On one side, we have Beuys representing a political life, a good life, and on the other the coyote, which represents the natural life. If Beuys as a Western artist performs and represents the political life, then Kulik embraces the totality of the Eastern body, its wilderness, its condition of bare life. What Kulik makes visible is not just the submissive Other of Easternness, but also the inferiorized position of Easternness/Otherness that needs to struggle and emancipate itself in order to become political life. What is more, comparing the performance and its analysis to the production of Otherness in relation to refugees, illegal immigrants, etc., we become aware of Ziarek's demand for the reinvention of a modern politics that needs to search for the new racialised and gendered targets of exclusion for the new living dead that in our time multiplies with astonishing speed (2008, 92).

Performing Bare Life

The second study within the research of the production of the Other in terms of Easternness resides within Ana Hoffner's performance *Movement. Privatized* (2009). The performance is a re-enactment of Bruce Nauman's performance *Walking in an Exaggerated Manner Around the Perimeters of a Square* (1968) and Oleg Kulik's performance *I Bite America and America Bites Me* (1997).

The performance is divided into two parts. In the first, Hoffner walks in an exaggerated manner within the perimeters of the square, confronting us with the fact that the square as a symbol of abstraction and erasure in modernity has expanded. The square marks the mode of functioning of neoliberal capitalism. This system is maintained through its continuous proclamation of itself as the centre that absorbs its peripheries (Hoffner, 2009, 12). The transformation within the re-enactment of Nauman's work happens in the very re-contextualisation of the activity of walking that, contrary to Nauman's silent video

performance, confronts us with Hoffner performing the Other from the Second World; and in her case, one additionally confined within *oikos*, within the logistic of the bodily experience.¹ If Nauman's walking constitutes artistic research that dealt with the relationship between the body and the space, where art is shown as an activity, as a process, Hoffner's walking tends to represent the activity of all productive forces dealing with capital, its expansion, and its dominion. As described by Hoffner, the act of walking in an exaggerated manner defines an act of over-aestheticization that represents the walking of the master in his house, the walking of a citizen in his country (2009, 12). It is in here that *Movement. Privatized* is not solely a critique of capital's expansion, but of the perpetuation of the master/slave dialectic imposed by and within race, gender, and class.

In the second part of the performance, we are confronted with the transformation that derives from the expansion of the square. Hoffner stops walking. As she performs, we hear: "This is not walking, it's a getaway. This is not a home, it's the disfunctionality of the homeland. There is no escape and no space outside the square. All barriers have fallen and now you are not my audience anymore, you have become a part of my drama. In this intimacy any distance between us is gone" (Ibid.). In that moment the artist disappears and is replaced by a dog.

The intimate, elegant and exaggerated human walking is replaced by a gentle dog walking and licking of master's shoes that is transformed into a brute, violent and threatening behaviour of a dog. "In the space with no borders you become a snob, and I become an animal. In this intimacy you are the consumer, and I am consumed. I am Kulik. I take care of the cleanliness in your home, I am a sexual worker of your desires, I am a refugee declaring you a citizen" (Ibid.). It is precisely in this transformation that we are confronted with the very production of Otherness, of the brute, violent, not so developed and only partially civilized Easterner, as also with any other body that is classified as Otherness, those bodies that supposedly threatens the Western way of living those who supposedly endangers democracy.

In her work, Ana Hoffner establishes a dialectical relationship similar to that of Kulik, but with the difference that in her performance the dialectical relationship exposed by the two actions is constitutive in structuring the performance. What Hoffner does is making Nauman's and Kulik's actions part of her performance. She rewrites them in a new critique of capital, gender, and colonial domination. By juxtaposing the elegant walking of Nauman in the safety of his studio with the rude reality of Kulik being a dog, Hoffner performs between the rupture of aesthetics and politics, opening the gap in order for the intervention to take place. *Movement. Privatized* is a political performance that does not negate aesthetics, but embraces it in a new dialectical relationship where politics defines aesthetics. Although aesthetic is pre-given due to the re-enactments, Hoffner uses these extremities – of extreme elegance, servility, and violence – in order to deliver us the reality of bare life.

An important place of consideration in the performance *Movement. Privatized* is occupied by the role of the citizen in establishing *bios* and bare life. Agamben explains how in the *Declaration of Human Rights and Citizenship* we see a passage to citizenship that does not simply identify a generic subjugation to royal authority, but where that citizenship names the new status of life as origin and ground of sovereignty. At the same time this passage defines a crucial problem not emphasized by Agamben that must be searched for in the very definition of citizenship. The passage to citizenship was a privilege that was widely denied to the colonial

¹ The logistic of the bodily experience defines the condition of women in the *oikos*. Rasa Balockite writes of the subordinated role of women in the *oikos* based upon the reproductive system, the ability to conceive, deliver and nurture a baby, etc., as a condition that imprisons women within the confines of domesticity and physicality.

subject and is still denied to all those excluded from the First World – the refugees, the illegal immigrants, the expelled. These are lives that are forced to be bare lives, kept in a permanent state of exception, defined not by biopolitics but by necropolitics. Which is precisely why Ziarek demands a supplementing of the term bare life. Bare life that should be redefined in a more complex structure, in a terrain that will allow us to determine the new forms of domination/subjugation and at the same time to establish new forms of emancipation.

In describing the functioning of biopolitics, Agamben exposes that it is not possible to understand the national and biopolitical development of the modern state without understanding the passage from bare life to citizenship. This means that in order for the modern notion of the sovereignty of the nation state to develop, bare life had to be transformed into bios through the passage of citizenship (Agamben, 1998, 128). If this holds true for biopolitics, then the opposite is valid for necropolitics. The form of sovereignty to which the colonial subject was exposed is not the new biopower, where life is invested through and through, but necropower, where death is invested over and over again. The question of citizenship becomes all the more relevant when analysing the current European politics of exclusion and segregation to which all those coming from the Third World trying to enter Europe illegally are subjected. They are the living dead of today, forced to migrate by the historical expropriation imposed on them through coloniality. They are without citizenship, deprived of any rights, and have to be submitted to necropolitics on biopolitical soil.

According to Mbembe, what we witness today is the actualization of coloniality that speaks of the modern usage of terror that is in complete resemblance to slavery and colonialism. I make reference to the triple loss, which Mbembe points to, of the slave on the plantation: the loss of a home, the loss of any rights over his or her own body, and the loss of political status. The refugee has no home, no possibility to work, no control over his/her body, and no political status. As in the case of the slaves on the plantation, the refugees, the migrants, the living dead of the capitalist reserve army have an economic value for capital. Even as bare life, capital still traffics with them, expropriating surplus labour, up to consuming their life. Bare life in the New Economy resembles the life of the slave on the plantation, who was kept alive, but kept alive in a state of injury (Mbembe, 2003, 21).

By way of conclusion, I would like to reflect on the studies proposed in the paper that are defined as radical critical politics/aesthetics. What those performances bring to light is a transformation in artistic production that transcends the formalistic, aesthetics modes of making art. Their interaction with theory, knowledge, and contexts, (that have become the constructive elements of the work of art) represent a division from the established valuation and interpretation of art. If we want to analyse those works, we need to reflect them from the analytical field of political economy, post-coloniality, decoloniality, gender studies and similar.

Through visibility, those works produce and make visible concepts, topics and synthesis of analysis we normally find in academic discourses dealing with the critique of capital, coloniality, patriarchal/sexual domination, and racial classification. By doing so those works do not aestheticize theory but instead produce a new body of work, a new medium through which the depoliticized subject can be re-politicized. From the perspective of the proposed analysis, they represent the very element of emancipation of art, the continuation of that same element Walter Benjamin was writing about in implying an autonomy and freedom of art. If this emancipation of art, according to Benjamin, happened by the mechanical revolution with the advent of photography and cinema then the second revolution occurred following the end of WWII, when some artistic practice became engaged with social struggles and emancipatory movements.

By exposing the role of social critique and the struggle against capital, by exposing the

functional operations of racism, homophobia, etc., we can assert that those elements that entered art and the social domain intensively from the 1960s onward are the new concepts to which Benjamin was alluding to that are useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands both in the politics of art and in society.

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