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INTRODUCTION

New feminist materialism: engendering an ethic-onto- epistemological methodology

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This special issue has been mostly based on communications presented at the Fifth New Materialist Conference on 25-26 September 2014 in Barcelona. Hosted by the Interdisciplinary Internet Institute attached to the Open University of Catalonia, this conference was also the kick-off event for ISCH Cost Action IS1307 on “New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on How Matter Comes to Matter”, organized by the GENTIC research group in collaboration with several European universities and partially funded by the Spanish Women’s Institute in order to highlight (in) visible structural oppressions. The September conference, titled “New Materialist Methodologies: Gender, Politics, the Digital”, was highly productive in terms of the intellectual contribution of ideas and content-wise papers on the subject of gender, methodologies, politics and digital cultures from a new-materialist framework. The articles in this issue constitute a sample of very insightful approaches coming from various areas within the conference themes.

New materialism is a transversal approach still in the making but becoming increasingly consolidated as demonstrated by the support of the European Union and of the eighty participants in the September conference. Nevertheless, the conference highlighted several issues as still works in progress that need to be further explored. One of these issues is the elaboration of new materialist

methodology/methodologies. Indeed, in order to be able to engender critical interventions in oppressive phenomena, a methodological plan remains a *sine qua non* condition.

As her methodological approach, Felicity Colman gives a more general account of the image and marks gender as a differential transformation for political recognition of the subject. That is, she claims that image is a conditional and conditioning process that may infer political territories in which racial and gendered discourses become simultaneously disruptive and disrupting. In Krizia Nardini’s words, they *become otherwise*, and, as Colman shows, gendered images are one possible approach to exploring social injustices permeating contemporary society. This “ethic-onto-epistemological” (Barad, 2007) methodology, at least for the moment, is becoming a self-transforming genealogy that affirmatively looks into the entanglement between past, present and future; this is because it produces “diffractive readings” (van der Tuin, 2011a) of contemporary and past theories (as Krizia Nardini demonstrates) but with a radical intervention in oppressive systems – that is, “always already” processual, in the making, with and within the future.

Arnette Arlande describes a methodological plan as an entanglement of momentarily accountable intra-actions. By

introducing performative cuts in an artistic project, Arlande shows how art is a self-transforming political matter. However, precisely what is the political matter in new materialism or how new materialism becomes accountable politically is another issue that remains a work in process. In her paper, Hanna Meissner affirms that much more work needs to be done in the theorization of new materialism, especially regarding its nature as a perspective or a common ground and the question of politics. So far, we are tempted to say that new materialism can function as both: a movement that breaks through traditional conceptualizations of epistemologies and a common ground from which phenomena can be analysed. For feminist theory, finding a plural common ground that alters hegemonic power has always been paramount. Already in the 1980s, Lucy Irigaray (1985) prompted feminists to “think differently” and “find a language of their own”. The articles presented here enact precisely this project by touching upon different areas of knowledge such as art, politics and philosophy. Thus, automatically we reformulate once again – and reiteratively work through – new materialism(s) when we discuss (new) feminist materialism – the specific focus of this issue. Inevitably, in talking about feminism(s), two particular dimensions occupy the front stage: gender and politics.

Reflecting upon “feminist collective” identity/identities and a “minimal notion of female essences”, Franciska Aigner and Katja Čičigoj propose Barad’s “violent” cuts as a way of finding a political ground for feminism. In a similar vein, Signe Gaamelgard’s paper aims at finding Ranciere’s radical democracy with/within Barad’s cuts in order to produce acts of resistance.

With this special issue, we aim to critically engage with some of the conversations produced with/within the September conference

in order to engender future debates. By contributing – through the continuum between real and virtual – to the conceptualization of key new feminist materialism terms such as “politics”, “methodology” and “gender”, we want to produce a *qualitative leap into the future of feminism(s)* (van der Tuin, 2011b). We aim to pursue a review of the ethics of feminist politics and theory by pushing at the self-transformative nature of matter at its extreme, while situating ourselves as always already political subjects. We aim to engage with –while seeking possibilities for transformation of – oppressed and oppressing conditions of life in the intra-action of past, present and future feminist realities.

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Recommended citation

REVELLES BENAVENTE, Beatriz; GONZÁLEZ RAMOS, Ana M.; NARDINI, Krizia (coord.) (2014). “New feminist materialism: engendering an ethic-onto-epistemological methodology” [online node]. *Artnodes*. No. 14, p. 2-6. UOC. [Accessed: dd/mm/yy]
<<http://journals.uoc.edu/ojs/index.php/artnodes/article/view/n14-revelles-gonzalez-nardini/n14-revelles-gonzalez-nardini-en>>
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.7238/a.v0i14.2410>>



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Her doctoral thesis (defended on the December, 2014), on women's literature and social networking sites, focuses especially on the contemporary author Toni Morrison and her official Facebook page. The object of the thesis, which applies a diffractive methodology, is to explore the shifts produced in communication between readers and authors from a feminist perspective when tackling issues concerning gender, politics and language. She is currently participating in the management committee of ISCH Cost Action IS1307 on "New Materialism: Networking European Scholarship on How Matter Comes to Matter" and is a board member of the European Association for Gender Research, Education and Documentation (ATGENDER). She has published several articles and book reviews in journals like *European Journal of Women's Studies*, *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, *NORAL: Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender research*, among others.

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A sociologist researcher, she received her PhD in statistics and operative research from the University of Cádiz. She was visiting scholar at PREST–Institute of Innovation Research (Manchester) in 2007, at the Institut für Horere Studien (Vienna) in 2005, at the Escola de Serviço Social de Pelotas (Brazil) in 2001 and at the Sociology Department of the University of La Habana (Cuba) in 2000. Her research focuses on gender, science and technology, scientific careers and the mobility of highly skilled professionals. She has published several academic articles in relation to diverse projects funded by the Spanish Ministry of the Economy, Secretariat for Research, Development and Innovation, Ministry of Science and Innovation (R&D Research and Innovation Plan) and the Spanish Women Institute. She also has participated in international projects funded by the European Union and the Spanish and Portuguese governments.

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Holder of a bachelor's degree in philosophy (University of Siena) and a research master in gender studies (Utrecht University), she is currently working on a networking masculinities PhD that investigates the mobilization of pro-feminist men in Italy and Spain and the links to feminist theories and activism, carrying out her research at the IN3 (UOC). When launching her PhD project in the Netherlands, she collaborated with the graduate gender programme as a teaching assistant. Her research interests include feminist philosophy (especially feminist materialisms), onto-epistemology, critical masculinities and the anthropology of the body. Her academic publications include a chapter in *Proceedings from GEXcel Theme 9: Gendered Sexuated Transnationalizations, Deconstructing the Dominant: Transforming Men, "Centres" and Knowledge/Policy/Practice* (Alp Biricik and Jeff Hearn (eds.), 2011) and the article 'Men's Antiviolence Activism: Two Cases from Contemporary Italy and Spain' in *Tijdschrift voor Genderstudies* (Vol. 16, 2013, No. 4).

