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# Chaos and the Speaking Body: Spitting on Hegel with Lygia Clark and the Limits of Language in Psychoanalysis

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“ *The Hegelian dialectics, inherited by Lacan, assume a division between the Subject and historical time, or, assuming a Symbolic system that is mediated by the phallic law, that only re-produces subjugated subjectivities, without a chance to create something new or be in touch with any **chaos** outside this phallogocentric system. So, echoing the 1977 essay by Italian feminist Carla Lonzi: “let’s spit on Hegel” – maybe with Lygia Clark’s Anthropophagic Slobber. [...] Guided by Clark’s **chaotic** vibration, we can think through what happens to the body in/of the world and to the world with/of bodies through the potency of a subjective full/void that vibrates independently from any Other. In **chaos** we avoid the total reign of language and identity as well as materialist biological reductionism of experience. We meet **chaos** in the frontier of the vibrating ‘full-void’ of bodies.* ”

What can a body do? This impossible question posited by Spinoza in the 17th century and picked up by Deleuze in the late 1960s is, we could easily agree, one that also moors the psychoanalytic clinic.<sup>1</sup> From ‘conversion hysteria’ in

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<sup>1</sup> With the publication of *Spinoza et le problème de l'expression* (1968) and *Spinoza - Philosophie pratique* (1970, 2nd ed. 1981), two monographs that mark the continuous and remarkable influence of Spinoza in Deleuze and, later, Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking and writing.

Freud's couch to contemporary psychosomatic disease and at times unexplained chronic illness, the body's capacity to produce symptoms, to react and to speak appears as an important riddle of any analytical trajectory. Potencies and enigmas of the body are a matter of interest to the broad field of Psychosocial Studies, where my research is located, and which could benefit from a little 'chaos'. What I am adding to this historical debate of the body – one shaped by Cartesian dualism, medical biologism, psychoanalytic ideas of desire and lack thereof, as well as affect theory – departs from a series of art/therapy practices by the late Brazilian artist Lygia Clark, who was heavily influenced by psychoanalysis in her practice. During this theoretical meditation, I follow Brazilian psychoanalyst, art critic and scholar Suely Rolnik, who coined the term 'corpo vibrátil' – or, 'vibrating body' – to address the potency of the body in Clark's practices, especially towards the last stage of her career in the 1970s and 1980s, when Clark developed the series *Structuring of the Self*<sup>2</sup>. More than three decades later, her work still leaves open questions, which are relevant to the discussion around the limits of language as a Symbolic structure, and of words, sounds, noise or vibrations that emanate from the body in the form of symptoms or affects that are central to an eco-feminist ethical project.

Working with such an idea of vibration takes us to the realm of chaos, a threshold of creativity and immanence that posits an ontological and epistemological challenge to contemporary clinical practices. My intention is to discuss the limits and problems of a conceptualisation of the body through the dichotomy inherent to the Freudian and Lacanian 'drive' – a founding psychoanalytic concept that presupposes a division between language and flesh; between the realms of a castrating Symbolic and a chaotic body. One central problem with the psychoanalytic theory of the drive is that it relies

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<sup>2</sup> 'Corpo vibrátil' is a concept coined by Suely Rolnik in the work that derived from her doctoral thesis, published for the first time in Portuguese in 1989 under the title *Cartografia Sentimental. Transformações contemporâneas do desejo* (Estação Liberdade, São Paulo, 1989).

on a Hegel-inherited negativity of desire and a dialectics of sexual difference, structuring subjectivity into a nuclear and out-dated family drama. To this critique I follow Guattari and his – at times cryptic – attempts to formulate a non-individual version of chaos as both affirmative and differential, granting this vibration an immanent emancipatory quality as well as an eco-feminist ethics or, as Guattari (1995) calls it, an autopoietic potency. Art practice, here, will be crucial to our push beyond critique and towards creativity in the field of psy-care<sup>3</sup>, stretching mainstream theories through chaos.

First: Moving beyond the limits of the plane

A prominent artist of her time, Lygia Clark was famously influenced by her experience in psychoanalysis. Working during the Brazilian military dictatorship that lasted from the 1960s to the 1980s, and witnessing the very early announcement of neoliberal politics in Europe, the United States and Latin America, she developed, in the later stage of her prolific career, a practice marked by what she claimed to be an “abandonment of the art world”. She is notable for her singular practice involving the body: her body, the body of viewers and the possibilities of bodies. Specifically, hers was a practice named the *Nostalgia of the Body*, which she defined as “a corporeal fragmentation in the process of arriving at a reconstruction of the body as ‘collective body’” (Rivera, 2013, p. 148). This trajectory of leaving the art world and embarking on a psychotherapeutic proposition can be followed in her essay *Nostalgia of the Body*, published posthumously in 1994 in the *October* journal.<sup>4</sup> In a passage entitled *Death of a Plane*, Clark qualifies the discontent with the elementary form of artistic practice – the ‘plane’, or the

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<sup>3</sup> Psy-care is my definition of the broad field of mental health care, involving psychiatry, psychotherapies, psychologies and psychoanalysis.

<sup>4</sup> *Nostalgia of the Body* appears in the *October* journal (Vol 69 Summer 1994, pp. 85-109), introduced by Yve-Alain Bois.

square, the canvas – that led her to embark on a journey beyond such a “false idea of reality” projected by humanity within this limiting frame:

The plane is a concept created by humanity to serve practical ends: that of satisfying its need for balance [...] The plane arbitrarily marks off the limits of a space giving humanity an entirely false and rational idea of its own reality [...] It's also the reason why people have projected their transcendent part outward and given it the name of God. In this way the problem of their own existence is raised in inventing the mirror of their own spirituality [...] But the plane is dead. The philosophical conception that humanity projected onto it no longer satisfies – no more than does the idea of an external God persists. In becoming aware that it is a matter of an internal poetry of the self that is projected into the exterior is understood at the same time that this poetry must be reintegrated as an indivisible part of the individual (Clark, 1994, p. 96).

The plane is charged with her cosmological dissatisfaction with the need of an external God as an obstacle to an internal poetry that pertains to the self. In this sense, I suggest one could interpret the plane as what Lacanian psychoanalysis calls the net of signifiers anchored in an Imaginary relation to language and culture that is always dependent on the Other to have any consistency. Following this logic, Clark's move towards a practice that liberates this 'internal poetry' is akin to an endeavour of tracing an ontological possibility that gives space for an immanence in desire that is not reliant on the relationship with the Other and the Oedipal Law-of-the-Father, as psychoanalysis demands, but to several others in space, tracing a different ecological cartography to the subject. This is Clark's eco-feminist twist: against universals and proposing an ethics of multiplicity.

Practicing art since 1947, when she moved to Rio de Janeiro from native Minas Gerais, Lygia Clark's most significant breakthrough in the artistic scene came with the publication of the *Neo-Concrete Manifesto*<sup>5</sup>, in 1959. Her

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<sup>5</sup> The Neo-Concrete Manifesto was a collective text published in the Sunday culture supplement of the newspaper *Jornal do Brasil*, on 23 March 1959. It was signed by Lygia Clark, as well as other artists such as Helio Oiticica, Lygia Pape and the poet Ferreira Gullar.

association with the Neo-concrete group and their push towards sensibility over the rationality of Concretism already carries something of her travel ‘beyond the plane’, which is present in their discontentment with the standardised practices of then contemporary artists and curators. Clark’s bolder ‘killing of the plane’ starts in the 1960s, in her departure from the formalist geometrical painting and sculpture that ignited her career, and development of works such as *Bichos* and *Caminhando* (1963-64), which called the viewer to a closer contact with the artworks, touching and participating. *Bichos*, a series of multidimensional metallic forms joined by hinges, invites the spectator to be co-author of the piece by moving it. In this work we see a dual interaction of entities (human/aluminium structure or spectator/artist) brought to the same level by movement. Or, we could say, in this early interactive piece we see a ‘levelling of the plane’, before Clark really moves into perforating it.

In *Caminhando*, the Möbius strip appears as the topological resource to bring her flight beyond the limits of the plane to the debate in/out, where not only the relation subject/object was questioned but the actual ‘being in space’ was the point of enquiry of her intervention on the body in the piece. In this work, for the first time in her career, the act thus gains more importance over the object. The piece moves towards a “final rupture, that will certainly come, once the width of the strip is not infinite, but it [the rupture] is slowed down in the repetitive trajectory of the scissors over paper” (Rivera, 2013 p. 142). As I see it, this movement towards rupture via a repetition, present in this piece, is also her move beyond the ‘plane’. The action of *Caminhando* offers a metaphor of the psychoanalytic fantasy, or of the Death Drive, which implies a constant repetition, marking pace on the same spot – this being Lacan’s view that all “drives” operate as a repetitive “death drive” (Lacan, 1966, p. 848). In this sense, Clark’s *Caminhando* is a subversion of the status of the subject, which in her work is not confined to the tragic repetition of the same but is moving towards a rupture. The subjective crisis

in such metaphoric gesture is “the subject themselves awakening, let’s say, from their specular alienation” (Rivera, 2008, p. 5). From then onwards, objects would not mean the same to Clark (limited to the status of ‘art objects’), and would no longer represent the limiting spatial cut of the ‘plane’. From *Caminhando* onwards, until her death in 1988, “the object would lose its *thingness* to become, once more, a field of living forces that affect, and are affected, by the world, promoting a continuous process of differentiation of subjective and objective realities” (Rolnik, 2013a, p. 76). Her work thus crosses the plane and embarks on a journey through the body and affect.

#### Second: Lygia’s bodies of/at work

While Clark ‘kills the plane’ and slowly ‘abandons the art world’, her surroundings shift dramatically. On a very concrete level, the Military coup of March 1964 inaugurated two decades of dictatorship in Brazil – a period of repressive censorship and violence that also loomed over other Latin American countries (Cayses, 2014). In the art world, censorship was explicit (Whitelegg, 2013). Similarly to the university field, the artistic environment was severely sabotaged, controlled and violated by the dictatorship – and to practice art (or any cultural/intellectual practice in general) that worked in opposition to the regime meant the risk of arbitrary arrest and further threats such as torture and assassination. After the promulgation of AI-5<sup>6</sup>, many artists were forced into exile, either due to the toxicity of the environment or direct threats of imprisonment (Calirman, 2012).

Clark’s fleeing of the dictatorship and her subsequent move to Paris in 1968 marks another moment of her working with the body (Rolnik, 2013b). At first, there is a clear collectivist necessity characterising the work, which opens up micropolitical grounds more clearly, in order to pave the way

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<sup>6</sup> AI-5 stands for “Institutional Act Number 5”, promulgated in 1968 by the General then occupying federal presidency under the military dictatorship. This act suppressed further any constitutional guarantees, leading to greater use of torture as means of suppression of political opposition.

to the final *Structuring of the Self*, where the vibrating body is most in evidence. From 1972 to 1976, Clark taught a course she called *The body and the space* (Rivera, 2013) at the Faculté d'Arts Plastiques St. Charles in the (post-1968) Sorbonne. The pieces she developed during this period were characteristically focused on collective interaction and envisaged the generation of a collective bodily experience and consciousness/perception, breaking with the subject-object dichotomy and playing out over the surface of the body. She developed a series of propositions with her group of students named *O Corpo é a Casa* (the body is the house) (1968-1970) and *Fantasmática do Corpo* (Phantasmatic of the Body), or Collective-Body, the latter beginning with the well-known piece *Anthropophagic Slobber* (1973). In this piece, a group of around 60 people receive thread reels to insert on their mouths and subsequently unravel the threads over other people's bodies who remain blindfolded at the centre of the group (Rolnik, 2000). Wet with saliva, the massive tangle of thread is untangled by the members of the group, who share their experience verbally. Their bodies, together, open the way to the word.

Compared to other artistic practices of the time, there is something fundamentally unique in Clark's production from this period. Contrary to the format of the art *Happenings* that gave origin to Performance Art in the United States, which sees "an affirmation of the body without a real problematization of the subject", Clark opts for "propositions" which "bring the body in a subtle and ephemeral manner that capture the subject in the kernel of its problematic constitution" (Rivera, 2008, p. 6). This way, the collective pieces of the early 1970s see "bodies that affect other bodies" in a complicated way that allow for a 'cast' to be formed on the affected body that is then anthropophagically<sup>7</sup> incorporated (Rolnik, 2000), generating a new

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<sup>7</sup> Anthropophagy is an early 20th century movement in Brazilian modernist art. The 1922 publication of the manifesto by Oswald de Andrade in the Brazilian Modern Art Week has a strong connotation of early decolonial artistic expression.



becoming. In a letter to Helio Oiticica dated 6 July 1974, Clark writes that “it is the phantasms of the body that interest me, not the body itself” (Clark, 1974, p. 223). With regards to the process of *Anthropophagic Slobber* she concludes: “Afterwards I ask for the *vécu* [the ‘lived’, in French in the original] which is most important, and like this I will go on elaborating myself through the elaboration of the other...” (ibid). This slobber seems to open up space for an ethics of a multitude of affecting ‘others’ that does not need to cross any anchoring transcendental referential, or Other, to be realised.

The presence of the body in works from this period comprises an invitation for the subject to speak of their body (sensations) and through their body, in this way “the bodily experience must give way to speech” (Rivera, 2013, p. 148). The Paris years – both works in groups were with her students at the Sorbonne, alongside her intense analysis<sup>8</sup> – were very potent in Clark’s journey and foundational to what came next, which was her establishment of the frontier between art and clinic. At the end of the same November 1974 letter to Oiticica, Clark talks about the impact that her work had had on some participants, whose lives and ways had changed dramatically. She writes:

Sometimes I unblock people in one experience and, other times, more time is needed. Before going through psychoanalysis, I had thought of becoming an analyst, but now I want to continue at the ‘frontier’, because this is what I am and it is not worth it to be less on its edge [*pois é isso que sou e não adianta querer ser menos fronteira*] (Clark, 1974, p. 254).

Clark returns to Brazil in 1976 and finds in her frontier the space to develop *Structuring of the Self*, her last piece, carried on until she was close to the end of her life, in 1988.

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<sup>8</sup> Lygia Clark was in analysis with Pierre Fédida, the French psychoanalyst and founder of the *Psychopathologie Fondamentale* laboratory in Paris during her exile in France. In her letters to Oiticica she writes enthusiastically about her analytic process of reconnecting with the unconscious, her dreams, words and transformative spills of such dreams in her daily life.

Clark's contentment with the frontier is very important once it challenges any easy interpretation of her project of 'abandonment of art' as 'not artistic'. It is not that she moved into being a therapist, yet she did not remain an artist in any traditional sense of the word. The transformative character of aesthetics and interaction were, to Clark, the real aim of her path as an artist: her abandoning of art and self-titled 'therapeutic work' in the *Structuring of the Self* series from 1976-1988, worked as the epitome of meaning of her practice, challenging the clinic/art divide and parking right at the frontier – in a way a realisation of her artistry through this abandonment of art (Rivera, 2008). In other words, Clark chooses to abandon art by not becoming exactly a psychotherapist, but instead, exploring this threshold, this in-between, as creative and generative. This abandonment, as she called it, or her desertion from art practice was, conversely, her greatest artistic endeavour.

The Parisian period of her work was also marked by a profound questioning of the function of art, of her practice and of herself – it was a prelude to *Structuring of the Self* (1976-88). This practice involved one-to-one exchange sessions designed to reach one person at a time, moving beyond the collective performances she was working on in France, but still challenging the status of the individual by invoking a singularity, or an individual potency, that was connected to one's experience of the world. In other words, Clark was concerned with "the reactivation of this quality of *aesthetic experience* in the receivers of her creations" (Rolnik, 2007, para. 9). Or, as Rolnik expresses, Clark's move to this place in the 'frontier' was concerned with promoting the *Structuring of the Self*

that is, the capacity of letting oneself be affected by the forces of objects created by the artist and the environment in which they were experienced; but above all, as a consequence, the capacity of letting oneself be affected by the forces of the environment of one's daily life (ibid).

This vocabulary of affect echoes what Deleuze and Guattari take from Spinoza's monism, accepting that humans and non-humans all share the same 'substance' and equally affect and are affected by each other constantly, without the need of a transcendental mediation *à la* Hegel. In *Structuring of the Self*, the potency of such aesthetic experience of transformation mimicked the clinical – inviting us into an ecological practice.

Clark would see her participants in her apartment in Copacabana, in Rio, for regular one-hour sessions. She would utilise her *Objetos Relacionais*<sup>9</sup> as tools for inferring sensations on the bodies of these participants. These sensations would generate affect: they would untangle knots; they would open the unconscious through the body. The sensations facilitated by the objects and their textures and weight would generate, or open, space for words that would be exchanged between Lygia and her 'clients'. The sessions "were regular, with a frequency of up to three times a week, and a considerable amount of time of the session, according to what the artist reported, seem to be employed with the verbalisation of associations generated from the experienced sensations" (Rivera, 2008, p. 6). The aim was that after a session, the participant would then encounter reality differently and a transformation would then take place upon such encounter.

The collective body marked her propositions until it was substituted by this solitary work or transformation, in which Clark's proposition is that art invites the subject, radically, to "transform oneself into an act, poetically" (Rivera, 2008, p. 6). In other words, following Deleuze and Guattari's vocabulary, this work is an invitation to experience the borders of being, and flirt, as much as possible, with becoming. Would not such invocation of "transformation" be "analogous to what a psychoanalysis

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<sup>9</sup> *Objetos Relacionais* or 'relational objects' were the objects of all sorts Clark utilised to touch, cover and generate sensations on the body during the *Structuring of the Self* sessions. The objects were makeshift and cheap, including plastic bags, seashells, elastic bands, mattresses and so on.

envisages” (Rivera 2008, p. 6), proposing a traversing of the fantasy, a subjective destitution and new forms of enjoyment, as Lacan would propose across his teachings?

Suely Rolnik sees this last stage in Clark’s oeuvre as the fixing of the vibrating body in subjectivity (Rolnik, 2000), or as activating the vibrating body as an excess, or ‘beyond’ that pertains to the level of sensation. Sensation, Rolnik, remarks, is “precisely this that is engendered in relation to the world beyond perception and sentiment” (Rolnik, 2002, p. 45) – it is not just phenomenological, as it is not about perception only, for it is, for Rolnik (2002) always limited to the visible, and we could extend it to the imaginable. The use of such sensation-provoking objects and the session as a ritual, promotes “a mode of subjectification in which the ‘at home’ is not the neuroticised ego of the modern subject anymore, but a live structure ‘becoming’, engendered in the impregnation from the world that Lygia calls ‘self’” (Rolnik, 2000, para. 16). In Clark’s vocabulary, what she was doing was to operate a means of deciphering the experiences each person would have with each relational object, this process inflicted upon the phantasmatic of the body, a frontier that does not fit into a classic psychoanalytic idea of the Imaginary, neither into phenomenological or even biologised ideas of the fleshy body. Perhaps, phantasms would be more on the side of this zone of excess, of creation, where there is no subject, but where subjectivity can be produced. Her work, thus, invited each participant to a confrontation with the ‘full-void’ chaotic potency of their bodies.

Third: The ‘full-void’ vibrating body

What is this body of Lygia Clark and what relations to the unconscious does it presuppose? She defines it as the in/out act of reaching out to the plural possibilities awakened by the affective “opening of the body” (Gil, 1998).

What strikes me in the “inside and outside” sculpture is that it transforms my perception of myself, of my body. It changes me [...]. Its internal space is an affective space. In a dialogue with my “inside and outside” work, an active subject encounters his or her own precariousness [...] Fullness. I am overflowing with meaning. Each time I breathe, the rhythm is natural, fluid. It adheres to action. I have become aware of my “cosmic lungs.” I penetrate the world's total rhythm. The world is my lung [...]. The “full-void” contains all potentialities. It's the act which gives it meaning (Clark, 1994, p. 104).

We may begin by considering this collective unconscious that vibrates to be a reverse of psychoanalysis; a model where the body is privileged over words to the point that words barely make a difference. Yet there are clear resonances with ideas within Lacanian psychoanalysis that have been in high circulation over the past few years. Any versed Lacanian could bring out the notion of the ‘speaking body’, which is Jacques-Alain Miller’s extrapolation of Lacan’s *‘parletre’* (speaking being) into a body that speaks as marking the twentieth-first century unconscious. Yet, the difference here is that Clark’s in-out dichotomy is not resolved in a version of the subject that is “transindividual” – which is Lacanese for being crossed by a common Symbolic that we all share and thus the subject is formed by being precisely anchored in language. Clark’s ‘in and out’ – subject and world, flesh and unconscious – is really rather material, physical and tangible. The unconscious is bare, and accessed by sensations, not an island or a repository.

Clinicians might defensively undermine Clark’s technique as being just part of an artistic endeavour and not a guide for therapeutic practice. Yet, in the least, it illustrates a problem in the anchoring concept of the body in the drive and the function of language in analysis. It is well known that Lacan’s later texts were precisely veering in the direction of the limits of language, specifically through the abandonment of the Oedipal metaphor and the (monotheist Judeo-Christian inheritance of the) ‘Law of the Father’ as the single most important mark of subjectivation that guarantees our life

in culture. This phallic Law acts as a regulator of the excess of enjoyment of the body, so a mediator of the drive and the effect of the word on the body. In the 1970s, Lacan was leaving structuralism and making use of topology in order to escape the limits of language in his teachings. Until the enigmatic later teachings of Lacan in which a Real that has nothing to do with the Symbolic appears in a somehow flimsy manner, subjects are necessarily bound to the signifier and thus the Name-of-the-Father. As Miller puts it,

Without the Name-of-the-Father there is only chaos. Chaos means outside law, a chaos in the symbolic. Without the Name-of-the-Father, there is no language, there is only *lalangue*. Without the Name-of-the-Father, there is, properly speaking, no body, there is only the corporeal, flesh, organism, matter, image. There are body events, events which destroy the body. Without the Name-of-the-Father, there is a without-the-body. (Miller, 2003, para 143).

What Miller seems to put in evidence is the matter of the Real of the body, as this excess in being that becomes abundant in certain symptomatic repetitions and also invoked in ideological forms of enjoyment. To me, most attempts to grasp this ‘speaking body’ via this enigmatic Real that stains flesh are unsatisfactory. Even bold attempts by feminist philosophers such as Alenka Zupanic’s work on sex (2017), privilege sexual difference as the generative gap of negativity in subjects (from all genders and sexes, for that matter) that leaves desire, or what moves us, as a negativity. My problem with that is that we are still working within a Hegelian dialectics and therefore the possibilities for an ecological and feminist thought are rather limited – we are stuck in a relation to a transcendental Other and a circular lack, unable to think of creative emancipation and remaining at the level of critique, as Braidotti (2017) puts it. The Hegelian dialectics, inherited by Lacan, assume a division between the Subject and historical time, or, assuming a Symbolic system that is mediated by the phallic law, that only re-produces subjugated subjectivities, without a chance to create something

new or be in touch with any chaos outside this phallogocentric system.<sup>10</sup> So, echoing the 1977 essay by Italian feminist Carla Lonzi: “let’s spit on Hegel” – maybe with Lygia Clark’s *Anthropophagic Slobber*.

What I am trying to flesh out from these works of art are possibilities to think of the ‘speaking’ and ‘vibrating’ body, like Clark’s conceptualisation of the body in her art practice, outside of this Hegelian negativity and invoking a differential affirmative excess but still within psychoanalytic terms. By which I mean, still keeping psychoanalysis as primarily a practice that is radical in the context of the psy-field and mental health care but opening up to an ethical – epistemological and ontological – revision in light of the possibilities of such chaos.

#### Fourth: Chaos and clinical ethics

Why insist on psychoanalysis, if it reproduces exactly what Clark moved beyond? Because not only can psychoanalysis denounce patriarchy by describing its operations and effects (Mitchell, 1974), but it may stop prescribing it – as long as it turns more chaotic. Following the trail of Clark, we can find clues for destabilising problematic anchors of psy-care practices. More precisely, the full-void of Clark’s vibrational body proposes a subjective creation that starts from where there is no subject – in the void, there is fullness. It dismantles the necessity of subjective reproduction in accordance to the cultural echoes passed on by the colonial and patriarchal Symbolic that is so pervasive in psy-practices.

Twentieth century psychiatry is characterised as an effort of “descriptive psychopathology” (Berrios, 1996) and of an aetiological mapping of discontent, suffering and illness within a system of biological and

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<sup>10</sup> Poststructuralist feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz and Rosi Braidotti, for example, reject this phallogocentric subjection of subjectivity assumed as necessary mediator of desire and universalizing the colonial, capitalist and patriarchal order. They propose, instead, ethical possibilities for subject formation that go beyond this beaten track.

individualised causality (Rose, 2008). The internalization of an external reality into a psychic structure is the cornerstone of psychoanalytic contributions to the broad field of mental health care, inaugurating a particular view on the dialectical arrangement of being in the world through the concept of the ‘drive’, inscribing the fleshy body into a body that speaks and exists. Freudian and post-Freudian ideas, however, accompany the trope of Psychogenic assumptions in psychology and psychiatry (for example, that we inherit defence mechanisms, or that some babies are just born with more hate and anxiety than others). We are back to an individualised ‘truth’ that rests on the body but that could, through nurture, entail in different outcomes (e.g. Winnicott, Klein).

The philosophical intervention of structuralism and German idealism into the field of *psy* has put emphasis on the question of language – or, in simple terms culture and an ‘outside reality that precedes us’ and yet operates through a gap of non-meaning (Lacan, 1966) for it is insufficient to grasp experience. Whilst the dialectics of *Innenwelt* and *Umwelt*, unconscious and language, body and society, have been explored widely in terms of morality, ideology and power (e.g. Zizek, Butler), contemporary feminist thinkers (e.g. Braidotti, Grosz, Bennett and Malabou) have argued against this limiting centring on language, rescuing the points of no-meaning, where life exceeds ideological conventions of what reality is and reframing a new ethics of materiality – much like Clark’s vibrating ‘full-void’. Their claim echoes post and decolonial efforts, calling for further ways of understanding psychic structures in ways that do not replicate the eurocentric subject (Said, 2003) and engage with the reality of new technologies and the challenges of the climate emergency. Multiplicities, affect and creativity, rather than a shared Symbolic, are the goal under this post-structuralist feminist lenses.

In Guattari’s model, and again echoing Clark, being a body is a reality that presents itself in constant tension between the chaotic accumulation



and flux of libidinal energy and what harnesses it, either by allowing new conjunctions to emerge or posing a limit. The contour of a body marked by words; words of a Symbolic realm structured within a colonial patriarchal modus operandi would suggest a circularity of the repetitions under the logic of the Death Drive. For such libidinal flow evident in Freud's very early texts, so cherished by Guattari, to carry an affirmative character, what needs to be redefined is precisely the mythical pre-subjective state that Lacan – and not Freud – granted to be a 'negativity' (at least in early and mid-life works). It is Hegel's influence in the accounting of time and history that fostered the privileging of a Symbolic that could not change effectively, and so limiting the very notions of creativity, singularity, potency and affirmation (Braidotti, 2017). Contrary to superficial readings, the Spinozist twist of Deleuze and Guattari's project was not offering instead a view of the subject as having a reservoir of positivity to start with that is then 'lost' as we encounter the mad-bad-sad Oedipal Capitalist order. In Guattari's elaboration on the notion of chaos in *Chaosmosis* (from 1992) and in the collection *Chaosophy* (from 1995), we see this libidinal energy that Freud observes to be floating through the body in the earlier texts on anxiety not as an 'originative beginning', but as a middle, a flux that breaks with the duality body/word and focuses on the threshold. A tension, a threshold, a zone of inventiveness, transformation, and creativity is, in this sense, of the level of chaos.

Affect, symptom, noise and vibration. A body speaking in the world and an ecology that allows some sort of radical, resisting and transformative 'autopoietic existence' is what I see in Lygia Clark's series *Structuring of the Self*. Her work invites us to Spinoza, whose "conative bodies are also associative or (one could even say) social bodies, in the sense that each is, by its very nature as a body, continuously affecting and being affected by other bodies" (Bennet, 2010, p. 21). His ontology thus proposes that we share the same substance which is in the world in different and differential modalities. In sharp contrast with the negativity of desire (not to mention its connection

with a ‘need’ and ‘demand’ that subscribe it to the Phallic function in Lacan’s early teachings), what moves our lives is not a repetition of negativity, but an affirmative tendency to produce difference anchored in this surplus that is an excess of the order of experience that vibrates chaotically and creatively – the ‘full-void’.

Guided by Clark’s chaotic vibration, we can think through what happens to the body in/of the world and to the world with/of bodies through the potency of a subjective full/void that vibrates independently from any Other. In chaos we avoid the total reign of language and identity as well as materialist biological reductionism of experience. We meet chaos in the frontier of the vibrating ‘full-void’ of bodies.

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