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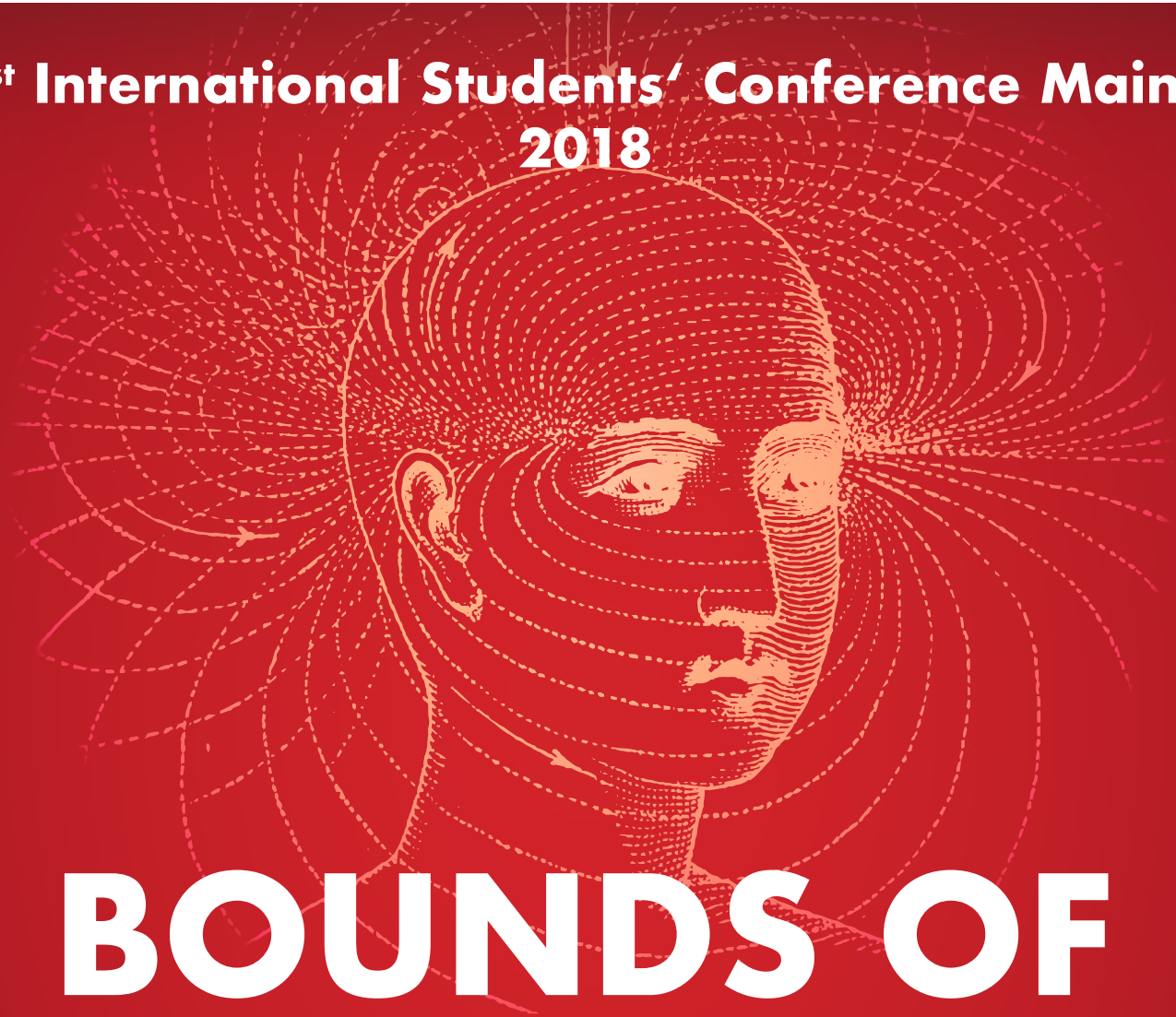# ICON
STUDENTS' CONFERENCE MAINZ

1st International Students' Conference Mainz 2018

BOUNDS OF HUMANITY

Conference Proceedings

JOHANNES GUTENBERG UNIVERSITÄT MAINZ

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ICON

International Students' Conference

BOUNDS OF HUMANITY

Conference Proceedings

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Daniel Schmicking

Antonia Schulz

(Ed.)

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Preface

Antonia Schulz, Marina Lehmann, Daniel Schmicking

We are pleased to present the proceedings of the First International Students' Conference ICON at the University of Mainz, which took place on the 2nd and 3rd of November 2018. Our principal goal was to organize an interdisciplinary conference in order to give students from all over the world and from various academic fields the opportunity to present their ideas and research. Furthermore, our aim was to facilitate discussions and networking among students. Finally, we also aimed at gaining new perspectives on a topic that encompasses existential concerns as well as current and future challenges.

We chose "Bounds of Humanity" as topic for the conference. Questions that could be triggered by this topic were: What bounds are there for humankind and humanity? Which responsibilities does humanity have now or might face in the future? Can we overcome mental, political, and social boundaries? Our speakers addressed these major issues, each from their own particular angle. A total of 18 student presentations were held, whereof nine are collected in this publication.

Based on prisoner's memoirs, Ismail Frouini's paper *The Subaltern Can Speak: The Intersectionally Gendered Trauma* focuses on how female prisoners write about their intersectional and gendered trauma and the subalternity they have experienced in prison apparatuses.

In his paper *The Meaning of Art and the Absurdity of Life,* Jan Niklas Jokisch shares insight into what art and life are. Furthermore, he maps the problematic relationship existing between them. He comparatively analyzes some of the fundamental features of both phenomena relying on the concept 'world' as used within Martin Heidegger's phenomenology, and on the concept 'enstrangement' as used in the art theory of the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky.

In *Emancipating Objects: The Subversive Potential of Male Beauty,* Kayan Klee talks about objectification. He shows that experiencing oneself as another person's object is not problematic in every instance and that there is also harm in discrediting being an object, as it is a legitimate aspect of a good human life.

The paper by Kalina Krivachkova is entitled *Male and Female Body Politics in Margaret Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'.* Krivachkova takes a look at male body dispossession, the cult of the phallus and social expectations of both men and women in relation to their reproductive purposes, which are all central issues in Atwood's novel. She concludes that what the novel describes is nothing new and that this notion of male and female reproductive performances is deeply rooted in our society's historical record.

In their paper *Men Read Literature, Women Read Women's Books,* Selina Jung and Bernadette Lange analyze how books as a cultural property are reinforcing constructed, stereotypical gender roles. They show that literary education in Germany is still highly dominated by male authors while female authors are mostly left out in the literary canon. Classifications such as "women's literature" and "chic lit" declare certain books as exclusively female. This contributes to the stereotype that exclusively "female topics" exist which are of no interest for men.

Ellen Medlock and Andrina Silberschmidt present their own research findings in *Assisted Euthanasia of the Elderly.* They conducted a survey to discover the differences between Swiss and German medical students' views on the ethics of assisted euthanasia of the elderly showing that most German students support the idea of assisted euthanasia if legitimate reasons are given.

In *Sharing Economy – The End of a Sharing Society?* Or Catalyst on the Way to It?, Simon Neumann examines the question whether socially and collaboratively motivated intentions of human beings are fostered or do get lost in a sharing economy.

Many reproductive treatments cause multiple pregnancies with triplets, quadruplets or even more fetuses. Due to risks of a multiple pregnancy, there is the option to reduce the number of fetuses. Verena Reusch examines the ethical reasoning for and against this practice in her paper *Fetocide or Selective Reduction in Pregnancies With More Than Three Fetuses*.

Antique authors often used topoi and 'Wandermotive' to draw connections to past events and to foreshadow specific statements. In her paper *The Horse As Topos of Imperial Whim. Lucius Verus in the Tradition of Caligula in the 'Historia Augusta'* Mareike Stanke shows to what extent the representation of the horse in the Historia Augusta implies Lucius Verus' categorization as a tyrant and how this influences our understanding of Verus.

Not represented in this collection are the following presentations:

- *Female vendors: Athenian working women outside of the bounds of the oikos in the 6th and 5th centuries BC*
- *Gaming disorder and structural explanations of addiction*
- *La Réunion: Europe's forgotten outermost regions*
- *The migration of Turkey's Jews to Israel and their integration to Israeli Society*
- *(De)construction of gender dichotomy? – A critical analysis of the theoretical positions of Garfinkel and Butler*
- *Kurdish diasporic women and nationalism: An ethnographic research about London based Kurdish organizations*
- *Inequality of gender in Vietnam*
- *Gender in Japan: Life, Work, and Welfare*
- *The ethical, legal and religious aspects of human cloning*

Furthermore, we would like to thank our three keynote speakers: Prof. Dr. Garrath Williams who talked about *Taking responsibility,* Prof. Dr. Meinard Kuhlmann who showed us *How markets work and where they fail*, and Prof. Dr. Lars Schmeink whose paper *The Future We Live In*

– *Media, Technology, Visuality* about the predictive nature of science fiction is also included in this collection. He argues that science fiction is a mode of thinking that allows us to better understand our volatile present because its perspective on the pervasiveness of information technologies and its linkages of virtual and material worlds all have come to represent our present.

We hope this publication will help to facilitate interdisciplinary discussions and give some insight and new impulses to the current and future challenges of humanity.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who contributed to the publication of these proceedings. First of all, the authors who were willing to share their thoughts and research with the public. Furthermore, a sincere thanks goes to our fellow team members in the ICON Editorial Team for their contributions to the editing process and the effective team work: Elena Syvokonyuk, Laura Christ, Tim Zinke, Maike Wolf, Melanie Kroska, Philipp Aigner, Sarah Ullerich, Roberto Ellis and Vanessa Möschner.

We would also like to thank the University of Mainz, Studium Generale, LOB project management, and the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (Federal Ministry of Education and Research) for their support in the conduct of this conference.

Mainz, 2020

The Subaltern Can Speak: The Intersectionally Gendered Trauma

Ismail Frouini

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Introduction

> "To imprison a woman is to remove her voice from the world, but many female inmates have been silenced by life long before the transport van carries them from the courthouse to the correctional facility. … Their essays, then, are victories against voicelessness – miracles in print."
> Wally Lamb, *Couldn't Keep It to Myself*

When Morocco got its "independence" from France in 1956, there were many voices (students, intellectuals, and activists) that tried to materialize a real autonomous rule from the colonial power. As a post-colonial nation, Morocco was undergoing certain uprisings and instability due to some challenging conditions that urged the Moroccan authorities' abuse of power and human rights violations. Many of the leaders of these uprisings were arrested, imprisoned, and others disappeared (Slyomovics, 2005). Such antagonistic subject position has led to an ongoing conflict between the hegemonic ruling, coercively dominant power (referred to as Makhzen) and a number of female and male activists, dissidents, nationalists and leftists. The "Years of Lead" (1956-1999) is accordingly used to describe the cultural and national trauma that overwhelmingly affected the post-colonial activists, dissidents and prisoners.

In the United States of America, Afro-American activists and leaders took part in the Civil Rights protests and uprisings of the 1960s. This emancipatory movement was at pains to maintain equal rights for the people of color, or say, black Americans. Many Afro-American people of color participated in theses protests, including the female

activists and black panther leaders (Victoria Gray, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Nina Simone, Mary McLeod, Lena Horne, Marva Collins, Rosa Parks, Assata Shakur and many others). These leaders were arrested and then imprisoned. Their prison and post-prison writings are inspired by their attempt to voice their subalternity and trauma as well as to speak 'truth to the "white" racist power'.

Having said that, this paper calls into question the complexity and the intersectionality of gender, race and trauma in both Moroccan and Afro-American female prison writings. To articulate its main argument, this paper argues that both the Afro-American and Moroccan female subalterns have already spoken. In so being, this paper aims first at contesting Spivak's conclusion (1988) that the subaltern "cannot speak". Based on its analysis of two female prison writings, this paper examines how the subaltern female prisoners' subjectivities are reshuffled and gendered. Shakur (1987) and El Bouih (2008) have challenged the monolithic, essentialist, chauvinist, and misogynist discourse shaping their traumatized subjectivities in both Moroccan and Afro-American prison apparatuses. Both former political prisoners have also dismantled the discourse that assigns activism and dissidence to male subjects and showed that both Afro-American and Moroccan female subjects are not always silent, voiceless, and agent-less subjects. Their writings form a kind of resistance. They aim at deconstructing the epistemic violence that excludes the female prison writers from resistance and activism scholarship.

Can the Subaltern Speak?
Theorizing the Subaltern Prisoner's Subjectivities

As a repressive state apparatus, prison is meant to discipline/punish and accordingly interpellate prisoners as subjects to the state ideologies (Althusser, 1971). The oppression, trauma, and the other forms of exclusion experienced in the twentieth century have evoked many voices of dissidence and resistance. Such resistance and dissidence have been

genderless. Regardless of how subaltern their subject positions are, both men and women have offered resistance to the different forms of oppression and exclusion they have experienced. While they have been discursively and structurally considered subaltern, weak, and unable to resist, female subjects have struggled, since then, to deconstruct such monolithic and reductionist views. In the United States of America and Morocco, women have positioned themselves within such a dissident and resisting order of discourse. They joined their voices of resistance and activism to their male counterparts. To voice their subalternity, they have challenged and dismantled the epistemic violence that shaped the afore-mentioned view; they accordingly struggled to foreground a feminist/womanist discourse to articulate their positionalities.

Having said this, this paper is premised upon analyzing the prison writings of the Moroccan political prisoners, Fatna El Bouih's *Talk of Darkness* (2008), and the Afro-American Assata Shakur's *Assata* (1987). The focus will be placed on how these two female activists, leaders, and political prisoners narrate their gendered trauma and subalternity that they have been shaped by in the prison apparatuses. It departs from the Subaltern Studies approach to ascribe agency to these subaltern women to act as active agents and therefore write their gendered trauma. Writing allows these prisoners a space to exert a sense of agency and empowerment.

As a way of doing beginnings, this paper questions the subaltern subject position of these female activists. In her 1988 seminal article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak's answer to her question-like title is in the negative. According to Spivak (1988), the (Indian) subaltern women have no history and lack consciousness; therefore they cannot speak (p. 287). This does not mean that all women are silent and cannot voice themselves. Female resistant voices have challenged such view and aligned themselves with male subjects who have "spoken truth to power". Even when they have been shaped by the state's regulatory and repressive ideologies, as prisoners, resistance has been the sine

qua non. The act of writing testimonies is per se an act of speaking the missing truth to the oppressive power. The subalternised prisoners under study show that they are conscious activists and could speak give voice to their traumas.

To contextualize this within a theoretical approach, the notion of subalternity should be first and foremost framed. As defined by Ranajit Guha (1988), "Subaltern" is "a name for the general attribute of subordination… whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or in any other way" (p. 35). Thus, it appears that the extension of this definition of the "subaltern" and the situation of female prisoners is quite similar, since it clusters together class, gender, age, caste and other issues. As female subalterns, Shakur and El Bouih have shared, in retrospect, testimonies about their traumatic experience in prison during the "Years of Lead" Morocco and "The Civil Rights Movement Era" America. Such retrospective trauma and gendered torture testimonies are best viewed as what Marianne Hirsch (2012) refers to as "Post-memory".

Post-memory, as defined by Marianne Hirsch (2012) in her book, *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust*, is a pertinent concept for discussing the particularities of these female prisoners. The notion of Collective memory or, "post-memory" is relevant to this study because it is a way of articulating how a collective body views its past trauma. *Talk of Darkness* (El Bouih, 2008) and *Assata* (Shakur, 1987) constitute post-memories for both Moroccan and Afro-American female prisoners, for they offer these ex-political prisoners the possibility to look into the dark years of the past "Years of Lead" Morocco (1956-1999) and the atrocities of the Civil Rights Movement America (1954-1968).

As a subdivision of the postcolonial theory, Subaltern Studies was launched in the 1980s by a group of Indian scholars. Being concerned with the historiography of peasant or insurgent movements in colonial India, Subaltern Studies attributes agency to "subaltern" people

to voice themselves. Subalternist theory, as defined by Ranajit Guha (1988), starts from the point the subaltern as an "other", who has no voice because of his/her race, class and gender. Subaltern is used to refer to non-elite, marginalized, subordinated groups, illiterate peasantry, and the urban sub-proletariat. The identities of these subalterns are constructed and shaped within a regulatory, oppressive and powerful order of discourse. To maintain such subaltern subject positions, this theoretical paradigm devised by Subaltern Studies Group has provoked some concern and attached agency to the subaltern subjects to redeem their stolen subjectivities.

Gendered Subalternities: Writing the Intersectional Trauma

There is an intersectional trauma that affects the female subjectivities. Such subalternity and trauma are articulated in different ways. As obviously noticed in all these prison writings, the female prison writer under study makes use of the first-person narration (I). Shakur's "i", however, is not akin to El Bouih's "I" – at least at the level of orthographic transcription. Shakur decides not to capitalize the "i" throughout her prison memoir because, like other Afro-American activists, namely bell hooks, they revolt against certain "established" and "canonized" norms, including capitalization. This is a form of resistance and a counter-discourse that shows the subalternity of the Afro-American subjects vis-à-vis the "white" American ones. Following Silvia Pellicer-Ortín (2013) "Using the first-person narration... allows them [women] to deal with the question of the female identity in an insightful way" (p. 60). Predominantly, Shakur makes use of this technique in order to claim her self-assertion; hence position herself within the hegemonic exclusive racial American order of discourse.

In her poetic prison memoir, *Assata,* Assata Shakur is interpellated in prison as JoAnne Chesimard, for she is the most wanted FBI "terrorist". She is viewed as "the most dangerous woman in the country" (Shakur, 1987, p. 253). Her name echoes her subject position as

an Afro-American revolutionist and activist; Assata means "she who struggles". She is known for her stand as a dissident activist who continues to fight by speaking truth to power against inequality, racism and oppression,

> "When someone asked my name i stammered and stuttered. My voice was so low everyone constantly asked me to repeat myself. That was one of the things that always happened to me after long periods of solitary confinement: i would forget how to talk" (Shakur, 1987, p. 83).

As noted by Leigh Gilmore (2001), "trauma is never exclusively personal" (p. 31). American "white" racist discourse has constructed a monolithic image on Afro-American subjects. They are viewed in the ("white") American "regime of truth" as "terrorists" and "criminals". Such systemic as well as epistemic violence has become worse and institutionalized. Shakur has been accused of various crimes, including murder, robbery and kidnapping (Shakur, 1987, p. 14). In so being, this trauma of incarceration and epistemic violence shape and frame the thinking of the ("white") American subjects. That's why when her four-year-old daughter visits her, she "refuses to play baby elephant, or tiger, or anything. She looks at me like i am the buffoon i must look like" (Shakur, 1987, p. 257). There are both epistemic violence and systemic violence that are exerted on the American subjects. Shakur's daughter is interpellated as subject to the dominant ideology. The little daughter is subject to a racist "order of discourse" that demonizes all people of color in the white-majority America.

As for El Bouih's prison memoir (2008), *Talk of Darkness*, the English and Arabic (*Hadith Al Atamah*) titles indicate the wretchedness and the silence of an evacuated space. The title is oxymoronic, for darkness cannot talk. Talking presupposes the presence of a listener; this prosopopoeia of darkness shows the whim of the listener (Fatna) to get rid of the specters of trauma, loneliness and subalternity. As this memoir opens up with some phrases that indicate freedom, lightness and clarity "sun and sky and water and air" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 1), the title might refer to a condition of obscureness and wretchedness that in-

spires darkness to talk. Darkness might also refer to midnight; talking, therefore, at the midnight reflects the trauma that the victim is experiencing. Linking the title with the (over)use of the pronoun "we", the memoir would offer (a) testimony(ies) of a traumatic experience about the past collective memory of darkness and trauma of prison. The use of past tense is very telling; El Bouih retrospectively seeks to break with a past that was traumatic and abusive. Based on this past experience, El Bouih offers the possibility of imagining and envisioning the future. Yet, as a subaltern who has spoken for other female subaltern subjects, the hegemonic center has not heard her yet.

As for matters of positionality, while Shakur is a leading figure of the civil rights movements in the USA, El Bouih is also a leader activist in post-independence Morocco. In the 1990s, El Bouih became involved in the Moroccan feminist movement (Laura Menin, 2014, p. 10). This movement has not received a warm welcome by the Moroccan regime. Many members/activists have been arrested and experienced the "Years of Lead" cultural trauma because of their political ideas and dissidence as well as for trespassing the state orders. El Bouih (2008) realizes subsequently the difficulty of addressing the taboo issues, like the issue of political violence against women. The regime's overwhelming hegemony exerted over the activists hinders and even weakens any effective activism. Despite the arbitrary imprisonment and their powerless subject positions, they have resumed their resistance and challenge even in prison.

Assata Shakur (1987), Fatna El Bouih (2008) and other female activists have broken their silence and challenged the oppressive regimes that cast them away. By the same token, their prison testimonies are a kind of activism and resistance, following the logic of Barbara Harlow (1987). They have voiced and narrated their unspeakable trauma that many others could not. They have been also deconstructing their gendered subjectivities by dint of showing how the hegemonic regime has exercised a physical as well as a symbolic violence to un-voice them and

shatter their political agency: "we suffered violent assault because we were women" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 11). The subaltern women suffer twice: being a woman in a patriarchal society and an activist shaped by a hegemonic repressive regime. As a prison narrative, El Bouih (2008) uses the simple past (were, remembered, learned, etc.) to make a rupture with this traumatic past. The use of the pronoun "we" also indicates the collective identity or what Hirsh (2012) refers to as "post-memory" of the activists and dissidents.

There is an intricate intersectional relationship between violence, gender and subalternity, as these two prison writings come to show. Subalternity is the ultimate outcome of both violence and gender relations. The subaltern voice is associated with resistance, given the subaltern subject position of the female subject in Moroccan discourse. El Bouih's 2008 prison memoir *Talk of Darkness* helps carve out a space where El Bouih – and other female detainees – could voice the voiceless women and their traumatic experience that deeply marked her during detention. It reveals the ongoing silencing and "means of correct training" (Foucault, 1975, pp. 170-194) of the female detainees during the "Years of Lead". This period marked different historical trajectories in Moroccan history. Subalternity, silencing and violence exercised on these women are attributed to their gendered identities. As a female subaltern woman, El Bouih "tried to speak though it was forbidden" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 11). She contests Spivak's conclusion that "the subaltern cannot speak" (1988, p. 287); the subaltern has already spoken. What's at stake however, is the process of silencing and negating the subjectivities of these subalterns as active agents so as to perpetuate power relations. This process of subalternising per se perpetuates the power relations underlying both male and female subjects.

Both Shakur (1987) and El Bouih (2008) have been also victims of trial procrastination; this exacerbates the trauma of the prisoners. According to Willingham (2011), "one of the common themes in black women's prison writings is the abandonment and neglect experienced

once women are incarcerated" (p. 59). Shakur and the Moroccan political prisoner, El Bouih, have been subject to this procrastination and negligence while in prison, waiting for the trial. Instead of recovering from the trauma of their imprisonment, this traumatizing strategy exacerbates their subaltern and traumatic status quo.

To resist such traumatic situation, prisoners have made recourse to different forms of resistance. Included was hunger strike. The hunger strike waged by El Bouih and her comrades has played a vital role in improving their situation. It echoes Shakur's mode of resistance "i was locked in my cell for a month... I began a hunger strike at one point, and after a few days in the tiny cell i was sick" (Shakur, 1987, p. 145). They have also gone on hunger strike to be recognized as "political prisoners" not as "terrorists" and accordingly demand their trial and liberation. Once the court passed the sentence of five-year prison to El Bouih, the latter mourns: "The rape of a flower in full bloom. Five years for the crime of imagining a better tomorrow, a world where human rights are respected, a world for women far removed from their inferior status" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 37). While serving this sentence El Bouih realized that her arbitrary imprisonment has been one of the regime's methods to shatter and silence these women and other women who have dared to do or engage in any political or social opposition and dissidence. Ultimately, by dint of waging this hunger strike, Shakur and El Bouih offer resistance to the oppressive regime. They take their bodies as an arena of power and resistance. Similarly, the famous Algerian political prisoner Assia Djebar, as she shows in her 1999 collection of short stories *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment,* the female body is an écriture of resistance.

The arbitrary punishment of these subalternised women whom prison has deprived of voice and agency intensifies their situation. Given that their subjectivities are circulated by a society of control, "everything in this world is subject to surveillance" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 31). And Shakur (1987) always "awoke to find four or five male guards standing

in the doorway of my cell" (p. 59). Female political prisoners are panopticoned and remain always under the male gaze and control. After the traumatic days of body search and torture, women are now under constant male panopticon gaze. Body search is a method of torture where the prisoners feel less human and subject to the master's order. "To them there was no difference in time or gender here, no difference at all" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 6). By the same token, Shakur is under surveillance all day. In prison, the unequal position of women appears immediately in the lack of facilities and special ill-treatment for women and the denial of the fact they have needs which may differ from those of men. Being in labor or giving birth is no exception.

Prison trauma is rampant and intergenerational. It affects the prisoner and all his/her "free" family. This exerts a systemic violence on the member of the prisoner's family. Ilham, the daughter of a female Moroccan detainee, is like Shakur's daughter, Kakuya Amala Shakur. They are both subaltern subjects who are born unfree; being born in the dark prison, these clean-handed female subjects have neither known freedom nor the outside world. Ilham's mother is silenced. For the mother, as El Bouih (2008) recounts, is a "powerless [*who*] did not utter a word – prison had tied her tongue – even when she was in labor there were no powerful drugs to ease her acute pain" (p. 59). This echoes Shakur's trauma when she is in labor, "I went into labor the morning of September 10, 1974... i had no doctor... finally... I am delivering the baby myself" (Shakur, 1987, pp. 142-143). Silencing is a means of traumatizing and subalternising. Prison is an arena where even antagonistic and opposite things (must) reconcile. Silence and screams are the same. They mean the same and almost nothing for the prison agents and hegemons, but for El Bouih and her comrades it is an anathema and challenge. They have fought what Paulo Freire (1972) calls the "culture of silence". El Bouih's narrative point of view shifts from the first person to the second person. Every so often, she slips up into slips of the tongue. These metaphorical slips include "our shared life, excuse me, our shared death" (p. 14) and "you saw light, excuse me,

the darkness" (p. 66). These parapraxises evoke the reader's attention of how painful and devastating the trauma of incarceration has been. This indicates also that there are some instances of pain and torture which El Bouih cannot go into describing. More than that, language cannot adequately convey this traumatic situation, given that trauma is unspeakable (Stroinska, Szymanski, & Cecchetto, 2014). These slips of the tongue show the effects left by this trauma; it reveals the post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by these female prisoners of conscience.

El Bouih is at pains to join her voice to the Moroccan activists demanding equity and equality. As a detainee, she deconstructs the fact that "the guard was unaccustomed to my new identity because he addressed me as a female" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 5). She has another identity in prison, "from now on your name is Rashid. You cannot move or speak unless you hear your name, which is Rashid" (p. 5). She has a reshuffled subjectivity. By means of speaking of, undergoing and bearing this gendered violence, El Bouih deconstructs and debunks the Moroccan cliché that women are passive or weak subjects. Thus, her work foregrounds the Moroccan feminist tradition of the female opposition to male chauvinism and patriarchal oppression. By and large, one's subjectivity is constructed with certain social and cultural norms. These norms are always congruent with the dominant ideology. The task, therefore, of women taking such initiative of voicing other women's trauma and subalternity is arduous. This shows that women can not only speak and voice their subalternity, but they could, as active agents, also speak 'truth to power'.

The last testimony that concludes El Bouih's prison memoir (2008) is Latifa Jbabdi's prison account. In this testimony entitled "The Police Station, Torture, Prison, and Torture", Jbabdi traces the same line of her comrades; she breaks her silence and voices her subalternity and wretchedness. She is at pains to deconstruct the view that politics and activism are the male sphere. This miserable male chauvinist situation

always goads these women into soliloquizing and questioning "whether to laugh at the situation ... or to curse the machismo that judged me of no account because of my sex, and didn't consider my ideas, consider my ideas, my choices, and my limits as a human being" (El Bouih, 2008, p. 95). These methods of traumatizing the prisoners – like other methods of the carceral system of transformation and incarceration – aim, once again, to interpellate the female prisoners into subject and obedient to the hegemon's ideology.

Following Michel Foucault (1975), the body of the prisoner is an arena of target and power. It is also an arena of resistance. The prisoner's body "is manipulated, shaped, trained ... obeys, responds, becomes skilled and increases its forces" (p. 136). As mentioned before, the female gendered body has metaphorically become a mode of resistance to the patriarchal oppression. As victims of domination and gendered violence, El Bouih and her comrades' prison writings are a direct correlation between writing and resistance. Additionally, these testimonies illustrate the role of writing (memoirs and poems) as a site of agency and political opposition, and activism. They also bespeak the hope of these prisoners for a different future. In so being, they encourage other Moroccans to engage with their ordeal experience of "Years of Lead". Their testimonies have triggered a debate on the state violence and at the same time encouraged the (re)writing of the excluded chapters of Moroccan history of the "Years of Lead". They reveal the untold history of a collective and cultural trauma and collective memory.

What other Afro-American women, Shakur included, want to communicate, and accordingly highlight, is that (Afro-American) women can be (and were, actually) leaders and revolutionists as (Afro-American) men. It is this patriarchal discourse that frames the minds of some revolutionists, which Shakur and even El Bouih are at pains to dismantle first in theory, by means of writing. That is to say, by means of weaponizing literature in such a situation, as noted by Barbara Harlow (1987), literature is presented as an "arena of struggle" and re-

sistance; these female prison writings (literatures) are no exception. Second, by action, and by dint of their engagement in political activism. The presence of men shapes the perception of the women struggles and revolutionaries; but it is not the other way around. Thus, Shakur (1987) tries to deconstruct what Joy James (2009) contends that "men appear independent of women in revolutionary struggles" (p. 138). Other Afro-American male resistance (prison) narratives have contributed to the masculinization of the political struggle in the memory of the popular. This includes Marin Luther King (*Letters From Birmingham Jail,* 1963), Malcolm X (*The Autobiography of Malcolm X,* 1965), Eldridge Cleaver (*Soul on Ice,* 1968), George Jackson (*Soledad Brother,* 1970, and *Blood in My Eye,* 1972), Malcolm Braly (*On the Yard,* 1967), Piri Thomas (*Seven Long Time*, 1975, and *Down These Mean Streets,* 1967) James Baldwin (*If Beale Street Could Talk,* 1974) Jack London's 1907 essays "Pinched: A Prison Experience," and "The Pen: Long Days in a County Penitentiary," Rubin Carter (*The Sixteenth Round: From Number 1 Contender to Number 45472*, 1974), Mumia AbuJamal (*Live from Death Row*, 1995), Lloyd L. Brown (*Iron city,* 1951), John Edgar (*Wideman's Brothers and Keepers,* 1984), and others too numerous to mention; but Afro-American women are hardly ever canonized.

While voicing her trauma and subalternity, Shakur (1987), in one way or another, has contributed to the creation of national consciousness, say black womanist thought. As Assata Shakur (1978) suggests that "it is imperative that we, as black women, talk about the experiences that shaped us; that we assess our strengths and weaknesses and define our own foreground of the female history" (p. 14). Compared with Fatna El Bouih (2008), both female prisoners foreground a feminist/womanist consciousness in both their prison memoirs, *Assata* and *Talk of Darkness*, respectively.

Shakur (1987) speaks out, demanding to define and to interpret Afro-American (wo)men's roles in American history, politics, and culture. Such roles more often than not have been neglected due to wom-

en's subalternity as well as lack of representation, voice, and presence in the American history. Prison, as a disciplinary and repressive state apparatus, perpetuates such relations of (Disem)power(ment). Shakur (1987) talks about the obvious repercussions of what it means to be a "colored" female revolutionist activist in a "white" dominated nation. She has experienced all kinds of traumatic incarceration: isolation, violence, abuse, body search, trauma, negligence, trial procrastination, and the likes.

Like the Egyptian Nawal al Saadawi's 1986 *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* and the Algerian Asia Djebar's 1999 *So Vast the Prison*, Shakur (1987) and El Bouih (2008) create a new space and site of agency and platform on which both activists write themselves, other subaltern women, and about other experienced traumatic atrocities being committed against their leading activists of their nations by the hegemons ruling them. Their prison memoirs offer them spaces to allow female emancipation and enunciation. While serving their prison sentences, female prison writers reveal violence, abuse, or other traumas of which they have been victims. It is this state apparatus that causes such traumas. In their controversial and even subaltern subject position, both El Bouih and Shakur challenge the patriarchal, capitalist and neo-colonialist systems by exposing the traumatic experience of the silenced subaltern women in both the United States of America and Morocco.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, Afro-American and Moroccan female prison writers have made a literature of their own. They have mostly written on other silent women. Despite the descriptions attributed to their initiatives, such as transgressive, provocative, and challenging, their writings form a kind of resistance, for it breaches patriarchal prohibition of female writings. During the "Years of Lead" Morocco and the Civil Rights movement era (1954-1968), El Bouih (2008) and Shakur (1987) have offered their

bodies as écriture of resistance by means of hunger strike. Ultimately El Bouih has contributed to the liberation of the female voices and gaze emanating from their gendered subjectivities. They have offered resistance not only to the hegemonic discourse underlying them, but they have also struggled to ascribe themselves agency to articulate their dissident positionalities and redeem their refashioned subjectivities. Their resistance – Shakur and El Bouih – is therefore twofold. It addresses the patriarchal and capitalist as well as the neo-colonialist discourses shaping them.

Held as political prisoners of conscience, such activist women – mainly the aforementioned Shakur and the Moroccan activist Fatna El Bouih – keep resisting the hegemonic structures which try to re-fashion and re-gender their subjectivities. Both activists have witnessed a cultural trauma in their nations. They retrospectively talk about such trauma in order to show their strategic locations as activists and at the same time to write a history of trauma of their own. Their writings constitute a form of postmemory. The gendered subaltern has already spoken. They have asserted themselves through the act of writing of dissidence and activism and articulate themselves as active agents in history of both nations. by dint of breaking the silence imposed on them politically and culturally, they put their stamp on the course of rebellion (Guha, R. & Spivak, G. 1988, p. 174).

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The Meaning of Art and the Absurdity of Life

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> *ROS.: Incidents! All we get is incidents! Dear God, is*
> *it too much to expect a little sustained action?!*
> Tom Stoppard, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

1. Introduction

The fundamental idea of this paper[1] is to give insight into both what art and what life are and to work out the problematic relationship that exists between them, which will hopefully result in a number of bounds and boundaries. 'To give insight into' does not mean 'to answer'. I am not at all after clear-cut definitions. Instead, I want to comparatively analyze some of the fundamental features of both phenomena, to further our knowledge of them. For this, I will rely heavily on the concept 'world' as used within Martin Heidegger's phenomenology and on the concept 'enstrangement' as used in the art theory of the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky.[2] Further, I will rely heavily on Jean-Paul Sartre's novel '*La nausée*' which I regard as the most compelling and consistent piece of philosophy that Sartre has ever produced. Since a formal introduction into Heidegger and Shklovsky is lengthy and unnecessary for an understanding of the basic idea of this presentation, I have chosen a more didactic route: I will use the central insight their theories provide, but only refer to them directly where I deem it necessary.

2. World

Let us start with the familiar and work our way to the 'enstranged' by considering the notion of 'world.' There is something really interesting about world in that we generally know how to use the different objects presented within it. Take for example the fact that you are reading a text right now. You probably do so without paying any attention to the act of reading as such, to the weird object a text is, to those weird little scribbles we call letters, nor did you start off by refreshing your knowledge of grammatical rules or your vocabulary. In fact, your connection to the text is so commonplace that it is nearly impossible to see a text without reading it – given that you have at least some knowledge of the language and alphabet used – while it takes a nearly insufferable level of concentration to look at a text and only see it and its letters as the little distinct and repeating forms they are. That seems to be the fundamental relation we have to the world. You use the door handle without thinking about it; you tie your shoes without thinking about the knot; and while you write, you forget that you are holding a pen. The object generally is less important than the way we use it. This usually entails that objects in our world are ex- and interchangeable. If you want to drive a nail into the wall and someone hands you a hammer, you usually don't ask for another hammer because this one is blue and you want a red one. Many objects in your world can get the same job done and you usually tend to abstract from all the details not necessary to get the job done – you may even forget about a shoe being a shoe if you use it to drive a nail into the wall (although, the tediousness of the task would keep on reminding you). Our world is structured pragmatically because *our perception* is structured pragmatically. The object is obscured by its function; your mind works automatically and blind. Heidegger calls this *Umsicht* (circumspection) and Shklovsky *(pure) recognition* and both of them contrast this to a mode of perception that actually perceives the object as a thing.[3] Maybe one of the most intriguing ways to illustrate what this entails lies in a little game we all sometimes like to

play: repeating a word over and over until it loses its meaning. If you say something too many times, you start focusing more on its sound, its material qualities, and less on its use – the thing that makes the word what it actually is. Focusing on an object as an object rips it out of its pragmatic framework and makes it quite literally useless.[4] Thus, circumspection is not just one of the occasional mishaps of our brain, but the necessary epistemological relation we have to our world.

3. Puzzling Cases of Ready-Made Art

We will let 'world' rest for a second and consider art instead. Not any work of art, that is, but perhaps one of the most puzzling cases of art: ready-made art (or *objets trouvés*).

For that, let us take a look at the "true" ready-mades of Marcel Duchamp. A ready-made in this, its truest form, is a vernacular object of ordinary use, ideally without any sort of uniqueness to it that is ripped out of its vernacular context and made into art – ideally, again, without any material changes. Thus, '*En prévision du bras cassé'* (1915) and '*Porte-bouteilles*' (1914) are basically just a snow shovel and a bottle rack. Duchamp bought them both in ordinary stores carrying dozens of these items, yet preceded not to use them ordinarily, but to exhibit them like art.

Now, I don't indent to argue about taste. Most people probably don't get too much out of ready-made art, but the question concerning art is not a question of taste. Just as a bad cake is still a cake, a bad artwork is still an artwork. Conversely, just because every artistic text is still a text, it does not mean that every good text is thereby art.[5]

Let us go back to Duchamp now. What does ready-made art tell us about the distinction of art and non-art? The distinction cannot rely on material aspects – '*Porte-bouteilles*', for example, was nearly identical, give or take possible scratches and other imperfections, with any other bottle rack of the same type. The distinction cannot lie in a certain mode of production either, since both the artworks and their vernacu-

lar counterparts were mass-produced by the very same company and means. Where then does the distinction lie? The ready-made – as I have mentioned before – is a vernacular object ripped out of its vernacular/ pragmatic context – or as Shklovsky would put it: an enstranged object. The loss of context is a loss of pragmatics and a loss of circumspection and thus, an elevation of the object as an object over its simple use. An ordinary snow shovel suffers the fate of any vernacular object: it is interchangeable[6] and every little detail that helps distinguish it from any other identical snow shovel gets abstracted from and only becomes relevant when it can be used e.g. for means of distinction. Duchamp's '*En prévision du bras cassé'* obviously works differently. Every little detail about it is meaningful, from a scratch on the metal to the veins in the wooden handle. Meaningful not for any sort of pragmatic use, but meaningful in and of itself – add another scratch and you have a different work of art; change Hamlet's "to be or not to be" to "not to be or to be", since both ordinarily mean the same thing, and you have yourself a different play. Since every aspect of a work of art could in principal be significant, changing anything about an artwork means changing the artwork and its interpretive potential as a whole. Artworks are complex structures, meaningful down to the last letter, brushstroke, frame or note.[7] Vernacular objects are only meaningful within their use and thus we are blind regarding any of their qualities that are not relevant to their use. The distinction is here a distinction in use and in modes of perception.

The famous philosopher Arthur C. Danto, one of the most renowned theorists of the ready-made, criticizes this approach in *'The Transfiguration of the Commonplace'* (1981) by saying:

> "It is always possible to suspend practicality, to stand back and assume a detached view of the object, see its shapes and colors, enjoy and admire it for what it is, subtracting all considerations of utility. But since it is an attitude of contemplative detachment that may be adopted towards just anything, [...] we cannot explicate the connection between artworks and reality on the basis of this distinction" (Danto, 1981, p. 22)

4. Reality

Danto is right and I will admit that a definition of art cannot be given solely based on a mode of enstranged perception. The whole idea of the ready-made relies on the very potential of any vernacular object to be enstranged. Heidegger calls this potential *Unheimlichkeit*[8] (uncanniness), the fundamental possibility of our world to become strange and unfamiliar to us, for objects to unintentionally fall out of their pragmatic framework and become useless not through a material change, but through a change of perception.

Jean-Paul Sartre's first novel '*La nausée*' (Nausea) (1938) might be one of the best exemplifications of this kind of phenomenon. '*La nausée*' is the fictive journal of Antoine Roquentin, a man suffering from what he can only describe as nausea, an overwhelming feeling of sickness produced by the arbitrariness of the world. Within the clearly psychotic episodes of '*La nausée*', everything falls out of the pragmatic framework of the world and becomes meaningless and unapproachable.

> "Donc j'étais tout à l'heure au Jardin public. La racine du marronnier s'enfonçait dans la terre, juste au-dessous de mon banc. Je ne me rappelais plus que c'était une racine. Les mots s'étaient évanouis et, avec eux, la signification des choses, leurs modes d'emploi, les faibles repères que les hommes ont tracés à leur surface. [...] Ce vernis avait fondu, il restait des masses monstrueuse et molles, en désordre – nues d'une effrayante et obscène nudité. [...] Je voyais bien qu'on ne pouvait pas passer de sa fonction de racine, de pompe aspirante, *à ça* [...]. La fonction n'expliquait rien : elle permettait de comprendre en gros ce que c'était qu'une racine, mais pas du tout *celle-ci*. Cette racine, avec sa couleur, sa forme, son mouvement figé, était... au-dessous de tout explication (Sartre, 2015, p. 181-182 +185). [So I was in the park just now. The roots of the chestnut tree were sunk in the ground just under my bench. I couldn't remember it was a root any more. The words had vanished and with them the significance of things, their methods of use, and the feeble point of reference which men have traced on their surface. [...] This veneer had melted, leaving soft monstrous masses, all in disorder – naked, in a frightful, obscene nakedness. [...] I saw clearly that you could not pass from its function as a root, as a breathing pump, *to that* [...]. The function explained nothing: it allowed you to understand generally that it was a root, but not *that one* at all. This root with its colour, shape, its congealed movement, was […] below all explanation." (Sartre, 1964, pp. 126-129)]

Obviously, this is an exaggeration, but I believe that everyone of us has experienced a situation such as the one described here, where everything just seems off, where you suddenly stop what you were doing and – as if you had just fallen out of your world – reconsider why you are doing what you are doing, why you are doing anything at all. This sudden loss of our pragmatic framework leads to two things. Firstly, the objects of our world – beforehand characterized by this near-magical approachability – now become entirely unapproachable, unnamable, unthinkable, epistemologically horrifying.[9] I have grown to call this mode of being that is outside the pragmatic-symbolic framework 'Reality' – in certain accordance with the notion of 'The Real' in the theory of Slavoj Žižek.[10] The framework that world provides structures reality and makes it comprehensible. The difference between world and reality is the difference between "circumspectly" knowing that there is an anthill and trying to watch every movement on this anthill, the movement of every ant, of every piece of dirt, of every shadow, ad infinitum at the same time (watch the beginning of David Lynch's '*Blue Velvet*' (1986) if you want a visualization of this).

Secondly, the loss of the framework proves the arbitrariness of the framework itself. Thus, not only are we and all objects in our world meaningless without the framework of world, but world itself is arbitrary and thus every meaning generated within world is arbitrary – or to put it bluntly: life is absurd.[11]

5. Raconter and Aventure

How do we deal with this absurdity? '*La nausée*' also provides insight into that. Roquentin describes his life with an already weakened sense of world as follows:

> Quand on vit, il n'arrive rien. Les décors changent, les gens entrent et sortent, voilà tout. Il n'y a jamais de commencement. Les jours s'ajoutent aux jours sans rime ne raison, c'est une addition interminable et monotone. (Sartre, 2015, p. 64) [Nothing happens while you live. The scenery changes, people **come** and **go**, that's all. There are no beginnings. Days

are tacked on to days without rhyme or reason, an interminable, monotonous addition. (Sartre, 1964, p. 39, authors changes in bold)]

The strategy to overcome this segmentation of life into singular, distinct episodes lies in *raconter* (telling a story):

> Mais quand on raconte la vie, tout change; [...] les événements se produisent dans un sens et nous les raconter en sens inverse. On a l'air de débuter par le commencement [...] [e]t en réalité c'est par la fin qu'on a commencé. Elle est là, invisible et présente, c'est elle qui donne à ces quelques mots la pompe et valeur d'un commencement. [...] les instants ont cessé de s'empiler au petit bonheur les uns sur les autres, ils sont happés par la fin de l'histoire qui les attire et chacun d'eux à son tour l'instant qui le précède [...] (Sartre 2015, 65) [But everything changes when you **talk** about life. [...] things happen one way and **we recount** them in the opposite sense. You seem to start at the beginning [...] [a]nd in reality you have started at the end. It was there, invisible and present, it is the one which gives to words the pomp and value of a beginning. [...] **moments** have stopped piling themselves **onto** each other **randomly**, they are snapped up by the end of the story which draws them and each one of them, in turn, draws out the preceding **moment** [...] (Sartre, 1964, pp. 39-40, authors changes in bold)]

By contextualizing the different distinct episodes of our life in a narrative structure, we make them meaningful and construct a sense of intrinsic necessity between them – as if they don't *just* happen, but they happen in anticipation of a certain future event. The picture you have of yourself right now entails the goals and wishes you have for the future and thus structures the importance of events of your past by how well they fit into your current self-perception and goals – this is usually called *biographic consistency*. Here we obviously have an imitation of the necessary structure of artworks. Roquentin calls the feeling resulting from this *aventure* (adventure), it is the very opposite of the *nausée* – it is a heightened feeling of the necessity of oneself and the world:

> [...] enfin une aventure m'arrive et quand je m'interroge, je vois qu'*il m'arrive que je suis moi et que je suis ici ;* c'est *moi* qui fends la nuit, je suis heureux comme un héros de roman. (Sartre 2015, 84) [[...] at last an adventure happens to me and when I question myself I see that it happens *that I am myself and that I am here; I* am the one that splits the night, I am as happy as the hero of a novel." (Sartre, 1964, p. 54)]

Although Roquentin rejects this feeling of adventure, it nevertheless takes hold of his life once again at the end of the book. Where similar figures – for example Goethe's Werther or Flaubert's Emma Bovary – kill themselves in a blatant imitation of the portrayal of suicide in literature,[12] Roquentin escapes by not trying to be art, but by deciding to make art. The book ends with a surprisingly upbeat tone as Roquentin heads to Paris to become an artist. The pieces finally are in place again, his life has new meaning, adventure has taken hold of him once again, from the shattered ruins of the old, a new world emerges – as usually does.

This, in my opinion, is the central relation between art and life. Life is absurd and an escape from this underlying absurdity lies in 'world' as the constructing of an arbitrary – yet only rarely overtly arbitrary – concept of meaning. Art on the other hand is necessarily meaningful and thus – consciously or unconsciously – gets imitated by life to give us the feeling of safety we so desperately struggle for. Living is always living in seemingly necessary narratives.

6. Art

There are two more issues deserving of brief discussion. First, both '*La nausée*' and I have only been talking about *temporal art* – artworks that necessarily exhibit a temporal dimension, e.g. literature, music, performance, theater, film, dance. What about more or less purely *spatial* art forms like painting, sculpting and photography? Here, the connection is subtler. Life isn't always just thought temporally. There are aspects we usually call 'pictures', which are moments that gain their significance from being set outside of time – snapshots of certain feelings or Hollywood-made desires. They don't even have to be representational. I can look at a picture by Mark Rothko – his *'Black, Red, and Black'* (1968) for example – and still long for the moments of my life to carry the same overwhelming necessity and wholeness.

The second issue we have to discuss regards the relationship between art and reality. For this, let us return to Danto's criticism. I think our detour into reality has shown that the problem is more severe than we originally thought: Not only can artistic appreciation be applied to non-art, but also not all enstrangement leads to artistic appreciation. How are we to deal with that? First, let's salvage enstrangement. Both art and reality rely on enstrangement, but while art relies on a controlled and partial enstrangement that results in every aspect of the object becoming irreducible and meaningful, reality emerges out of an uncontrolled, all-encompassing enstrangement that results in a loss of any possible framework of meaning. This represents a gradual difference, like having fire in the oven or having your house on fire. Secondly, let's look at the problem within artistic appreciation. Here Danto again is of great help:

> "[...] there would be cases in which it would be wrong or inhumane to take an aesthetic attitude, to put at psychic distance certain realities – to see a riot, for instance, in which police are clubbing demonstrators, as a kind of ballet [...]. The question instead must arise as to what one should *do.*"
> (Danto, 1981, p. 22)

Danto is right. The question is one of adequacy. Strictly speaking, it is not impossible to see police brutality as a ballet, but this is not the question. The problem is similar to problems discussed by ordinary language philosophy for years. There are situations in which it is not strictly speaking impossible to do a specific thing, and yet doing so would in some sense be misunderstanding the situation. If someone says, "Red is bigger than any square," or, "Saturday is in bed,"[13] we would tell them, that they cannot say this. What we mean is not that they are unable to utter these sounds – they have just proven that they are perfectly capable to do so – but "[w]hen the philosopher who proceeds from ordinary language tells us, 'You can't say such-and-such,' what he means is that you cannot say that *here* and communicate *this* situation to others, or understand it for yourself" (Cavell, 2015, pp. 19-20). Or to put it more bluntly: If you play chess, but you let the king move two squares in

every direction, you are not playing chess. "Statements which describe a language (or a game or an institution) are rules (are binding) if you want to speak that language (play that game, accept that institution); or rather, *when* you are speaking that language, playing that game, etc." (ibid. p.14). If you think it acceptable to take an aesthetic attitude towards vernacular objects, you are doing something, but you are participating neither in our practice of vernacular objects nor in our practice of art.

Now we come to the proverbial twist. World and reality are both ontological facts, but art is not. We have already hinted at that while discussing Duchamp's ready-mades. There is no material or ontological difference between vernacular objects and artworks. Both of them are within world, but they rely on different games, different uses, different ways of approaching and perceiving them. Art is not a structure different from our world, but a social practice, just as language, law, politics and the use of a hammer are all social practices. What we call artworks is a collection of different objects that for some reason have been singled out from vernacular objects and have been given their own social practice to participate in. Because art is a social practice, it changes with the way we play it. What counts as art can and has changed, just as has the way we approach, perceive and 'use' art. The art I talked about today would have been unthinkable 200 years ago and will probably be nothing more than a historical footnote in the art theories of the 23rd century.

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1   This paper is just a slight alteration of the talk held on Nov. 3, 2018. For obvious didactic reasons I have chosen to keep the more colloquial tone of a talk and add footnotes only where I believe that the further explication of a point might yield further insight for the reader. I see it as a way for me and for the reader to tie up some loose ends that my talk previously left unexplored.

2   I have worked out the relationship between Heidegger's early phenomenology and Shklovsky's early formalistic thoughts in greater detail in my bachelor's thesis. Further, I have used the resulting synthesis to sketch out a philosophy of art that I build on in this paper (see: Jokisch 2017).

3   Heidegger – most prominently in *Sein und Zeit* (Being and Time) (1927) – distinguishes between two modes of being when it comes to objects, *Zuhandenheit* (readiness-to-hand) and *Vorhandenheit* (presence-at-hand), as well as their corresponding modes of perception, *Umsicht* (circumspection) and *Hinsicht* (regarding). Umsicht is a form of perception that is always already aiming towards a certain use and thus reduces the objects perceived to their use, their *Bewandtnis* (involvement). The objects that appear in the mode of Zuhandenheit are called *Zeug* (paraphernalia) and they are ordered holistically around the subject based on the subject's concerns, goals, etc. The objects in our world are all already Zeug und knowing what something is means circumspectly knowing what it is for. In the case of a hammer that means: "[…] je weniger das Hammerding nur begafft wird, je zugreifender es gebraucht wird, um so ursprünglicher wird das Verhältnis zu ihm, um so unverhüllter begegnet es als das, was es ist, als *Zeug*" (Heidegger, 2006, p. 69), ["[…] the less the hammer-thing just gets stared at, the more you use it hands-on, the more primordial becomes the relationship to it, the barer it appears as what it is, as paraphernalia" (My transl.)]. The fundamental relationship you have to your world and the objects within it, is not one of just staring at them, of just regarding them, but of using them, working with them, perceiving them pragmatically since your connection to the world is a pragmatical one.

For Shklovsky it is the other way around – different, yet ultimately the same. Here – especially in his essay *Iskusstvo, kak priem* (Art, as device) (1917/1919) things are strange and noticeable at first and only gradually withdraw behind their purely pragmatic features – a process he calls *automatization*. Automatization results in a shift from the perceptional mode of *seeing* to the mode of *recognition*: "Things that have been experienced several times begin to be experienced in terms of recognition: a thing is in front of us, we know this, but we do not see it" (Shklovsky, 2015, p. 163). Although this pragmatization is an inevitable feature of perception both for Heidegger and Shklovsky, Shklovsky explicitly points towards the danger of automatization and puts this notion into the core of his theory: "This is how life becomes nothing and disappears. Automatization eats things, clothes, furniture, your wife, and the fear of war" (Ibid., p. 162). Here Shklovsky sees the *raison d'être* of art: "The goal of art is to create the sensation of seeing, and not merely of recognizing, things; the device of art is the 'enstrangement' of things and the complication of the form, which increases the duration and complexity of perception […]" (Ibid.). I have argued before (Jokisch, 2017, pp. 10-16) that Shklovsky's notion of enstrangement has to be subdivided into two different

phenomena: *discursive enstrangement* – an enstrangement not of the work itself, but of its content – and meta-discursive enstrangement – an enstrangement of the work as an in itself enstranged object. Further, I have made the case that discursive enstrangement neither is a necessary condition of art – works of abstract expressionism, for example, do not possess any content – nor a sufficient one – a scientific texts can enstrange just as much as any artistic work can (Ibid., pp. 16-20). Thus, only meta-discursive enstrangement holds relevance in my theory of art.

4   Graham Harman puts special emphasis on this fact in his interpretation of Heidegger: "At any rate, present-at-hand and ready-to-hand are not two different *types* of entities. Instead, all entities oscillate between these two separate modes: the cryptic withdrawal of readiness-to-hand and the explicit accessibility of presence-at-hand" (Harman, 2010, p. 19).

5   Both of those problems are not as clear-cut as language makes them out to be. Firstly, every bad cake is of course a cake – as is the case with all intersective and subsective adjectives (for an overview see Partee 2009) – but that does not mean that any honest attempt to produce a cake is going to result in a cake. If I leave it in the oven for too long and burn it to a crisp, I have tried to bake a cake, but failed – the result resembles a cake neither in form nor in function –, but if I leave it in the oven just a bit too long, it will be charred, yet edible, a bad cake, yet still a cake. The transition here is fluid and spans a multitude of objects where it is up for debate if they are cakes still or not cakes anymore. Secondly, an artwork is not a better version of its vernacular counterpart – if such a counterpart even exists –, but it must succeed at something that vernacular objects fail at for us to refer to it as an artwork in the first place. What that is exactly is up for debate, but it has very little to do with the distinction of good and bad as we understand it in relation to cakes, houses or coffee cups.

6   There is one big exception to this interchangeability and it resides in *sentimental* or *historical value*. Here an object becomes way more than a mere tool. It becomes meaningful as the very object it is, because of our personal connection to it and because of its history. In Paul Auster's *The Music of Chance* (1990) Flower, an eccentric billionaire, possesses a private collection of trivial historical objects like "[t]he telephone that once sat on Woodrow Wilson's desk. A pearl earring worn by Sir Walter Raleigh. A pencil that had fallen from Enrico Fermi's pocket in 1942. General McClellan's field glasses. A half-smoked cigar filched from an ashtray in Winston Churchill's office" (Auster, 2006, p. 76) and many more. What is enticing about this collection is the fact that every one of those objects is trapped between historical relevance and pure triviality. They are all barely important enough to be collected, yet they seem to carry some kind of spark that gives them a weird relevance as if they are irreplaceable objects of nearly religious importance. This is not at all surprising since they possess what Walter Benjamin calls *Aura* and which, again unsurprisingly, is the same transcendental unapproachability – "[die] einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie auch sein mag" (Benjamin, 1990, p. 479) ["the unique emergence of a distance, no matter how close it may be" (Authors transl.)] – that typically surrounds artworks and which cannot be carried over in reproduction. Benjamin's rhetoric carries the same impetus as Shklovsky's, but advances it to a critical reflection about the means of technical reproduction: "Die Entschälung des Gegenstandes aus seiner Hülle, die Zertrümmerung der Aura, ist die Signatur einer Wahrnehmung, deren "Sinn für das Gleichartige in der Welt" so gewachsen ist, daß sie es mittels der Reproduktion auch dem Einmaligen abgewinnt" (Ibid., pp. 479-480) ["The prying of the object out of its shell, the shattering of the aura, is the signature of a perception who's "sense for the uniform in the world" has grown so far that it uses the means of reproduction to extract this same sense even from unique objects" (Authors transl.)].

7   This has two restrictions. Firstly, this obviously only holds in accordance to the specific channels of a given artistic medium or as Nelson Goodman puts it, "[...] plainly not all

countless features of the work matter (not, for example, the painting's weighing four pounds or the symphony's being first performed during a rainstorm) but only those qualities and relationships of color or sound, those spatial and temporal patterns, and so on that the work exemplifies and thus selectively refers to [...]." (Goodman, 1984, p. 60) Secondly, and way trickier, there seems to exist a margin of error, a certain potential to abstract from some normally meaningful aspects of an artwork in those cases where they are obviously just mistakes of some kind. For example, in the First Vintage International Edition, August 2011, of William Faulkner's famous composite novel *Go Down, Moses* the running head of every odd page tells the name of the current story, but on page 315, the last page of *The Bear*, the fifth story of the novel, the running head reads *Pantaloon in Black*, the name of the third story. Since the composite novel is "[...] a literary work composed of shorter texts that – though individually complete and autonomous – are interrelated in a coherent whole […]" (Dunn & Morris, 1995, p. 2), the title in the running head first seems as a strategy to interrelate the stories, until you realize that a one-time use of such a device seems implausible and that this very page of *The Bear* has no significant relation to *Pantaloon in Black*. Therefore, we abstract from this oddity in the running head at this point, stripping it of all significance, since it is nothing more than an editing mistake.

8   The word *uncanniness*, purely semantically a fitting translation, misses a fundamental aspect of *Unheimlichkeit*. 'Heim' means 'home' and Unheimlichkeit, therefore, implies a fundamental concept of not-being-at-home in the world. This means an always already disrupted relation of the subject to its surrounding world, which only heightens the subjects longing to lose itself in its world: "Das beruhigt vertraute In-der-Welt-sein ist ein Modus der Unheimlichkeit des Daseins, nicht umgekehrt. Das Un-zuhause muß existenzial-ontologisch als das ursprüngliche Phänomen begriffen werden." (Heidegger, 2006, p. 189) ["The relieved-familiar being-in-the-world is a mode of the *uncanniness* of the Dasein and not the other way around. The not-at-home has to be understood as the existentially-ontologically initial phenomenon." (Authors transl.)]

9   This concept is in need of a thorough analysis. Although, this is neither the time nor the place to do so, I at least want to sketch out the basis of what I call 'epistemological horror'. It lies in the confrontation of the mind with something outside the border of experience, outside of our epistemological frame. It is an experience of the chaotic and inhuman reality that always lies behind the neatly constructed, yet fragile walls of our world. I see certain precursors of this phenomenon in the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil* and the idea of paradise lost in Genesis 2 and 3, the story of *Actaeon and Diana* (e.g. Ovid: Metamorphoses III, lines 138-252) and the notion of *curiositas* in Augustine of Hippo's writing – all instances of people getting punished for achieving (forbidden) knowledge. Yet, the phenomenon only properly developed through a step of secularization and a shift towards knowledge not being the reason for punishment, but the punishment in itself. This occurred through the failure of Enlightenment, which resulted in a problematization of knowledge as such. One of the most concise descriptions of this idea can be found in H.P. Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928): "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. [...] but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age." (Lovecraft, 2014, p. 381) Especially in literature, the concept of epistemological horror is bound to questions of the philosophy of language. How can you construct something in the abstract medium of language, a medium of understanding, if the very thing you set out to construct lies outside your means of understanding? Here literature has to use a multitude of strategies to hint within language at the frightful things forever outside of it. It rings in Kurtz' cryptic outcry "The horror! The horror!" in Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'

(1899), fills the titular object in Richard Weiner's unmatched short story *Prázdná židle* [The Empty Chair] (1916) and floats beneath the waters of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972).

10   I am especially referring to a combination of what Žižek calls the 'real Real', "[…] the horrifying thing, the primordial object […]" (Žižek, 2001, p. 82), and his notion of the Real-as-impossible, as "[…] an impossible, incestuous, self-destructive experience." (Žižek & Daly, 2004, p. 66) The Real is not in such impossible that it cannot be experienced and always eludes our grasp, but: "T*he point is not that the Real is impossible but rather that the impossible is Real. A trauma, or an act, is simply the point when the Real happens* […]. The point is that you can encounter the Real, and that is what is so difficult to accept." (Ibid. pp. 70) The Real is the frightful experience that can make itself known, but always stays impossible in that it cannot possibly be integrated into our experience. It stays an impossible actuality. I think my interest in this reading of Žižek sheds further light onto what I call 'epistemological horror.'

11   The notion of 'absurdism' has been a major topic in philosophy especially in existentialism. The broadest and most compelling statement about the absurd can be found in Sartre's *La nausée*: "Un geste, un événement dans le petit monde colorié des hommes n'est jamais absurde que relativement : par rapport aux circonstances qui l'accompagnent. Les discours d'un fou, par exemple, sont absurdes par rapport à la situation où il se trouve mais non par rapport à son délire. Mais moi, tout à l'heure, j'ai fait l'expérience de l'absolu : l'absolu ou l'absurde. Cette racine, il n'y avait rien par rapport à quoi elle ne fût absurde" (Sartre, 2015, p. 184) ["A movement, an event in the tiny coloured world of men is only relatively absurd: by relation to the accompanying circumstances. A madman's ravings, for example, are absurd in relation to the situation in which he finds himself, but not in relation to his delirium. But a little while ago I **had an experience** with the absolute or the absurd. This root – there was nothing in relation to which it was not absurd" (Sartre, 1964, p. 129, Authors changes in bold).]

12   The reason for this is obvious. Living your life like a story means living towards some kind of event that will give meaning to the whole story and end it. The imitation of a story not ending in death poses the problem of what to do with your life once the story reenacted is over. Thus, life and the story need to come to a mutual end. The classic structure, therefore, leads to an over-stylization of the life of the protagonist towards an inevitable and overly dramatic suicide. Alira Ashvo-Muñoz gives further insight into this when she says: "A life cannot be written because it is open-ended until the time of death when it assumes absence, therefore, is fictional […]" (Ashvo-Muñoz, 2016, p. 198). To complete the transformation into art means giving up on life. This is how deep the chasm between both goes.

13   The second example is borrowed from Gilbert Ryle (Ryle, 1990, p. 179), who uses it in his ingenious essay *Categories* (1938) as an example for what he calls *category-mistakes*. Both examples are nonsensical or absurd – neither true nor false –, "[…] because at least one ingredient expression in it is not of the right type to be coupled or to be coupled in that way with the other ingredient expression or expressions in it" (Ibid.). Color universals do not have a size and thus size comparison makes no sense; Saturday cannot be in bed nor anywhere else since weekdays do not have a location. These sentences, though grammatically correct, are semantically void. Well, they are most of the time. Ryle himself recognizes that "[…] many jokes are in fact type-pranks" (Ibid. p. 180), but jokes themselves are a complex form of language usage and thus still follow rules or as Stanley Cavell puts it, "Do you wish to claim that you can speak strangely yet intelligibly – and this of course means intelligibly to yourself as well – in ways not provided in the language for speaking strangely?" (Cavell, 2002, p. 31)

Emancipating Objects

On the Subversive Potential of Male Beauty[1]

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In the 1980s, radical feminist anti-porn-activists fought for a ban on pornography. One of their main criticisms was that pornography was harmful to society in that it inherently objectified women. Nowadays, many feminists have a different view, that is a more differentiated one toward the specific topic of pornography, but ever since this movement started, the fight against the objectification of women in various parts of life is a prominent part of feminist politics. However, there has been surprisingly little debate over what actually *is* objectification and what is implied by criticisms of it with regards to the evaluation of human lives. In this paper, I suggest that a considerable amount of criticisms of objectification imply an illegitimate contempt towards objects and/or a problematic understanding of what an object is.

Starting out by sketching a theory on the joint implementation of the practice of objectification and the norm of contempt toward objects in male-dominated, Western, capitalist society, I will suggest a definition of objectification which contests the metaphysics that derives from this cultural heritage. Objectification, as I understand it, is the denial or deprivation of a person's subjecthood.[2] Drawing on this definition, I defend that objectification is a universally problematic practice. At the same time, however, I insist that being an object – in contrast to being objectified – is not a universally problematic aspect of a human existence, but instead an important and inevitable part of it. In a closing remark, I will expand my thesis regarding objectification of women in a sexist society to also encompass a phenomenon which I'd like to call 'subjectification'. Feminist politics, I will argue, has an interest in sub-

verting the association of femininity and beauty/objecthood, which permeates our culture, as a means for subverting the association of masculinity and power/subjecthood.

The cultural phenomenon of objectification of women has its roots in the long history of masculine oppression. As an instrument and expression of their power, the powerful institute a number of binarisms, that is purportedly oppositional and hierarchical terms, ordered pairs, such as *male* and *female*, *master* and *slave*, *subject* and *object*, *person* and *thing*. All of these binarisms overlap and partly derive from each other, because they are collectively motivated by the same "tendency toward universality" (Wittig 1992) of that which Wittig characterises as "the straight mind" and Haraway called – among other things – "the cyclopean, self-satiated eye of the master subject" (Haraway 1991: 192). This means that, *ideally,* an individual is either male, master, subject, person, good, strong, etc. *or* female, slave, object, thing, evil, weak, etc. The word 'ideally' in this instance cannot mean anything but 'according to an idea', because in reality, obviously, things have never been just as simple. Many generations of philosophers aimed to overcome the boundaries of this world, of the body and/or being itself. I believe that that one reason for this is their uncomfortable experience that as long as you exist, as long as you have a body that is situated in a material world, you will always in some way remain a thing, in addition to being a person. And this experience of being both object and subject, slave and master, body and soul defeats the metaphysics of oppositional dualisms in general. However, this metaphysics had an important part in grounding the power of the dominating groups. So, in reaction to this threat, 'objecthood' was shunned as unworthy of a human being and supposed to be overcome; it was expelled from being a human trait and accordingly all who were considered to be objects – for example women – were expelled from being human.

Women's struggle and feminist movements obviously challenged these metaphysics, although notably in most cases only up to a certain

point. Let's take Beauvoir as an example because of her significant impact on feminist theory. Beauvoir claims the right of women for what she calls 'transcendence'. She fights against the inhibition of women's capabilities and against a culture that condemns humans who at birth are assigned the female sex to remain in 'immanence', which more or less corresponds to them remaining things, objects of men's domination and exploitation. However, while Beauvoir does advocate women's transcendence, she does not advocate men's immanence. According to Beauvoir's existentialist ethics,

> "[t]here is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the '*en-soi*' […] and of liberty into constraint and contingence. This downfall represents a moral fault if the subject consents to it; if it is inflicted upon him [*sic!*], it spells frustration and oppression. In both cases it is absolute evil." (Beauvoir 1953: lix)

Therefore, only so much as even acknowledging a person being an object, being immanent in some respect, had to be considered unethical. In her distrust, even contempt toward being an object that is looked at and acted upon by others, Beauvoir stays true to a cultural heritage of over 2000 years of hatred for – and fear from being – the powerless.

Of course, there are counter-examples in feminist movements, as well, especially in later developments.[3] Nevertheless, I think it is fair to say that most parts of our culture – including parts of feminist thought – contain at least elements of hostility toward being an object. And this is especially true, I think, for some types of criticism of objectification.

So, what is 'objectification'. Within philosophical discourse, an especially relevant account of objectification is the one given by Nussbaum (1995), in which she criticises Catharine MacKinnon's and Andrea Dworkin's radical anti-porn stance. She suggests that

> "in all cases of objectification what is at issue is a question of treating one thing as another: One is treating *as an object what is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being."* (Nussbaum 1995: 256f., italics in original)."

She then distinguishes seven different forms of objectification, characterised respectively by notions of *instrumentality*, *denial of autonomy*, *inertness*, *fungibility*, *violability*, *ownership*, and *denial of subjectivity* in someone's conduct toward another person. Remarkably, however, concluding her discussion of all seven forms, she argues that apart from the first one, "the instrumental treatment of human beings" (Nussbaum 1995: 289), "there seems to be no other item on the list that is always morally objectionable" (Nussbaum 1995: 290). For every way of treating a person as a thing, apart from treating them as a mere means to an end, she argues that there are possible and real cases where objectifying someone is not problematic.

To me it seems that there is a tension between these two claims: On the one hand, objectification is a "treating *as an object* what is really not an object" (Nussbaum 1995: 257), but on the other hand, there are cases where this inadequate conception of what you're dealing with is not actually morally inadequate. Certainly, one could argue that an epistemological or metaphysical error doesn't necessarily constitute a moral fault. But, I'd like to draw on Nussbaum's characterising of her own account as "an initial exploration of a concept whose full mapping will require many more investigations" (Nussbaum 1995: 291), and consider it as ultimately not satisfying. Although I think that Nussbaum's analysis contains several important observations, in the end it seems to me to fall prey to a misconception of what an object is – or, if preferred: of what we should consider 'an object' to be – which has been handed down to us from appropriative practices and ideologies of male, imperialistic hegemony. It is the concept of an object that can't, at the same time, be a subject of strict mutual exclusiveness of oppositional terms. I'd like to argue that in the instance of the subject/object-pair, such a conceptualisation is not convincing.

So, to start over, consider a type of advertisements, which are often charged with being sexist in that they objectify women. A product, a car for example, is being promoted and without any relation to the product,

an attractive woman is featured, and not as an expert or a consumer, but basically as decoration. For this type of ad women are generally not the target group and hence subjects, but rather an imaginary part of the product, something that is supposed to be associated with it. The ad tells you something like: "Buy this car and you also will have an attractive woman smile at you from the passenger's seat." The characteristic of objectification is the reduction of a person to a thing. It is depriving a subject of their subjecthood. Such a deprivation clearly constitutes a violation of a person's human rights, since being the subject of one's life, being a subject in general is a vital aspect of being human.

'Subjecthood', as I understand it, is not equivalent to Beauvoir's 'transcendence', although it is related. It is more closely related to 'activity' in contrast to 'passivity', but again, there is no perfect match. In the first instance, 'subject' and 'object' are relational terms; the applicability to something of one of the terms requires that there is something to which the other term can be applied. In a way, 'activity' and 'passivity' are relational terms, as well, but in another way; you can be active, without there being anything passive in relation to your activity. You are active in contrast to the possibility of yourself being passive, the contrast is 'doing something'/'not doing something' – or: 'not doing anything' – and you don't need recourse to another thing for this. Something similar can be said about 'transcendence'/'immanence': the contrast is between "expansion into an indefinitely open future" and 'stagnation'; you don't necessarily need an 'Other' for this, either. Subjecthood and objecthood are different: you can't be a subject without there being an object in relation to which you are the subject and vice versa. Now the relation – the 'kinship', if you will – between subjecthood and activity is that many acts have objects, so that the acting party is the subject of the act and the object of the act is usually passive within a description of that act. Transcendence and subjecthood are related, because you live in transcendence as the subject of your life and the world, while in immanence you make yourself susceptible to be the object of others. What is common to all three dual terms is that they don't denote stable

features or unalterable facts about a person, but rather fluent, vague and ever-changing aspects of a person's life. I wrote that objectification is "depriving a subject of their subjecthood". It would have been more precise, in the first instance, to say that it is a denial or a depriving of a *person's capability* to subjecthood. However, as Stein and Merleau-Ponty illustrated to us,[4] human beings are always fundamentally *both* subjects and objects, persons and things; there are (almost) no occasions in our lives in which we aren't in some ways instantiating both subjecthood *and* objecthood.

That is why there is more to this definition of objectification than might be obvious at first sight. Because, if it is correct, while objectification means referring to a person's 'objecthood' in a specific, reprehensible way, it is not a "turning a person into a thing", as Nussbaum puts it. It might *magnify* objecthood, but it doesn't *create* it. Objectification is a thoroughly negative act, it takes away, deprives of something. Denying someone's subjecthood doesn't 'turn' them into objects any more than depriving a specific currency of its exchange value 'turns' all its coins into metal. Therefore, I claim that on the one hand I think that objectification is indeed morally problematic in all – or at least almost all – cases; on the other hand, however, I don't think that it is a "treating *as an object* what is really not an object"(Nussbaum 1995: 257), but rather it is a treating as *only* an object, what is really not an object only.

How is this relevant to criticisms of objectification, uttered, for example, with reference to sexist advertisements? The theory of objectification suggested in this paper is stricter that Nussbaum's account, but it is reluctant to agree with, for example, radical feminists' criticisms of what they consider to be objectification. Certainly, criticisms that focus on acts of reducing people to being mere objects remain untouched by it. It does, however, cast doubt on those criticisms of objectification that consider *any* reference to a person's objecthood as demeaning. Such criticisms are not convincing, if being an object is not generally considered a bad thing. To be sure, an ad can still be sexist, even if it doesn't

feature women as mere decorations, for example if it promotes ideals of beauty or behaviour which are oppressive or demeaning to women. But it wouldn't necessarily be objectifying in such cases.

At this point, I have implied that being an object is not generally a bad aspect of human life, that it is not universally demeaning to be referred to as a thing. But perhaps this is not as self-evident, as I might have made it seem. After all, undeniably, many people and women especially suffer under demeaning practices which do refer to their objecthood. Might it not be the case that even if we cannot entirely rid ourselves from this aspect of our lives, we should still do our best to suppress it, to develop practices which only recognise the subject-half of a human being? I believe not, although I do think that we need a discourse on which practices that refer to people's objecthood are legitimate and which ones aren't. Sexist, imperialistic society as well as parts of the feminist movement shunned this aspect of our lives, but I think that we rather need to try and come to grips with it.

In order to oppose the claim that being an object is inherently harmful I will suggest that there are many common occasions where people actually enjoy their objecthood *and* where there is nothing wrong with this enjoyment. This last qualification is important, because certainly people sometimes enjoy things that are nevertheless harmful to either themselves or others. For example, some people may enjoy drinking and driving and some may enjoy torturing others, but we wouldn't justify or even encourage these actions on the grounds that they are enjoyable to the ones who perform them. And – making the matter even more complicated – I think that there actually are ways of enjoying one's objecthood that fall under this category of problematic enjoyment. For example, a seriously underweight woman might think of her skinny body as beautiful in accordance with popular ideals of beauty. She might enjoy this experience and yet, in the long term it is an unhealthy condition to be in.[5]

But I want to argue that not every case of enjoying one's objecthood is of such a kind and I will illustrate this using the example of sexual encounters. Generally, during sex we do not only enjoy being the subject of our actions and their results. There are not only the pleasures that we derive from sexual contact of which we are the author, but we also enjoy ourselves being pleasant objects to our partners and we enjoy what our partners do to us, because of their desire for us. It is necessary for this pleasure that our partners are themselves subjects who relate to us as objects. Merleau-Ponty analyses what he calls 'the sexual drama' like this:

> "Usually man does not show his [*sic!*] body, and, when he [*sic!*] does, it is either nervously or with an intention to fascinate. […] Shame and immodesty, then, take their place in a dialectic of the self and the other which is that of master and slave. […] The importance we attach to the body and the contradictions of love are, therefore, related to a more general drama which arises from the metaphysical structure of my body, which is both an object for others and a subject for myself." (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 166f.)

Note how Merleau-Ponty also engages in the mythical amalgamating of the subject/object-binarism and the master/slave-binarism. But apart from that, I think, his analysis is quite correct: During sex we permanently have a doubled experience of ourselves as objects *and* as subjects. The one may be more latent and the other more manifest at times, but both are always there. And both aspects can be enjoyable. Note how in Merleau-Ponty's description it is the body *as an object* which *both* enables me to be 'master' *and* makes me susceptible to be 'slave'. And analogously, of course, as a 'lived body', as a subject I can enjoy my capabilities to act on the one hand or feel inhibited or compelled to act on the other.[6]

For considerations of space, I only focused on sexual encounters, but I believe – as does Merleau-Ponty – that the same structure of experiencing ourselves twofold permeates our whole lives. Every social contact we engage in consists in ourselves recognizing the other and being recognized by them as both an object and a subject. And every aspect of these reciprocal relations has a risk of being hurtful and a

potential of being pleasant. So, in conclusion, there certainly are cases where enjoying one's objecthood is inappropriate – as in the case of the underweight woman – but it doesn't seem convincing to me that this is true for *every* case. Being an object and being recognised as an object are not *inherently* bad things.

The title of this paper is "Emancipating Objects: On the Subversive Potential of Male Beauty". Until now, I have made an effort to emancipate objects – or rather: objecthood – against the degrading myths deriving from Patriarchy, but I haven't addressed the second part of the title yet. I'd like to suggest the thesis that feminist politics has an interest not only in fighting the objectification of non-males, but also what I'd like to call the 'subjectification' of men. As I mean by 'objectification' the denial of someone's subjecthood, I understand 'subjectification' to be the denial of their objecthood. Masculinity is associated with an active principle, with transcendence, strength, power and *not* with being the object of something. Now, certainly, there already is a specifically male aesthetics and this might be taken as an argument against a theory of subjectification, because beauty is generally associated with objecthood. However, firstly, men's appearance is far less relevant for them in their everyday lives, than it is for women. And secondly, the prominent male aesthetics is the one of a 'capable' man, a strong, muscular or at least skilful man. Male aesthetics is derived from the impression of being able to act, to perform, in contrast to female aesthetics which rather is derived from being passive, decorative, or – as Beauvoir calls it – 'remaining in immanence'. Beauty, in the first instance, is associated with femininity.[7] Men are not usually called 'beautiful', but 'handsome', which has a connotation that is similar to 'appropriate' or 'viable', rather than 'decorative' or 'pleasing' in a sensual way. So, in a slight exaggeration, one could say that according to heterosexist thought, there is no actual 'male beauty', but only 'female beauty'. 'Male aesthetics', then, is only derived either from feminine beauty or from male capability. Men, generally, are expelled from the realm of objects.

Emancipating Objects

I think, it's important to note that, although 'subjectification' and 'objectification' are complementary terms, in several important respects they are not symmetrical to one another. First of all – and probably most importantly – subjectification in tendency grants power, rather than deprives of it. So, subjectification is not an operation of dominance that often has men as its targets, in the way that objectification is an operation of dominance that often has women as its targets. Secondly, subjectification is typically an ideological strategy of proclaiming *oneself* to be subject and only subject, while objectification typically is *imposed on others*. It is the powerful who create binarist myths that consolidate their power, and so it is men who *both* proclaim themselves to be subjects *and* women to be objects. Objectification and subjectification are not two sides of a reciprocal relation between two identities who influence one another. Rather, it is a double movement of *one* identity that at the same time influences another identity as well as itself. And as Wittig remarked, this binaristic thinking has a 'tendency toward universality' to it. I must not leave a single trace of subjecthood on yourself, in order to gain complete control. And – perhaps even more importantly – I cannot leave a singly trace of objecthood on myself, either, because that might leave room for someone else to gain control over me. What motivates this totalizing tendency is the hysterical fear of the dominator to be dominated themselves.

But although subjectification grants power, I would argue that it still constitutes a problem for men – and *because* it grants power, this problem causes more problems for other genders. Objectification deprives people of capabilities to act and consequently of the acknowledgement by others that comes with successfully performed tasks. Subjectification deprives people of opportunities to be referred to as objects and the corresponding acknowledgement. This might be illustrated by the limited attention the fashion industry grants men in contrast to the one it grants women, or the norm that it is the man who approaches the woman and not the other way round, or the general association of beauty and femininity. Men, I claim, often experience a lack of attention to

their object-side, an attention to the desire for which is common to the vast majority of humans, but has to be supressed by men in many communities. It is the desire to be loved, not for what one *does*, but for what one *is*, to be acknowledged for the opportunities one passively grants others to enjoy, rather than to be acknowledged for the tasks one successfully, actively accomplishes. This desire, I believe, systematically frustrates men and this might also provide a partial explanation for some cultural phenomena. For example, many cases of sexual harassment and violence carry with them an air of "I'm not appreciated for my objecthood, I'm not allowed to be an object, although I badly want to. So, in order to convince myself that I'm better off with *my* end of the deal, that my being subjectified actually works in my favour, I will give hell to those who I feel are allowed to be objects. I will prove to myself that being an object is a bad thing, since, as a subject, I have the power to make it one." So, while objectification is problematic because of what it does to the objectified, subjectification is problematic not only because of what it does to the subjectified, but even more so because of what its consequences can be for their potential victims.

Having started with a critique of understandings of objectification in feminist philosophy and (parts of) radical feminism, in this paper I suggested a revision of what we should consider to be an object and how we should value it. Being reduced to a mere object, I argued, is universally problematic for a person. But being an object – and being treated as such – while remaining a subject is not.[8] Rather, objecthood is an important part of most people's lives, which is why men being reduced to subjects constitutes problems both for their own and other genders' well-being.

Generations of feminist thinkers – from Wollstonecraft over Beauvoir to Wittig and contemporaries – have warned women not to let themselves be seduced by the association of femininity with agreeability and beauty, because of this association's origin in male dominance. Additionally, I claim, we should call for men not to let themselves be

seduced by the association of masculinity and power and instead admit that they too have a desire to be agreeable and beautiful. We need to rid ourselves of a culture that ridicules men for striving to please others and longing for praise for what they are, as well as for what they do. I certainly wouldn't consider this task as important as the one of ridding ourselves of a culture that not only ridicules, but inhibits and punishes non-males striving to be independent, strong and powerful. But I believe that ultimately these two tasks are inextricably linked in a future emancipatory practice. For a politics that strives to rid itself of the association of masculinity with power, it is instrumental, as well as inevitable, to rid itself of the association of femininity and agreeability. The contempt against being object derives from patriarchal dominance and fear of being powerless. But we shouldn't universally despise being powerless in the same way that we shouldn't glorify power. We should emancipate ourselves from this heterosexist, male normativity that unfortunately shaped even feminist thought.

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2   Later on, I will explain, what I mean by 'subjecthood', but I'd like to address one ambiguity of the term right at the outset. Especially in earlier times, 'subjecthood' was sometimes used to denote a person's 'being subjected to something or someone', such as a sovereign's power or a tormentor's cruelty. This is, of course, not the sense in which I am using the word. The polarity I intend is the one between the notions of 'influencing subject' and 'influenced object' – as in the case of a speech act – and not the one between a 'subject's dominator' and a 'dominator's subject'. Obviously, and interestingly, there is a certain association – although importantly not a perfect match – of the one polarity's 'object' with the other polarity's 'subject'. However, within this paper I can't go into this any further.

3   For examples, Wittig, Haraway and Butler all criticise the strict binarism of subject versus object; cf. Wittig (1992): 16-18, Haraway (1991): 197-201, Butler (1990): 4/5, 139-141.

4   Cf. Stein (1917): 44-63; Merleau-Ponty (1962): eg. 166/167.

5   It might be argued that this case wouldn't be analogous to the ones of drinking and driving and torturing, which constitute moral faults while being underweight doesn't constitute a moral fault on the part of the underweight woman. I don't intend to brush this off lightly – this might be a genuine point of discussion – but since this argument is not that relevant to the whole of my argument, I will leave it at this point with just a hint to two cases which seem to me to run counter non-analogy challenge: 1. Someone drinking and driving is really only endangering themselves, because there are no people or animals around where they do it. 2. An underweight person requires a lot of social and medical attention from people around them, because of their health being affected by their poor eating habits.

6   Against this, it has been argued that phenomenologies of sexual encounters often rather include the notion of something that could be called a 'fading of the self', abandonment in the situation. Therefore it would be inadequate to talk about a 'doubled experience of ourselves as objects and as subjects', because in these cases we would have no actual experience of ourselves, at all. I will admit that there certainly often is some kind of abandonment during sex – although I do think that it sounds strange, as well, to say that in these instances we have no experience of ourselves, whatsoever. In any case, even if there were no instances at all of sexual encounters in which we experience ourselves as subjects and as objects, it remains true, I think, that in many cases nevertheless we are both subjects and objects of activities. And we can derive pleasure or pain/frustration from these activities, whether we experience ourselves as their subjects/objects or not and this seems to be sufficient for my overall argument. I am thankful to Garrath Williams for discussion on this issue.

7   Which can easily be confirmed by means of issuing an image search for 'beauty' in any search engine.

8   On the other hand, of course, this doesn't mean that every reference to a person as an object is fine, as long as it acknowledges their subjecthood, as well. Consider the example of ads promoting problematic ideals of beauty or behaviour to women.

Male and Female Body Politics in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*

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The concept of body politics could be perceived as a very recent invention. Never before has literature concerned itself so much with the body of man, society's perception of the female and male body, and the grave expectations that are overbearing the bodies. If we are to trace what exactly body politics would suggest, it would hardly be possible to give an exact definition, as the politics concerning the body are all-encompassing; as such they are not limited to the body as a physical entity but also include the notions concerning the social, physiological, and personal perceptivity of what a man's body is. As in Roberta Sassatelli's work (2012), body politics is used to refer to both "the processes through which societies regulate the human body or use (part of) it to regulate themselves, and the struggles over the degree of individual and social control of the body, its parts and processes. […] it covers the two sides of the power-body relations: the powers to control bodies on the one side, and resistance and protest against such powers on the other" (p. 348).

Body politics, in relation to the dispossession of the body or the control exercised by society over it, is clearly a major element in Atwood's novel. The female narrator is the example of this kind of struggle of control-resistance Sassatelli is talking about. The dispossession we are witnessing is expressed in two ways of losing control over one's own body. The most obvious element is the 'branding' of the woman with the name she is given by the household she is Handmaid in; this is the first sign of taking away her freedom. I chose to use the term 'branding'

here for two reasons, the first one being the small tattoo on the ankle of the Handmaid: "Four digits and an eye, a passport in reverse. […] I am too important, too scarce, for that. I am a national resource" (Atwood, 2016, p. 101). The marking of the body shows that it has become a state-owned object that serves the need of the state for procreation. It means that the individual is no longer in possession of their own body, as they are subjugating their bodies to the state, in the case of *The Handmaid's Tale* to the Republic of Gilead. Like Deborah Hooker states in her work *(Fl)orality, Gender and Environmental Ethos of Atwood's 'The Handmaid's Tale'* (2006) by quoting Val Plumwood's *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature:* "Like nature, each woman has become a 'terra nullius, a resource empty of its own purposes or meanings, and hence available to be annexed for the purposes of those supposedly identified with reason or intellect'" (p. 287). What this means is that the female body is a territory which is available and not claimed; thus, the state can annex it and use it for its purposes as it sees fit for the development of the nation. Furthermore, because it is a state possession, its movements and actions are lawfully within the limitations or directives prescribed by the legislative power. In this case, the dispossession of the physical body is full because the whole entity has been transformed from 'terra nullius' to, in a way, a government-owned property, which is bound to the state and its premises. All members of Gilead society are unable to leave the premises of the state under no condition, except when the state deems them unwomen or corpus vile, i.e. 'worthless body'.

The second reason for the term 'branding' is the close allusion to the way of branding cattle as to show ownership, as I believe is the case illustrated by Atwood in the novel. The belief is strengthend by the narrator, who refers to herself and her tattoo as "a cattle-brand. It means ownership" (Atwood, 2016, p. 395). It is the narrator herself who establishes this allusion to animal branding. The feeling of ownership is reinforced by the attitude of the other women of the household in relation to Offred, an example being the discussion that goes on in front of her between the two Marthas – Rita and Cora – about who is going to run

the bath: "They are talking about me as though I can't hear. To them I'm a household chore, one among many" (Atwood, 2016, p. 76). This comparison to a chore, to a household item, is once again intensified by the attitude of the Wife towards the Handmaid: "Possibly she'll put a hand on my shoulder, to steady herself, as if I'm a piece of furniture. She's done it before" (Atwood, 2016, p. 121). This way of illustrating the body as furniture, as a commodity, proves the further dispossession that occurs in the attitudes towards Handmaids. It is not a single act, a single word, but recurring events if we are to take Offred's word about it. What is more, even the Handmaid's humanity is being taken away. Being a chore, a piece of furniture, proves the ownership rights of the people in the household. "I wait, for the household to assemble. *Household*: that is what we are. The Commander is the head of the household. The house is what he holds. To have and to hold, till death do us part" (Atwood, 2016, p. 124). The body politics in connection to ownership are clearly expressed in this example. The commodified female body is subjected to the possession of the Commander, something that belongs to him. Being the head of the household gives the man the right to own everything that is placed in the house, making every living being inside the property belong to the man; and it is upon him to decide what to do with his property, as the state has given him the freedom to do so. Women on the other hand do not have this freedom. In fact, women are men's property as they are part of the house. Throughout the novel we hardly see any of the women actually leaving the house, except the Handmaid, but she is rented property, which belongs to the state, and is temporarily given away. So the Wife and the Marthas are full property of the household, they are not rented by the state but are actually owned by the Commander.

In the novel the narrator talks about the dispossession of her own body, but through the description of her surroundings we can see that the ownership rights of the Commander include all the women in the household – the Wife, the Handmaid and the Marthas. All these female bodies are in his possession, but following the rules of Gilead society he

cannot claim them physically, only in words. That of course is debatable, as the women cannot form a household by themselves and need a man in order to support them financially as well as physically, because it is the Commander's presence that ensures the house's and its occupants' safety. On the other hand, we see that the women do not respond to the Commander's whims but follow the orders of the Wife. This follows the tradition that women are responsible for household matters while men work outside of the house and provide the financial means in order to sustain the ordinary life of the members of the household. This way, though the female bodies have been subjected to a male dominance in name, the matters in the house itself are under the supervision of women. In this case, we can argue that there is a partial dispossession of the body, as the word of the Wife, the head female figure in the household, is to be heard. She has a level of authority, which, though it cannot be compared to the male one, is still very powerful.

Returning to the ownership rights: While the Wife and the female servants are bodies that do stay in the household "till death do us part" (Atwood, 2016, p. 30), the Handmaid's body is owned by the Commander only for a certain period of time. "Not every Commander has a Handmaid: […] *From each*, says the slogan, *according to her ability; to each according to his needs*" (Atwood, 2016, p. 181). Both women and men are subjects to the body politics of procreation, yet it is the women who bear the biggest responsibility to follow nature's order. Female bodies are handed over from household to household, and the ownership rights change. This interchangeability proves that Handmaids are being handled as cattle, or, even more, as furniture after their service at one house expires. According to Suparna Banerjee in her study *Science, Gender and History: The Fantastic in Mary Shelley and Margaret Atwood* (2014) it is not only the objectification of the body as furniture or cattle, but "[…] an entire society geared obsessively and exclusively toward[s] baby-farming" (Banerjee, p. 58); thus, mechanizing the whole act of procreation as much as the farming industry, which works only for the rise of birth rates among cattle. This further intensifies the feel-

ing of dispossession of the body: As we get a feeling of uniformity of the female body, it becomes undistinguishable and serves only one certain purpose – procreation.

This diminution of the female individual into an object used only for procreation is exemplified in the narrator's story about Offred's life in Rachel and Leah Center or the Red Center. It follows the biblical tale of Rachel and Leah from the Book of Genesis 30 – "*Give me children, or else I die. Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? Behold my maid Bilhah. She shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her*" (Atwood, 2016, p. 138). That is the credo of the Handmaids. They are Bilhah, Rachel's maid who bears children to Jacob in her stead. And because they are Bilhah, they must bear as many children as possible – they have a sacred duty to perform. "It was our hands that were supposed to be full, of the future; which could be held, but could not be seen" (Atwood, 2016, p. 74). They are to hold, to bear the baby, but after that they lose it, they have to give it up as it is not theirs to hold – it is also property of the Commander, it will become part of the household, another thing that the Commander holds.

The dispossession and commodification of the body is also expressed in the notion towards the loss of identity and how it relates to the power relationship between the male and female body. The replacement of the given name with one that is universal for all of the Handmaids that pass through that house is in a way an objectification of the female figure as a thing to be possessed, not as a person, a someone who has free will and is in possession of their own body. Of course, the literary tradition of the woman being called by her husband's name, and in the case of the Handmaids by their Commander's, is very old and is typical for patriarchal societies, in which the role of the man is the highest-ranking in the nucleus of the family as well as in society. The man was, and in some ways still is, the breadwinner, the one to be respected, the head of the family. His words are law. The women are only to be viewed as child-bearers and housewives; they do not leave the threshold of the

house because they belong to their husband, just like all other material things in the house. As an example of this name-taking process we can take the Eastern European literary tradition in the Awakening period when the woman was almost always named in her relation to her husband, indicating her as a man's wife, e.g. in the Bulgarian literary canon Elin Pelin's *The Gerak Family* – Bozhanovitsa, Petrovitsa, respectively the wives of Bozhan and Petar. The reason for this naming process in the literary movement is that fictional women lack identity. To become a woman meant to become a wife, in which case a husband is required and the naming process occurs as it is a process of taking the name of the husband in order to form an identity. These female bodies are then just that – bodies that need to be claimed because if they do not have a given name by which they are to be called, then they do not have an identity. In his work on Greek mythology Jean-Pierre Vernant (1989) talks about the naming process. According to him

> "the individual identity has two sides: a name and a body. The given name is that one specific social scar, which is given to one person to reinforce their uniqueness in the space to which they belong. Objects, animals generally, do not have a given name. All people have that because they are people. Even those of lower origin have an individual form of existence. As Alcinous reminds Odysseus when he prompts him to say who he is: '[T]here is no man on Earth, who remains completely without a name – neither noble, nor ignoble, as far as he had been born. Everyone as they see the world are given a name from the parents' (Odyssey, VIII, pp. 552-554). In the same way the body is that which gives one's personality its identity, and in that distinguishes her through her appearance, her face, her clothing, her distinctive characters from any other among the like" (Vernant, 1989/2004, pp. 46-47, author's translation).

In the case of *The Handmaid's Tale* we have an identity that is universal for a certain type of women – the ones that can bear children. Not only do they share an identity by their purposes of existence, but also, to make them even less human, they are clad in a uniform red robes and white wings surround their heads. Vernant says that even lower people have a given name. So what is the case with those that do not have one? – They are transformed into objects or animals. Here again we go back to the previous statements that the female body of the Handmaid

is objectified in order to oppress these exceptional government-owned entities. As Vernant notes, the name is a social scar, a proof that one is part of society, that one exists within certain groupings of people. Then what happens to the Handmaid who does not have a name? Would this mean that being a Handmaid means not being part of society? If we are to understand Offred's words correctly, that is exactly what it means – Handmaids are not part of society. They might have the identity of child-bearers, but they are seen only as wombs that are to bear children. "[…] [E]ven those with lower origin have an individual form of existence" (Vernant, 2004, p. 46, author's translation) remarks Vernant in his work *L'individu, la mort et l'amour. Soi-même et l'autre en Grèce ancienne*, then the Handmaids are positioned even lower than those with low origin. They do not have rights, just one sole obligation which, if they failed to fulfill it, would result in their death.

The state power over the body politics of society does not limit itself only to the possession of walking wombs but also to the notion of the sacred superiority of the phallus. The cult of the phallus in connection with the dispossession of the body is more closely explored during the so-called Ceremony, when the Commander has intercourse with the Handmaid while the Wife is holding the Handmaid's arms:

> "My red skirt is hitched up to my waist, though no higher. Below it the Commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love, because that is not what he's doing. Copulating too would be inaccurate, because it would imply two people and only one is invested. Nor does rape cover it: nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice but there was some, and this is what I chose" (Atwood, 2016, p. 146).

From the way the Ceremony is described in the novel we can see that neither of the parties is willingly participating in this act, but it is the Handmaid's job to bear children – that is actually her only job, that is the reason she is a Handmaid. The female body is regarded only as fertile body that bears children and nothing more. The act of reproduction is an act that concerns only the body, there is no need for love, no need for emotions or identities. The only things that matter are the semen

and the womb. This allusion is taken by Carolyn Merchant in her book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (1990), in which she writes about the Aristotelian approach towards the female body: "[T]he female provided only the matter, while the active principle was attributed to the male semen…the theory of man as parent and the woman as incubator" (p. 157). According to this, we can conclude that the cult of the phallus is taken to a sacred level in the society of Gilead. The man is the only parent, the only active participant in the procreation process.

The female body is also defined merely by its reproductive organs, and that is her only reason for existence. This definition of the vagina as an incubator only, a place of hollow space for the embryo to rest in, is also shown by the narrator herself in the changed perception of her body:

> "I used to think of my body as an instrument, of pleasure, or a means of transportation, or an implement for the accomplishment of my will. … I'm a cloud, congealed around a central object, the shape of a pear, which is hard and more real than I am and glows red within its translucent wrapping. Inside it is a space, huge as the sky at night and dark and curved like that, though black-red rather than black. Pinpoints of light swell, sparkle, burst and shrivel without it, countless as stars. Every month there is a moon, gigantic, round, heavy, an omen" (Atwood, 2016, p. 115).

The body, which was once a very solid shape, an instrument that the woman could use and control however she liked, is now concentrated around one pear-like form. The pear is a euphemism for the vagina, that grows red, the color of fertility, the menstrual cycle, which stays as an omen, a heavy duty that the society has imposed on the woman, and the pear witnesses month after month its own failure to bear fruits and fulfill the role that society, the household or nature has given to women. The Handmaid is defined by her vagina, that is the only identity she has in the society of Gilead. The vagina feels more real than the person herself. The narrator depicts herself as a cloud, very ephemeral, unstable, while the 'pear' is hard and real, and inside it there is a huge spatiality, unlimited, unperceivable. It also glows red, a very clear sign

of fertility, and is closely connected to the Handmaids' clothing, which is also red, and singles them out in the crowd of blue, green and black.

"We are containers, it's only the insides of our bodies that are important" (Atwood, 2016, p. 150). While Offred alludes here to the Handmaids, which is very logical as she can only give the Handmaid's account as the procreative female body, one cannot but think also of the Commanders. The cult of the phallus is also in a way commodified in *The Handmaid's Tale*. Sex, love making, or fucking, however we call it, is no longer an act of arousal or pleasure but has been turned into a mere technicality, a duty one must perform: "Arousal and orgasm are no longer thought necessary; they would be a symptom of frivolity merely, like jazz garters or beauty spots: superfluous distractions for the light-minded. Outdated. […] They are so obviously recreational. This is not recreation, even for the Commander. This is serious business. The Commander, too, is doing his duty" (Atwood, 2016, p. 148). Pleasure is outdated, it is a frivolity, penis and vagina are just instruments, not organs of pleasure. The whole social structure and religious connotations are built around these two organs. The narrator cannot comprehend how society used to spend so much time worrying about sex, thinking about it, and writing about it. That would be a waste of time. The copulating act should be, according to the narrator's present society, limited to only once a month and be purposeful. Men should not waste their semen to the useless vagina. That way they are using precious material, the seeds that need to be planted for a child to be born. Of course it is the phallus that takes the superior role, as without the semen, the womb cannot be filled and bear fruits. To be a man is not an easy role, it bears a lot of responsibility but also oppression. A man, just like a woman, cannot enjoy the whims of his sexual organs but is subjected to the once-a-month Ceremony, which it would seem is unable to quell his desires.

> "To be a man, watched by women. It must be entirely strange. To have them watching him all the time. […] To have them putting him on, trying him on, trying him out, while he himself puts them on, like a sock over a

foot, onto the stub of himself, his extra, sensitive thumb, his tentacle, his delicate stalked slug's eye, which extrudes, expands, winces, and shrivels back into himself when touched wrongly, grows big again, bulging a little at the tip, travelling forward as if along a leaf, into them, avid for vision. To achieve vision in this way, this journey into a darkness that is composed on women, a woman, who can see in darkness while he himself strains blindly forward. […] Still, it must be hell, to be a man, like that. It must be just fine. It must be hell. It must be very silent" (Atwood, 2016, p. 136-137).

It is difficult, from this quote, to define who has the superior hand in this sexual duality. The man blindly tries to reach the woman, the dark space inside of her, but he is blind, unable to see through the complexity of the woman's body and soul, while the woman on the other hand is more perceptive, is the guide to her own body. The man, who is supposed to bear the heavy role of the sole parent according to the Aristotelian model, is very much limited by his penis, which turns out to be very whimsical, as the quote suggests. It is shy and "shrivels back into himself" (Atwood, 2016, p. 136), it needs special touch or stimulation in order to fulfill its role, and we can speculate that the man is unsure of how to use it in order to reach a woman's vagina. The woman on the other hand is described as guide, as someone who is very well aware of all her body parts and knows them well enough to show the man what he has to do. In this case, we can say that the incubator takes the dominating role while the provider of semen is very much submissive and reduced to the stimulation of the penis.

And not only is the penis whimsical, it is also very much dependent on the womb. For the procreation policy of Gilead the man, and by extension the phallus, must wait until the fertility period of the woman, for the womb to be ready to be filled. "It is my fault, […] Not mine, but my body's. Even the Commander is subject to its whims" (Atwood, 2016, p. 12). Again, while the sole parent might be the penis, the incubator takes on the dominating role, as the phallus must follow its whims. Only when the vaginal is ready, is then the phallic able to perform its sacred duty. The act of copulation is also described by the narrator as an act of fertilization, as is the bee pollinating the flowers. It is an in-

teresting comparison, as the bee is the active participant in the act of fertilization. Once more the female is being described as the passive participant, only waiting for the semen. This intensifies the feeling of social responsibility of the male – that would be the expectation to perform. In his research on manhood, David D. Gilmore collects evidence of the social expectations of masculinity. In his book *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (1990), Gilmore explains that if a man is unable to perform, that would bring shame to him and the society he is part of. Not only that but if he is not serving, that is if he is not doing his duty and filling women with his semen, his existence bears no meaning – "Pobrecito, no sirve pa' na' (poor guy, he's totally useless)" (p. 35).

Of course, in *The Handmaid's Tale* we do not see this male weakness of the sort, as the narrator is female and she can only provide her part of the story. The Commander, along with Nick, a Guardian, are the only two male figures that Offred can provide us with, and it is still her visualization of them that we get.

As a conclusion of this paper I would like to offer a summary of the sorts of the problems discussed. Atwood's novel is quite controversial in that the feminist movement has claimed the novel to be a purely feminist one, as it explores the question of the female body and the injustices that women suffer in the face of the social expectations for procreation. The author herself has on numerous occasions during interviews rejected the claim that her work is a feminist one, and by exploring both the female and male body politics in this paper, I would suggest that she was right in her statement. Of course I do not wish to put words into Atwood's mouth and claim that her purpose was to show both the male and female injustices and heavy expectations. In the process of exploring the novel and the themes related to body politics, I have reached several conclusions. First of all, the question of the female body as being only an incubator for the fetus has been explored on numerous occasions by other authors and has proved that the Aris-

totelian view is still very much applicable. Women are still regarded as housewives, mothers, someone who can fulfill men's sexual appetites. The woman is still defined by her vagina, by fertility and is still in many cases just like Offred – she subjects herself to the role she is given by society and which, if she fails to fulfill it, will mark her as corpus vile, i.e. 'worthless body', devoid of meaning and left to rot. The second point I wish to emphasize here is that man can also become corpus vile, empty of meaning, if he does not fulfill his role of the sole parent, the provider of God's seed and the father of humankind. The Commander fails month after month to prove his seed's worth, which is why his place is taken by Nick, who proves himself worth of the role God and society have given him – in this case man as the epitome of what a man should be. At the end of the novel, we do find out that the Commander has met his demise because he was not man enough to serve society. At the end of this paper I want to conclude that Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is a very clear example of tracing the historical account of society's division of male and female responsibilities. The work might be shocking, some might even say exaggerating, but it does not show anything new – in fact what Atwood describes is something with a very long tradition in society, and our role as scholars and humans is to make sure that social expectations cease their oppressive role on both male and female bodies, and we should strive to break away from 'the old thinking' of a what is man and woman.

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Men Read Literature – Women Read Women's Books

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1. Introduction

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie pointed out in her opening speech at the Frankfurt Book Fair 2018 that, "we know from studies that women read books by men and women but men read books by men" (Buchmesse, 2018, min. 11:25-11:33). Of course, we were furious that this great writer and fighter for human rights had stolen our speech, but actually, we were very happy to see that this topic, that means a lot to both of us, is discussed on this international level. And we hope to make our contribution with this paper.

We believe that books as cultural goods reflect society and, at the same time, are able to influence it. Books can teach us empathy because we take in different perspectives and relive emotions, thoughts, and decisions of others (Kidd & Castano, 2013). That is why it is so important that literature does not reproduce prejudice and stereotypes. Since we noticed the exclusion of certain groups of people from certain kinds of literature both in our academic and our working context, we decided to point this out in our text. Our paper argues in favor of the hypothesis that the book industry, as well as the educational and cultural context, are still reinforcing constructed, stereotypical gender roles by reproducing outdated gender norms and unrepresentative gender concepts.

To support this thesis, the first part of this paper will focus on the literary canon[1] to point out that it is still highly dominated by male authors. This contributes to the belief that books by men are literature worth reading while marginalizing books by women. Although it seems

to be an old and disproved stereotype that books by female authors are inferior, the analysis of different canons will emphasize that they encourage this stereotype on an implicit level and therefore reinforce gender inequality. For example the Nobel Prize of Literature is often seen as a kind of international literary canon and the fact that the 116 laureates only include 15 female writers gives the impression that books by women are comparably inferior. The reading lists analysed in chapter 3 will further support this impression of inequality.

Literary canons in education and culture demand generality and therefore implicitly deny the significance of titles and more general genres, that are underrepresented or left out (see chapter 3). This is where the first part links into the second of our argument that the classification 'women's literature' and the genre 'chic lit', declared as exclusively female, are almost left out in the canon. The following analysis will show that the underrepresentation in canons and the genre classification contribute to the stereotype that exclusively 'female topics' exist which are of no interest for men. Literature can help to improve empathy for others by experiencing a different perspective, but we want to show that the premise of 'female topics' can lead to exclusion that spoils the male readers from experiencing a 'female' perspective and overcoming stereotypes while teaching them that it is not as important as the 'male' glance.

In a merging of our two parts, we want to point out that both male and female readers are being guided in a stereotypical way by the literary context. While reading literature sounds inclusive, it opposes and therefore leaves out a majority of 'women's literature'. This term already points out the intention of the classification. It is meant to speak solemnly to a female audience, that is guided to read those books in order to learn about problems that are specifically 'female'. Men, on the other hand, are not targeted by this form of literature, which causes the observation both Adichie and our title referred to. It can be argued that this takes away the possibility of dealing with the problems of a

large group of individuals in order to learn that we might not be that different despite gender labels. Therefore, we will conclude that instead of encouraging the readers to scoop the potential of literature to draw people closer together, there are restrictions of the educational and cultural context separating the readers into stereotypical target groups.

2. Gender

The reason why we talk about men and women in our paper is not because we believe in the existence of only two genders. We understand gender as a construct that does not represent reality. Since we focus on the book market of German and English literature as well as the literary academic context in Germany, we use these gender ascriptions because they are standard in those contexts. Still, it is our aim to point out that this understanding of gender reproduced in this discourse is far from reality and should be disestablished.

We are aware that there are more aspects to keep in mind when it comes to discrimination such as social status or ethnicity. But as we have limited time and space here as well as no first-hand experiences, we decided to focus on gender and hope to come back to these other aspects in another context.

3. Literary Canon

In order to analyze the canon, it is necessary to explain what the canon exactly is and how it is formed. The basic idea of a canon, that comes to mind, is that the literary canon is like a list of books you have to read to be seen as educated or well-read (Engel, 2007).

Etymologically the term is derived from theology. According to *Duden Fremdwörterlexikon* (2007, p. 502) canon means an "irreversible list of texts accepted by a religious group" (author's translation). According to Ricarda Schmidt (2007) these texts were necessary to be read to be a part of your community. Today it is different. *Canon* does not only apply to theology and it is not as strict anymore, but the basic

assumption stays the same. The first things associated with canon are hierarchy, doctrine, and a strict contrast between belonging and not belonging. So, in simple words, it means everything that is canon is good and respected, everything that is not canon is not and therefore does not offer the same level of quality as canon texts (Schmidt, 2007).

In *Kanon – pragmatisch* (2007) Manfred Engel tries to answer the question if there really is the one and only canon everybody has to follow. According to him, there are different canons, his main point is "Kanones existieren – der Kanon existiert nicht" ("Canons exist, but the canon does not", author's translation) (Engel, 2007, p. 25). So, every person has more than one canon to rely on, some of them are intentional and others not, some of them are explicit in form of aforementioned lists and others are non-explicit. An example for non-explicit canon are the questions in quiz-shows which are based on books, when these books are chosen to form a question, they are granted a level of general publicity, which indicates that knowing them is part of the general knowledge (Engel, 2007).

The form of explicit canons is easily explained and can be manifested in form of lists. Lists, which are given to students all over the world, naming all the books they have to read in order to graduate. Canons are used in schools and universities and fulfill an important role in every subject, though this essay focuses on the canon used in literary studies.

The next important question to answer in order to analyze a canon and to explain the problems within is: What is the basic function of a literary canon? Why is it needed?

Ulrich Greiner (2002) attempts an answer in his article *Weshalb wir einen literarischen Kanon brauchen* ("why we need a literary canon", author's translation). To him, canon passes on a kind of a cultural memory. In his opinion, every person needs to know their past in order to have a basis for a future and one possibility to learn about this past is to read the literary canon of your society, which almost every time is formed of historic texts. These historic texts were selected because of

their quality to be passed on to the next generation. So, one of the basic functions of the literary canon is to select and collect certain texts to preserve them for the future (Greiner, 2002).

The difficulty with this is, when this expectation is put on the canon, the canon is granted a great deal of trust to convey truth and facts about history. But literature is still a form of art and, even though it is true that through art knowledge is passed on, it is important not to forget that this is just a small part of the knowledge available and this knowledge is influenced by the perspective of the artist. So, no form of art can ever give an utterly true report of the past.

Beside this point, there is another critical aspect of the canon when it comes to its assigned importance. If you take a closer look at the canon – or maybe the different canons – we have at the moment, they are all dominated by male authors.

To back up this assumption a closer look on different canons is necessary. For this essay the analyzed canons were researched in form of reading lists of schools or suggestions from different critics.

The first analysis is based on a reading list for students of German philology at the University of Würzburg accessible through their website (Leseliste für Germanistikstudenten). The list also concentrates on the so called 'newer German literature' which includes titles written around the 16th century. The chosen time period ends in 1980, since "a reasonable canonization for the current literature is not possible" (author's translation) (Universität Würzburg, 2018), why this impossibility occurs is not explained. The list is divided in five categories starting with number one: novel, epic and autobiography. This category consists of 61 titles from which only one is written by a woman: Ingeborg Bachmann's *Malina*. The other 60 titles are all written by men and often there is more than one title from the same author. For example, Kafka is listed with three titles and Goethe with two.

The second category is called narratives and novellas and consists of 43 titles. Two are written by women. Again, Ingeborg Bachmann

made the list with *Undine geht* and the other female author is Annette von Droste-Hülshoff with the novella *Die Judenbuche*. Also, there are the same authors listed as in the first category. We do find Goethe and Schiller again and also Kafka is listed with two different titles.

Drama is the third category in which 61 titles are collected, not a single one of them written by a woman. But again, we have some male authors represented with multiple titles like Goethe with four different titles, or Lessing also with four separate books. Another interesting fact is, that there are books featuring a female protagonist like Lessing's *Miss Sara Sampson* or Schiller's *Maria Stuart* just not written by a female author.

The fourth category is lyric with 27 titles, in which case title does not mean specific poems but often collections of them. In this listing, we find one female author Marie Luise Kaschnitz with *Steht noch dahin* also a collection of poems. And again, there are the same male authors as in the former three categories like Goethe, Rilke or Brecht.

The fifth category is called poetics and lists different titles concerning theories of lyric, narratives etc. The category contains 60 titles none of which written by a woman.

A short summary of all five categories shows a total of 252 titles of which only four are written by female authors and since Ingeborg Bachmann was listed twice only three women made the list in general. Spoken in percentage: 1,6% titles of the list were written by women. In comparison Goethe himself is listed ten times which results in a percentage of 3,97%.

The University of Trier published a similar list containing a total of 605 titles. They categorized the titles not by genre but by time period and so there are three big categories with smaller sub-categories (*Trierer Leseliste*).

The first time period contains titles from 1400 to 1830. 200 titles are listed and four of them are written by women. The second period starts at 1830 and lasts until 1945. With 259 titles it is the biggest

category. 13 titles are written by women with similar authors to Würz-burg's list like Annette von Droste-Hülshoff and Marie Luise Kaschnitz. Whereas this is also true for the male authors – in general there is a great similarity between these lists. The last time period starts in 1945 and lasts in theory until today, but the most recent title is from 1999. There are 146 titles listed, which is the smallest number, but also the category with most female authors. Of these 146 titles 35 are written by female authors which results in a percentage of 23%. This was the highest percentage found within the research for this paper.

The whole list contains 605 titles of which 52 were written by female authors and certain authors – both male or female – were listed more than once. 52 out of 605 constitutes a percentage of 8,6% titles written by female authors. In comparison the titles by Goethe were counted again. He is listed with 22 titles which results in a percentage of 3,6%. One man alone contributed only 30 titles less to a list than a group of 31 female authors.

The last university we looked into was the one of Mainz. The department of German philology does not have a suggested reading list on their website, so the book *Was sollen Komparatisten lesen?* (Lamping & Zipfel, 2005) was analyzed. Like the lists from the other universities it is a printed list with the suggested literature you should read if you study the subject of comparative literature. The list is categorized based on the languages the listed literature is originally written in. Since the division in individual languages is very detailed, the presentation is based on the continents. There were 238 titles listed which originated from Europe. Of these titles seven were written by woman resulting in a percentage of 2,9%.

North and South America combined were listed with 37 titles two of them written by women, which results in a bigger percentage than the one of the European titles – one of 5,4%.

From Asia 20 titles were listed, only one of them written by a female author, which totals in 5%.

Australia leads in the percentage of books written by female authors with a total of 50%. Two titles were listed from Australia and one was written by a woman.

The problem in counting these titles was that there were some where the author was anonymous. These titles were left out in the final count since there is no way to be sure which gender the author represented. So, there are actually four titles more in the European literature.

Not only were literary titles listed, but also theoretical texts. 153 theoretical texts are suggested of which seven were written by female authors representing a percentage of 4,6%.

Without the anonymous titles, 450 books are suggested for the students of comparative literature, 19 of which are written by female authors resulting in a percentage of 4,2%. Additionally, there is one other list to be mentioned, which is printed in this book. It is called *The 20 Indispensable*, it can be seen like a summary of all the other lists since these are no new titles. Not one of these essential books is written by a female author, but two male authors are represented with two titles each. These are Sophocles with *Antigone* and *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare with *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*.

These three were examples based on an academic background, the first two were randomly selected as they were the first results in a simple online search. To gain a more significant insight, further analysis of more reading lists and suggestions needed. It is not an established proof that all reading lists everywhere lack profoundly in the representation of female authors, but these are two randomly selected lists and one is selected because of the personal connection between the authors and the university. So, there was no ploy to find the canons with as few female authors as possible to prove a point. But these three examples show something because of their randomness, namely that there is little consciousness for the lack of female authors. Otherwise these three lists would not be so similar to each other.

Putting behind the academic context, one other example was researched. Which was the curriculum of a German high school covering school years five to twelve, but the list only gives suggestions for classes five to ten. The list is divided in three parts, the first one being suggestions for classes five and six. 16 titles are listed, although the use of the word 'title' is difficult in this context since there are also fairy tales and myths listed. So, after leaving them out because generally there is no author given, there are nine specific titles. Two of them are written by a woman – the same woman: Astrid Lindgren is listed with *Ronia, the Robber's Daughter* and *The Brothers Lionheart*. In this list 22% of the titles were written by a female author.

For the years seven and eight 84 titles are listed, twelve of them written by a woman, which results in a percentage of 14,3% of female authors. The amount of titles is increased again in the years nine and ten, but the share of female authors does not increase proportional to it. Out of 136 titles 15 are written by women, which results in a percentage of 11% (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium, 2006).

Since there are doubling of titles between the lists, they were all analyzed separately and not treated as one combined list. But one general tendency occurs: As the students get older there are fewer women on the reading list. A trend that continues if you look at the academic reading suggestions. So, you could say that with the level of education getting higher, there are fewer woman deemed worthy to be read.

So, every one of these lists claim that they are not universal and that they have to leave out more titles than they can include. This is understandable and sensible, but they also claim that this selection is not based on quality but on pragmatism. But for pragmatism there have to be reasons and in overwhelming majority these reasons resulted in the choosing of male authors over female authors.

Engel (2007) states in his article that reading lists like these are merely a distinction between obligatory reading and additional, voluntary reading. This argument is problematic because it signifies a differ-

entiation between levels of importance granted for different books. If no one thinks that these books on these lists are more important than others, there would be no point in having those lists and every student could choose what to read for themselves and every teacher could choose what to assign to their students without consulting those lists. But since these reading suggestions exist, there has to be some sort of criteria and as the situation is now, this criterium favors a male point of view in literature.

When these circumstances are linked to the functions of the canon, a great discrepancy is to be discovered.

According to the school curriculum analyzed above the function of the canon and the chosen literary examples should help students – all students male and female – to socialize in society, gain insight and understanding in, and of the historical aspects of their culture and the literature should also help them in developing their own identities (Kultusministerium Niedersachsen, 2006) How can this be possible when the chosen examples exclude the point of view of female authors? The percentage of female authors in these lists does not represent the percentage of female students in schools or universities – and certainly not in studies concerning literature.

Engel (2007) states that the critic of the given canon is obsolete and that everybody can chose for themselves what to read. Lists like these are just a basic requirement to be seen count as well read. But what impression will female authors get, when they are basically told that reading their stories is not a basic requirement in school or elsewhere. How can girls be expected to rely on the help of literature to develop when at the same time they are shown that the required base lies predominantly in the male point of view and their stories?

The responsibility to gain other perspectives than the required ones should not lie only in the individuals because they also will reproduce the social structures deeply rooted in our thinking. The responsibility to change the canon, the reading lists, and the idea of the basic

requirement should be in the hands of the so-called experts who actively reproduce and teach it. It should be easier for them to define new selective criteria and a new more diverse canon.

To help gain a more diverse canon, we also need to abolish the separation of literature based on the gender of the author. The next part of this essay will focus on this constructed separation and explain the background and the problems with it. A reason why female authors are excluded from canon lies in the marginalization of their books as inferior and not of universal interest. This separation is enforced through the so-called category 'women's literature' explained in the following chapter.

4. Women's Literature

The majority of relevant dictionaries declare the term 'women's literature' – as well as the German term 'Frauenliteratur' – outdated and problematic (Becker-Cantarino, 2002, p. 123). However, this term did not always have a negative connotation. After first being used as genre classification by literary historians in the 19th century (Gnüg, Möhrmann, 1999), it was feminist literary criticism that transferred this term to describe often marginalised and underrepresented books by female authors during the 1960s and 1970s. Still, it kept its pejorative connotation which made many female authors want to distance themselves from it (Becker-Cantarino, 2002). Besides other economic and social restrictions, many female authors published their books under male pseudonyms to avoid this prejudgement as well (Kroll, 2010). While authors like the Brontë sisters later become famous despite the male pseudonyms they used, other identities of female authors might have never been revealed. Therefore, feminist literary criticism seeks to point out these excluding factors for female authors during history and try to canonise these authors left out because of their gender.

Due to feminist literary criticism, 'women's literature' finally became a collective term that included books 1.) written by women,

2.) focused on a female audience[2] and/or 3.) taking a female perspective instead of a genre (Becker-Cantarino, 2002). Although this feminist movement contributed to the increasing number of female authors within the literary canon (Kroll, 2010, p. 48ff.), it also enforced the separation of literature based on gender. These three aspects of women's literature show that it is categorised by its femininity. This leads to the assumption that books by or about women include factors that distinguish them from books by men (and vice versa). This notion reinforces the belief in gender difference it is based on. Concerning this, Susanne Opfermann (1996) remarks: "Gender difference in literature encourages the hierarchization of literature by gender"[3] (p. 82). This illustrates that this strict separation by gender is not only unrepresentative, it is a ranking. Women's literature is distinguished by its lack of universality and seen as a separate and unequal partner to male dominated general literature. Since, apparently, they are only meant to speak to a limited audience, these books are seen as inferior – they do not deal with the topics of public interest.

When it comes to a specific focus on a female audience, it is assumed that so called 'women topics' exist. As Opfermann (1996) says, „Literature by women […] is homogenised throughout the female gender and taken in a female sphere"[4] (p. 81). Hence this definition of the term 'women's literature' contributes to the belief of gender and gender difference as 'natural' circumstances instead of a construct.

The usage of this term separates women's literature from literature in general. Apart from the sense of purpose of such a division – this segregation is one-sided. It does not separate literature by and for women from literature by or for men. There is no such thing as a specific 'men's literature' since texts by male authors always belonged to literature without the necessity of pointing out the gender of the authors (Kroll, 2010). Therefore, this is no consequent separation by gender. It is simply an exclusion of a group of authors based on their gender.

But why is a term that most literary dictionaries call outdated still relevant today? Because it is still used. While it is avoided in most academic contexts (although the neglect of female authors is not), the book industry still uses it to classify its books and therefore influence a much broader audience. Analysing the webpages of German as well as British publishing houses we find that this categorisation is still very popular. Arrow, an imprint of Penguin Random House UK presents itself as covering "Bestselling women's fiction authors" (Penguin Random House, 2018) while Random House Germany lists "Frauenunterhaltung" meaning "entertainment for women" as a genre (Verlagsgruppe Random House Bertelsmann, 2018). Of course, those are just two examples that may not be representative for two very large book markets. But as one of the biggest publishing groups, Random House has a huge impact on cultural standardisation. A larger analysis would be very useful to detect the extent of this classification, but for this paper I (S. J.) preferred to focus on the spread of different types of literature mediators. Libraries also use this outdated classification as catchphrase within their library system. This can be proven by the city library of Mainz. Here the catchphrase "Frauen" ("women", author's translation) results in a list of books involving novels by author Nora Roberts and is presented as "Interessenskreis" ("category of interest", author's translation) (Öffentliche Bücherei Mainz Anna Seghers, 2018). Also, the social cataloguing website Goodreads uses the genre classification "women's fiction", including 119,761 books as well as "chicklit", including 1,010,374 books (Goodreads, Inc., 2018). This example illustrates how this structure is rooted within the book industry and reproduced by literature mediators. They influence the readers to adapt these marginalising genre classifications by normalising them.

I do not want to state that this influencing is done maliciously. Just like every other stereotype it is simpler, although they can never be representative of a whole group of people. The negative effect of such general resentments against 'women's literature' is that they are not mere theoretical constructs but concepts that are (consciously or sub-

consciously) fixed within people's minds. This becomes obvious for most people working within the book industry. For example, booksellers from Waterstones in Uxbridge shared their experience with costumers on social media in May 2018. They emphasised that male customers tell them "they don't read women" (Clossett, 2018, paragraph 3) once or twice a month. For female costumers they do not remember the same remark when it comes to books written by men. Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett (2018) states in her article *You cannot be 'well read' without reading women* for *The Guardian* that, "[f]emale readers do not have the same myopia, perhaps because male authors claim a universality of which women writers tend to steer well clear" (paragraph 6). As most of the books by women are classified as 'women's literature', it is not that easy for female authors to claim this universality as it is for their male colleagues. These books are often pegged as more limited and - as the analysis of 'chic lit' is going to show - marketed as a niche product. Therefore, the literary context and the book industry are responsible for this exclusion and stigmatisation that leads to a misunderstanding of the quality and abilities of literature on behalf of the readers.

5. Chick Lit

'Chick lit' is a quite recent and young genre on which opinions differ. Lauren Baratz-Logsted (2006) correctly observed its ambiguity: "[…] I cannot remember a single instance of a genre being as widely reviled, while at the same time being as wildly popular, as chick-lit" (p. 2). Although books that fit this genre classification are almost globally successful, some language areas, such as the German speaking one, still have no pendant to the term 'chick lit' and simply classify these books as 'women's literature' in general. Still, these books share distinct characteristics distinguishing them as a subcategory to the collective term 'Frauenliteratur' (Peitz, 2010). Therefore, I (S. J.) will talk about German 'chick lit' because, although it might not be labelled that way in Germany, it is treated just the same. That chick lit is a much narrower construct than 'women's literature' can already be detected from its de-

sign. The cover design for both English and German 'chick lit' is very similar and schematically. The design makes the label 'chick lit' become obvious at first sight (Peitz, 2010). But more so than with women's literature the context of the term 'chick lit' shows perfectly the influence the book industry - in cooperation with the media - has over the reception of literature when it comes to gender. To illustrate this thesis, I would like to start with a personal anecdote:

Although I am a Master's student of comparative literature, I never heard of a genre called 'chick lit' during my studies. Neither did my professor when I first decided to research this topic. The first time I've heard about this genre was at my job in a bookstore. I offered my help to a customer and in order to recommend something suitable I asked what she would like to read. She noticed my irritation when she said: 'No chick lit please', so she explained: 'You know those trashy girl novels. I want something well written and not too plain'.[5] My first impression of the genre was shaped by a decidedly negative definition and set place in a non-academic context. As the Waterstones booksellers proved with their own testimony, this opinion is no isolated case when it comes to customers in bookshops (Clossett, 2018). To understand how the label 'chick lit' enforces these gender stereotypes in literature, I will first give a definition.

5.1 Origin and Definition of the Term

Cris Mazza claimed to have first introduced the term 'chick lit' 1995 together with Jeffrey DeShell in their anthology *Chick-Lit. Postfeminist Fiction*. They used the term ironically for feminist texts that focus on a critical view of female role ascription (Mazza 2006). Thereby, their intention was very similar to the one of the literary feminist critics who transferred the term 'women's literature': they wanted to draw attention to marginalised female authors. In *Chick-Lit. The New Women's Fiction*, Cris Mazza (2006) explains that her memory of her high school English class influenced her decision to title their anthology *Chick-Lit*:

"Eleventh-grade American Literature introduced me to exactly two female characters, both dealing with accusations and convictions having to do with sex: Hester Prynne (convicted adulteress in *The Scarlett Letter*, written by a man) and Abigail Williams (adulteress in *The Crucible*, written by a man)." (p. 27)

The title choice was actually the result of frustration with a male dominated literary canon. It was the attempt to give female authors the chance to speak about women and female role ascriptions from a female perspective. Mazza (2006) wanted to contribute to the feminist literary criticism she noticed in the '70s and point out the shortcomings:

"writers with double-X chromosomes have been set apart, frequently called "women writers" while the others remain, simply, wholly, "writers." What these women writers produce has been "women's fiction", and the rest, unconditionally, is "fiction" (or even "literature"). The translation to me always has been that men write about what's important; women write about what's important *to women*." (p. 27f.)

Mazzas anthology was meant to point out the indefensibleness of this separation while its title was meant to raise awareness for this "second-class differentiation" (Mazza, 2006, p. 28). Therefore, the motivation for constituting chick lit is almost analogous to the one of women's literature. And just like women's literature chick lit turned into a term more negatively connoted. In the years following 1995 chick lit developed into a genre containing a – as Elizabeth Merrick (2006) puts it – formulaic form and content:

"[…] white girl in the big city searches for Prince Charming, all the while shopping. Alternately cheating on or adhering to her diet, dodging her boss, and enjoying the occasional teary-eyed lunch with her token Sassy Gay Friend. 'chick lit' is the daughter of the romance novel and the stepsister of the fashion magazine. Details about race and class are almost always absent except, of course, for the protagonist's relentless pursuit of Money, a Makeover, and Mr. Right." (p. vii f.)

This definition barely disguises Merrick's contempt of the genre. Its formulaic structure and the comparison to the non-literary fashion magazine reveals Merrick's value judgement of the genre.

Lauren Baratz-Logsted (2006), self-described author of chick lit, expressed her outrage regarding Merrick's definition in her introduction to *This is Chick-Lit*. As a counterpart to Merrick's collection and intended as a positive example of chick lit, Baratz-Logsted defines her anthology as filled with "chick-friendly plots" (p. 4) dealing with "the stuff of life" (p. 4). Baratz-Logsted tried to cover the diversity of chick lit in order to falsify its assumed stereotypical structure. She emphasises that not all titles deal with the exact same topics such as dating, having or not having children, infidelity and diets. This can be seen as an attempt to regain control of the reception of a marginalised genre by opening its classification. Still, most academic books and papers come to the conclusion that 'chick lit' is a formulaic genre following the tradition of harlequin romance (Paul, 2007) and centred on a love plot (Wells, 2006). The presentation of the female protagonist is described as "stereotypically female" (Paul, 2007, p. 66) and oriented on sexual stereotypes of women in the 1950s. This reactionary role ascription is the source of the greatest criticism regarding the genre - although the exaggerations are often explained as ironic or cynical (Paul, 2006).

On behalf of the analysis of the impact of this genre on the stereotyping of gender, I would like to sum these different approaches to chick lit into the following concluding definition:

'Chick lit' is a genre that contains humorous popular fiction for a specifically female readership (Ferriss, 2006). The female protagonists are mostly heterosexual and present their stories as homodiegetic narrators with an internal focalisation. The plot focuses on their everyday life involving tropes and motives like consumption, relationships to friends, partners, family and bosses, with an obligatory happy ending (Peitz, 2010). Due to its formulaic structure and reappearing elements chick lit is often accused of banality. Just like women's literature, 'chick lit' is a problematic term shaped by a marginalising and negative connotation (Peitz, 2010; Paul, 2007).

5.2 Linking the Genre to Just One Gender

As the previous definition of the term 'chick lit' emphasises, the genre is defined by gender. Just like 'women's literature', it is necessary that the authors are female to make a suitable chick lit novel (Peitz, 2010, p. 25f.). While Suzanne Ferris and Mallory Young (2006) at least implied that there might be exceptions to this rule by stating that "(c)hick lit is […] a form of popular literature (largely) written by women for a female audience" (p. 12), they do not discuss this possibility either. So, is it possible for chick lit to be written by a male author after all?

As the author Jodi Picoult put it in an interview published in *The Telegraph*:

> "If a woman had written One Day [by David Nicholls], it would have been airport fiction. Look at The Marriage Plot by Jeffrey Eugenides. If I had written that, it would have had a pink, fluffy cover on it. If Jenny Eugenides had written it, it would have had a pink fluffy cover on it. What is it about? It's about a woman choosing between two men." (Gordon, 2014, paragraph 6)

While her own books often deal with very different topics, she sometimes gets categorised as a chick lit author. Still, this does not seem to happen to David Nicholls, Jeffrey Eugenides, Nicholas Sparks or the like. Although she does not use the term 'chick lit' here, "airport fiction" implies the negative connotation of a light holiday read without mentioning gender. Still, her remark shows that gender is the main indicator of the genre. Picoult's impression is shared by journalist Claire Fallon (2013):

> "[…]while commercial 'chick lit' is a real thing, and can even be written by men (ahem, Nicholas Sparks), there is […] a temptation in the industry to package a romance-themed literary novel by a woman as softer, more rom-commy, in order to attract readers, when the same book, if written by a man, would have been marketed as purely literary." (paragraph 11)

Although Fallon clearly differentiates between commercial and literary fiction and accepts the value judgement within this separation, she also notices the inequalities that are due to gender and criticises this

treatment. She states that chick lit can be written by men and mentions Nicholas Sparks as an example. But at the same time, she knows that he is treated and presented differently than female chick lit authors. Sparks' work is not denied literary status, which is the major difference in the marketing and reception of his books.

Picoult sums this inequality up very bluntly: "'I write women's fiction,' she says, an 'apparently' hanging in the air. 'And women's fiction doesn't mean that's your audience. Unfortunately, it means you have lady parts.'" (Gordon, 2014, paragraph 5). 'Women's literature', 'women's fiction' and 'chick lit': All these attributions are value judgements that are prejudiced against the capabilities of female authors. And these judgements are enforced by a book industry that markets books by women respectively. Picoult's reference to a "pink fluffy cover" was neither made up nor exaggerated. The marketing strategy for books more or less officially labelled as 'chick lit' by the publishing houses includes a cover design that is meant to speak to the intended audience. The typical and homogeneous cover designs of these books mostly involve colours in the shades of pink to red as well as pastel colours, playful elements such as stylised illustrations instead of photographs. Images such as cocktail glasses, high heels and handbags are popular examples (Peitz, 2010; Paul, 2007). The character font is mostly ornate. This homogeneity is part of the intended recognition value.

These books use colours that are stereotypical linked to the female gender to exclusively address a female audience. As the mention of Nicholas Sparks and similar authors indicated, the books labelled as 'chick lit' deal with not 'exclusively female' topics. They can be written and read by men as well as by women. So, why not open the genre into a category based on its plot and style instead a social construct called gender?

This way of marketing enforces exclusion in the literary context. Not only are authors labelled as writers of chick lit taken less seriously, but also male readers are affected by this separation by gender. They

refuse a whole genre based on something as simple as a genre label. Of course, that does not mean that no man ever reads a book that might be understood as 'chick lit', but they are led to believe that these books are not meant to be read by them. As though these books – that are praised for their identification potential for female readers – would not serve as an insight into the problems and trains of thought of others (Peitz, 2010, p. 61). Why should a male reader not empathise with a female protagonist just because her problems are apparently 'women's problems'? Whereas fictional texts invite readers to emphasise also with fantastic creatures and animals?

Proof that these marketing strategies actually put off male readers can be noticed in retailing. As Cosslett writes in her article, "[…] the fact remains that many men continue to be put off by a female name on a book cover, especially if that cover looks cutesy or at all feminine – just look at the books of Elena Ferrante, one of the greatest novelists writing today" (Cosslett, 2018, paragraph 4). Cosslett's example of Elena Ferrante's novels is well chosen, because they seem not limited to a female audience. I once got a male customer who recommended the Ferrante books to me. But while doing that he immediately added that the cover was very bad and not suiting the book. The label 'women's literature' or 'chick lit' as well as the stereotypical 'female' cover conveying this message leaves out a male audience. Consequently, male readers do not even consider a book of this ascription or they seem to find an excuse for reading it anyway. To my experience this usually ends in 'it's for my wife'.

The value judgement resonating with this genre is a reason to distance oneself from it or find an excuse for reading or writing it. For example, Elizabeth Merrick titles her anthology *This Is Not Chick Lit. Original Stories* by America's Best Women Writers. By distancing the female authors in her anthology from the genre label 'chick lit', her title can be understood as a contrast between the 'Best Women Writers' and this genre. Thus, 'chick lit' is denied its literary quality and just like

women's literature put into the sphere of second-rate fiction. Although Merrick (2006) emphasises that she believes "it's essential to celebrate the success of women writers of any genre" (p. xi), she criticises that, "the chick lit deluge has helped to obscure the literary fiction being written by some of our country's most gifted women – many of whom you've never even heard of" (p. xii). Hence, the original intention to draw attention to female authors resulted in the proof of its inferiority by this commercial genre, according to Merrick. Her critique goes as far as to deny books labelled as 'chick lit' their status as literature. Since their formula is too predictable and schematic, it lacks access to "new cultures, places, and inner lives" (Merrick, 2006, p. xii). Instead it is "beating us over the head with clichés that promote a narrow worldview" (Merrick, 2006, p. xii). Obviously, this critique is also meant to point out the dangers of a stereotypical representation of female characters, but simultaneously it negates all value of this genre. Merrick belittles the authors by saying "[i]t's no surprise that many chick lit authors are former fashion or entertainment journalists – the genre's interest in glamour and goods is perfectly suited to consumer-based media" (Merrick, 2006, p. viii). Hence, celebrating the success of female authors does not prevent denouncing them as superficial and profit oriented.

Still, there is one reason why many readers and critics just like Cosslett think that 'chick lit' equals 'trash'. That is the sometimes stereotypical characterisation. As Annette Peitz (2010) emphasises in her book *Chick Lit. Genrekonstituierende Untersuchungen unter anglo-amerikanischem Einfluss* the cliché gender role ascriptions in some chick lit novels are problematic, especially when it comes to young reader. These cases affirm the critique that the gender stereotypes within chick lit novels are outdated and unrepresentative. Since this critique gets generalised for the whole genre, authors often try to avoid this classification. If a work is published in a publishing house known for its 'chick lit', an author is stigmatised. From her own experience Baratz-Logsted (2006) recalls, "[…] the chick lit label that had attached itself to my work like a designer-lable barnacle, and it began to rankle" (p. 3).

This value judgement the 'chick lit' label represents, influences whole careers by marking authors suffering the same shortcomings as other representatives of the genre. And the reason for this categorisation as well as the marginalisation of the genre in the first place is simply and unjustly: gender.

6. Conclusion

What can we conclude from what we just said? We are quite sure that most of you already know that women are still treated differently and are often belittled. We don't have to prove that to you. What we wanted to show you is that this separation in the book industry as well as in the educational and cultural context – and sometimes even in our heads – is of no use for anyone. If men read literature and women read women`s literature, both are suffering from a disadvantage. As shown in our analysis, women are treated as inferior while men are excluded from a great part of today's most popular fiction. And both are stereotyped. Nobody actually wins here. Even the book industry misses out on a potential group of readers.

We pointed out that the literary canon is still very male dominated and able the to create a society in which it is okay to never have read a book by a female author. At the same time the labels 'women's literature' and 'chick lit' reinforce the impression that literature can be separated by gender. Those are outdated gender norms and unrepresentative gender concepts that are reinforcing constructed, stereotypical gender roles in the book industry as well as the educational and cultural context.

If we accept literature as a mirror of our society, we cannot accept these excluding factors anymore. What we want to say is more than just 'Don't judge a book by its cover'. It is 'Don't judge a book by its anticipated gender'! Since we cannot change the book market overnight, we have to dismiss these kinds of labels in our heads first. Do not feel embarrassed to read books held as 'light fiction' or not suiting your ascribed gender. Question those labels and read to gain new perspectives.

Discuss those labels and books with your family, friends and colleagues. Once we have freed ourselves from these excluding stereotypes and broaden our horizons, we can go as far as to change the literary canon to become an actual mirror of our society.

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1 The literary canon is here understood as a theoretical construct that exists in literature and literary studies. In chapter 3 there will be an explanation of the different canons that exist in society, schools and university. The literary canon in general is an almost non-comprehensible concept, that describes literature that should be read and preserved without an explicit definition of what it consists.

2 This classification is used by most of the literary dictionaries and anthologies, such as R. Kroll: (Ed.), *Metzler Lexikon. Gender Studies und Geschlechterforschung. Ansätze – Personen – Begriffe* (S. 123-125) Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler. and Peitz, A. (2010). 'chick lit'. *Genrekonstituierende Untersuchungen unter anglo-amerikanischem Einfluss. Studien zur deutschen und europäischen Literatur des 19. Und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Vol. 64). Frankfurt a.M., Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien: Peter Lang Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften. S. 13. Here it is used critically and cautiously since it indicates that a female audience shares a specific taste or reacts to the same elements.

3 „Die Geschlechterdifferenz in der Literatur erlaubt eine Hierarchisierung der Literatur nach Geschlecht." Translated by the author. Opfermann, S. (1996). *Diskurs, Geschlecht und Literatur. Amerikanische Autorinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts.* Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler. S. 82.

4 „Die Literatur von Frauen, so meine These, wird über das Weibliche Geschlecht homogenisiert und in eine weibliche Sphäre gebannt Translated by the author. Opfermann, S. (1996). *Diskurs, Geschlecht und Literatur. Amerikanische Autorinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts.* Stuttgart, Weimar: Metzler P. 81.

5 Since this converation is based on memory the choice of words might differ.

Assisted Euthanasia of the Elderly

A Survey on the Attitude of Medical Students in Mainz, Germany, towards Assisted Euthanasia[1]

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Introduction

The word *Euthanasia* originates from the Greek meaning "good death." In this context it can be used as a synonym for suicide. *Assisted* means either a relative, a good friend, trained personnel or a health care professional who accompanies the individual in his or her act of suicide. There are multiple forms of euthanasia, of which these are a few examples to contextualize: assisted euthanasia (AE) where the assisting person prepares the lethal drug (*Pentobarbital-Sodium* (Burkhardt & La Harpe, 2012)) and the individual actively carries out the procedure. And voluntary active euthanasia of a competent (VAE-C) or incompetent (VAE-I) patient, in which the accompanying person actively injects the lethal drug into the patient, as the patient cannot inject it him- or herself (e.g. paralysis) (Braverman et al., 2017). A competent patient is one who can voice his or her request to die, an incompetent patient is either unconscious, or has mental health issues (e.g. dementia), but has stated his or her wish for euthanasia in a previously competent state (van Delden, 2004). This paper discusses the meaning and ethics of assisted euthanasia of the elderly. An age of 85, or greater, is defined as elderly, as the vice president of the society *Lifecircle* (a right-to-die organisation (Burkhardt & La Harpe, 2012) in Switzerland carrying out among other things AE), Erika Preisig, said: "…Everybody over the age of 85 years should have the right to die without justifying him- or herself…" (sah/dpa, 2018).

The law in Germany states that AE is free from punishment for those who are relatives or close to the individual and act out of non-commercial motives (§217StGB, 2015). The formulation of this statement is unclear and problematic for two reasons: firstly, giving the deadly drug *Pentobarbital-Sodium* to an individual is punishable due to the narcotics law (§29BtMG, 1994) along with the failure to render assistance (Good Samaritan Law) (§323cStGB, 2017). Secondly, assisting euthanasia can only be performed once by an individual, otherwise it could be seen as a "commercial motive". Physician assisted euthanasia is not permitted in Germany according to the model professional code (Art.16MBO-Ä, 2015). However, each federal state has its own regulations regarding this matter (e.g. in Rhineland-Palatinate AE is not explicitly forbidden for physicians).

In a society where the idea of autonomy is gaining relevance, discussing the liberty to decide one's fate until death is of utmost importance. This includes the debate of AE. Medicine is progressing at a great rate, ensuring more individuals live a much longer life. However, this does not necessarily relate to a higher quality of life. In any case old age, as for now, has no "cure" or "treatment", meaning the quality of life will decline for all at some point.

This was the case of Prof. Dr. Goodall, a comparably healthy 104-year-old Australian scientist, who decided to rely on AE in Switzerland in May 2018. His reasoning was undignified aging, due to a reduced quality of life (koe/AFP, 2018). Furthermore, he pointed out that the better the medicine, the harder it becomes to die (sah/dpa, 2018). Back then (May 2018), the law prohibited AE in all territories and states of Australia (QUT). Goodall would not even fit in the eligibility criteria of the law that will enter into force in June 2019 ("Authorised Version No. 001 Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2017 No. 61 of 2017," 2018), as he is not terminally ill. Goodall therefore had to travel to Switzerland, where AE is not explicitly forbidden, even for foreigners, ("Art. 115 Swiss Penal Code," 1937; Bosshard et al., 2016), to fulfil his request to die.

The number of AE in Switzerland increased three-fold between 2003 and 2014. The increase was most significant in the age group of 65-94 (Steck, Junker, Zwahlen, & Swiss National, 2018). Is it ethically acceptable for elders who are not suffering from a severe disease to rely on this service? A survey was arranged to determine the ethical opinions of the medical students of the Johannes Gutenberg University (JGU) Mainz on this issue.

Methods and Materials

A survey was conducted to determine the ethics of AE of the elderly. The original (German) and translated (English) versions of the form are both copied in the attachments. The number of participants receiving the questionnaire was 90, only 71 survey responses were evaluable (clearly completed form). All questions were binary, the only answer options were "yes" or "no".

The body of the survey was designed in three parts describing different situations: the scenarios described a healthy elderly person (> 85 years old), an elderly person (> 85 years old) with restricted quality of life and an elderly person (> 85 years old) with uncertain prospects of good eldercare. The participant then had to decide, if he/ she thought the scenario was ethical or not: i) in general (Fig [2]), ii) if related to the participant (results not shown), iii) if participant were assisting themselves (Fig [3]).

The participants were also asked if assisted euthanasia was ethical or not in general (Fig. [1])

Since all participants were medical students, they were asked if they would prescribe the lethal drug to requesting elders (Fig. [4]). On that question, only 68 forms were evaluable.

The frequencies of the summarized results are represented in stacked columns (see Fig [1] - [4]).

Results

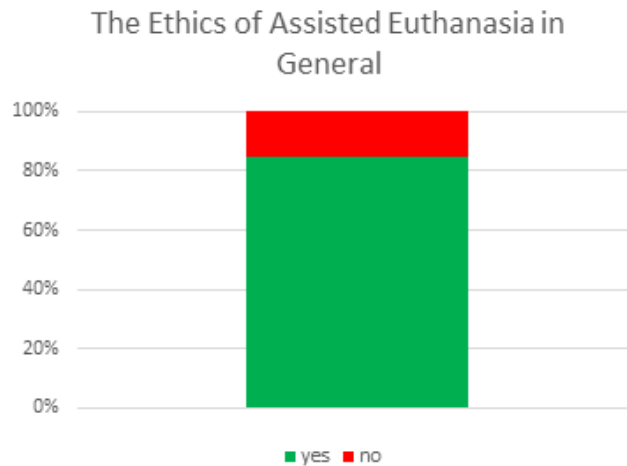Figure [1] (n = 71) depicts a major acceptance of AE in general of the surveyed group.

Fig [1] Survey concerning assisted euthanasia of the elderly with 71 participants of the medical faculty of the JGU, Mainz. Participants were asked to evaluate the ethics of assisted euthanasia in general. 84.5% of participants accepted assisted euthanasia as ethical; 15.5% of participants denied the ethicality of assisted euthanasia.

Figure [2] shows that most students support AE of the elderly, but only related to a restricted quality of life (n = 71). An uncertain prospect of good care at old age as a reason for euthanasia was largely seen as unethical.
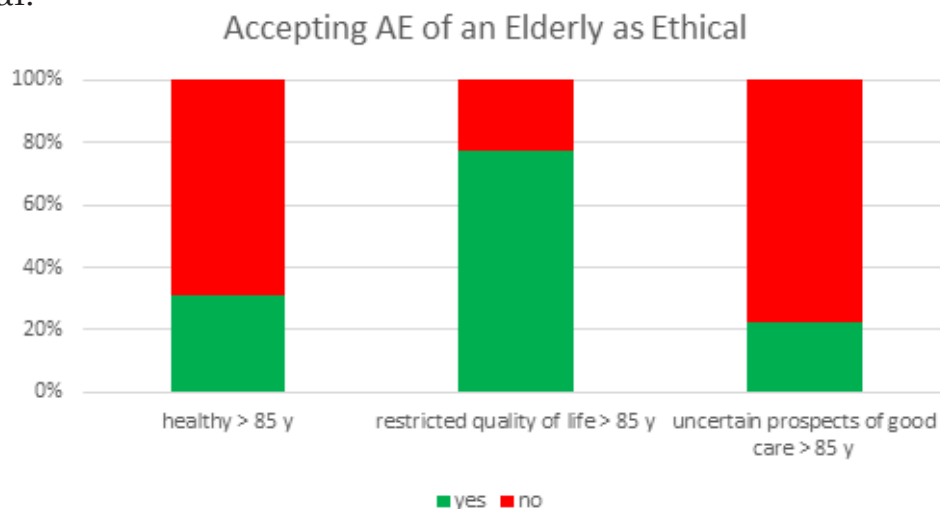

Fig [2] depicts the survey of 71 participants of the medical faculty of the JGU, Mainz. Participants were asked to evaluate the ethics of assisted euthanasia, a) if a > 85 y was in perfect health, b) if a > 85 y had restricted quality of life, and c) if a > 85 y had an uncertain prospect of good eldercare. a) 30.99% yes, 69.01% no; b) 77.46% yes, 22.54% no; c) 22.54% yes, 77.46% no.

Figure [3] shows similar results to Fig [2]. The surveyed students were slightly less likely to accept AE if they were to assist themselves in an AE (n = 71).
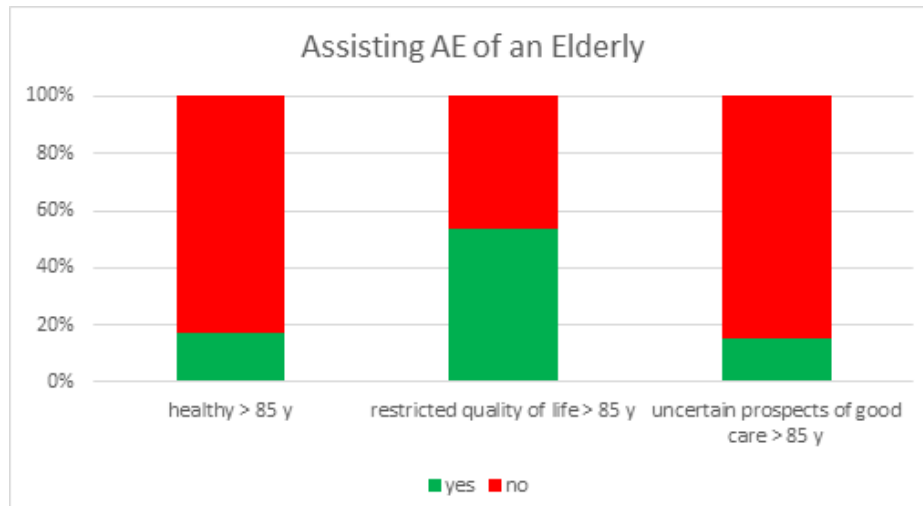

Fig [3] depicts the survey of 71 participants of the medical faculty of the JGU, Mainz, regarding the assistance of euthanasia under the circumstances: d) AE of a healthy > 85 y, e) AE of a > 85 y with restricted quality of life and f) AE of a > 85 y with uncertain prospects of good eldercare. d) 16.9% yes, 83.1% no; e) 53.52% yes, 46.48% no; f) 15.49% yes, 84.51% no.

Figure [4] shows a slightly different approach, in which 45,6 % agreed to prescribe the lethal drug to the elderly without further assisting the AE (n = 68 valid answers).
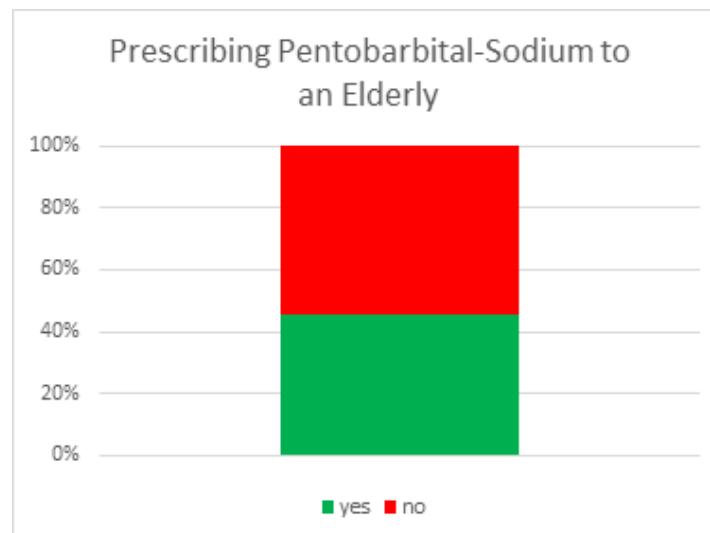

Fig [4] Survey of 68 participants of the medical faculty of the JGU, Mainz. The students were asked to state if they would prescribe the lethal drug (Pentobarbital-Sodium) to > 85 y without further assisting themselves. 45.59% agreed to prescribe *pentobarbital-sodium*, 54.41% would not prescribe the lethal drug to an elderly person.

Discussion

The survey showed that old age in itself seems not to be a legitimate reason to condone AE. To interpret the data, the reasoning behind the decisions of the participants needs to be asked. What arguments could support and oppose AE of the elderly?

Legalizing AE of the elderly could lead to opportunities for abuse. This includes among other things financial reasons, such as relatives unwilling to pay for good elderly care or palliative medicine and children wanting access to an inheritance.

In a federal state (Rhineland-Palatinate), where Christianity is prominent, religion may present a valid argument against AE, since suicide, the killing of oneself, is considered forbidden (*Exodus 20:13 (New International Version);* Stack & Kposowa, 2011).

Some may argue that AE is only ethically acceptable in case of deteriorated health conditions. Aging is a physiological process of life, therefore it does not fall into the category of sickness. Thus, it does not present a justifiable reason to perform AE on the elderly.

Additionally, uncertain prospects of good elder care should not be an argument for AE, as this ought to be a fundamental goal of the state, especially with an aging population.

Lastly, one could mention the value of palliative medicine. Giving aging and dying patients a pain-free death could be a valid alternative towards AE (Erdek, 2015). Especially as the possibility of abuse is immensely reduced.

The most notable argument for AE of the elderly is autonomy. Every competent individual should be able to decide his or her fate without external influences. This includes the right to request AE (Hendry et al., 2013).

The relief of suffering is also a point of great value (Hains & Hulbert-Williams, 2013; Hendry et al., 2013). This can give patients a more dignified death than palliative medicine.

This raises the next point – dignity. The limits of living with dignity are very subjective. Some see a life with dementia, a vegetative state, or even old age in itself as undignified (see Goodall). These people might rather opt for AE, than continue life in that state.

It must not be forgotten that AE offers a much safer ending than conventional suicide. Elderly people willing to end their lives on their own might end up in worse conditions than previously if they fail to commit suicide. At this point one cannot omit to mention that suicide affects the family and friends of the individual, as well as any other bystanders.

Lastly, AE offers a certain economical value. Finances otherwise going to elder care and palliative medicine would be saved. Nevertheless, it is assumed this is not a major argument of the participants (also shown in the survey by Braverman (Braverman et al., 2017)).

Comparing this survey with other studies, similar results are observed (Braverman et al., 2017; Emanuel, Onwuteaka-Philipsen, Urwin, & Cohen, 2016). Participants seem a lot more liberal towards AE (of the elderly), than the current legal situation dictates. The results also show that the ethical opinions depend greatly on the circumstance of the elderly. Relief of suffering (Hains & Hulbert-Williams, 2013) seems to be the leading argument here. Most probably the majority of participants did not see old age in itself as a "sickness" and therefore believed it to be an unethical reason. AE of an elderly with uncertain prospects of good elder care received mostly negative reactions. This is probably due to the fact that good eldercare should be a service provided by the government.

Interestingly, the participants were less likely to assist themselves an AE of an elderly person Fig [3], but the numbers were still very similar to the ones of Fig [2]. This difference is likely due to the closer, more personal situation it causes. As the question "prescribing the lethal drug" was not divided into the different scenarios, the reasoning behind the results cannot fully be deduced. It can be assumed that arguments

such as religion (*Exodus 20:13 (New International Version);* Hains & Hulbert-Williams, 2013; Stack & Kposowa, 2011) and potential abuse, due to the lack of control, could account for the 56,4% negative results. Again, both the personal distance of only prescribing the lethal drug and autonomy are likely to explain the positive results.

It must not be forgotten that the survey only included medical students of the JGU, Mainz, meaning a very small group of people studying in the same region were analyzed for this question. Given that the participants were educated in the manner of AE, it was already suspected that the group would be more liberal towards this matter compared to the general population. Their ethical opinion is yet to be determined.

Conclusion

Assisted euthanasia both in general and of the elderly is a procedure that provides a relief for persons who want to die. However, it remains an ethically controversial topic.

The authors believe that everyone should have the freedom to decide about his or her life and death. In this regard, autonomy and dignity are the highest virtues. All humans should have the ending they wish to have. In conclusion, attention should be drawn to seniors who consider undergoing AE only because they are afraid of an uncertain prospect of good eldercare. This should not be an argument. Improvements to the quality and accessibility of elder care should be prioritized, rather than consider alternatives such as AE. Furthermore, the opinion of the participants on AE in Germany does not seem to correspond with the current German laws (see Fig. [1]), that are worded very vaguely. Matters of great importance, such as this topic, should be defined more clearly by legislators. Even though this does not necessarily represent the whole German population, it shows that there is still a substantial amount to debate and maybe change in the future. As the laws across the globe differ in a fast-changing world, we call for more discussion

on this topic internationally to determine if the public's opinion on the ethics of AE of the elderly and the country's law coincide.

No conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

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§ 217 StBG Geschäftsmäßige Förderung der Selbsttötung, (2015).

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1   The authors are very happy to see the modifications passed on the 26th of February 2020 regarding §217 of the German criminal code (StGB) concerning assisted euthanasia. This was passed after the editorial deadline. As stated in the sentence 2 BvR 2347/15, §217 StGB is incompatible with the German constitution, rending the mentioned paragraph obsolete.

Sharing Economy

The End of a Sharing Society? Or Catalyst on the Way to It?

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1. Introduction

Airbnb, Uber, Booksharing, Couchsurfing – today's society can hardly save itself from new forms of consumption, especially in the industrial nations. Conceptual manifestations of these forms of use are often assigned to the so-called Sharing Economy, which by definition is aimed at making joint use of unused or underused resources (Teubner, Hawlitschek & Gimpel, 2016, p. 1). But sharing in itself is not a phenomenon that has only been introduced with the possibilities of digital networking. In science, the intensity of cooperative behavior is regarded as a characteristic that distinguishes humans biologically from all other living beings. A characteristic that has also contributed significantly to the successful colonization of the earth by man. The downside of this settlement is the overexploitation of earthly resources, which is due in particular to the capitalist mechanisms of the global economy. Cooperative forms of resource use could help to secure the livelihoods of all people and future generations. The integration of models subsumed under the term sharing into the structure of a capitalist economy, as suggested by the Sharing Economy, seems to make little sense in view of the negative consequences of the prevailing economic order. However, if one considers the individual concepts gathered under this term, the question arises: Is Sharing Economy a suitable generic term for such heterogeneous patterns of action? Is it reasonable to combine such different patterns of action under one term? This paper shows that a redefinition of the term Sharing Economy as well as a

separation of the concepts collected under this term from the associated concept of the Sharing Society is necessary, sensible and practicable.

The present work is a formulation of thoughts that have found their way into a lecture at the ICON conference in Mainz. In the meantime, my studies and research have led to findings that continue the contents of the lecture and deviate from the structure of the original concept. A general explanation of human cooperation (2) is followed by a description of the currently popular concept of the Sharing Economy (3.1), which is subsequently viewed critically (3.2) and leads to the introduction of the concept of the Sharing Society (3.3). This concept is discussed in the following chapter with regard to its strengths and weaknesses (4).

2. Cooperation and Collaboration

According to findings from biology and anthropology, the way in which humans cooperate is unique among all living creatures on earth (Hamann et al., 2011; Tomasello et al., 2005; Tomasello & Carpenter, 2007). Although contemporary research repeatedly reveals astonishing insights into the willingness and practices of other living beings to cooperate, the extent and intensity with which people display group-oriented behavior is unequaled anywhere in the world. The so-called "shared intentionality", i.e. the ability and motivation to collaborate with other people, is a characteristic that only humans possess.[1] A characteristic that can already be observed in infancy. Cooperation is an essential aspect for the successful settlement of the planet by humans. In the course of this colonization and the development of human life forms, cooperation has also evolved – thanks, among other things, to the development of language and writing.[2] The mathematician and biologist Martin A. Nowak has identified five different horizons in the collaboration of human individuals:

Kin selection

Direct reciprocity

Indirect reciprocity

Network reciprocity

Group selection

Five Rules of Evolution of Cooperation (Nowak, 2006)

Kin selection describes our urge to cooperate with people who – to a certain extent – carry our genes. Direct reciprocity describes the direct exchange of goods. In the case of indirect reciprocity this consideration is paid indirectly. The indirect route is via the reputation through which the donor can assume that he will also receive consideration. An example of this principle is money. In the case of reciprocity in networks, the reciprocal value at an indefinite point in time results from the fundamental solidarity between the members of the network. Group selection refers to the demarcation of competing groups whose members cooperate within their organizational unit.

The modern world, however, has created some social structures that threaten to stifle this apparently natural urge of man – above all capitalism. This model of coexistence between people and societies is also characterized to a large extent by forms of cooperation (no one would deny that there can be a cooperative relationship between an employee and an employer or between two companies in neighboring countries). However, capitalism is based on motives that are determined by dogmas of growth and are increasingly alienated from the actual human goal of peaceful coexistence on the basis of values such as fairness and justice. The right of the strongest, a principle of the unbridled wilderness or also of Hobbes's original state, has found its way into a world that actually wants to see itself far removed from that very original form of life. Especially since mankind already realized some decades ago that its foundations of life are finite and strongly overused in the modern age. New patterns of action are in demand. Patterns of

action that are not inherent in the unbridled growth and exploitation of resources. Approaches that make the human use of these resources as efficient and sustainable as possible.

3. Sharing

Mechanisms for sharing scarce resources, joint financing of machinery and other forms of cooperation are not new phenomena. The ability to share material and spiritual resources and later work and expertise has determined the development of human societies since their inception. Even today digital applications are not a prerequisite for the development of sharing approaches. For example, people in Ghana organize themselves in groups to provide each other with short-term financing for important goods or create sharing systems for scarce water (Neuwirth, 2017). However, digitization is able to accelerate the development of sharing concepts, not least by facilitating better networking of more and more individuals. Since more and more economic and social sectors have been affected by digitization, concepts of sharing seem to have arrived in their midst.[3]

3.1 Sharing Economy

The range of possibilities offered by the so-called Sharing Economy is extremely diverse and covers all conceivable goods. In the current discourse, Sharing Economy is a generic term for "companies, business models, platforms, online and offline communities, and practices, which enable the shared use of un- or underutilized resources, often [...] in exchange for money" (Teubner et al., 2016, p. 1). It is often used as an umbrella term for concepts such as collaborative consumption, collaborative production, access-based consumption and commercial sharing systems. Botsman and Rogers (2010) divide the Sharing Economy into three areas: product service systems, redistribution markets and collaborative lifestyles. The services Uber and Airbnb, through which private individuals offer taxi-like passenger transport (Uber) or holi-

day accommodation (Airbnb) via an online platform, are usually cited as prominent examples. Other applications offer the infrastructure for giving away food (food sharing) and objects (Freecycle), lending books (book sharing), exchanging certain goods, sharing expensive machines or reselling objects (eBay, thredUP).

3.2 A Critical View on the Definition of Sharing Economy

When looking at the companies and concepts subsumed under the term Sharing Economy, it becomes apparent that their great diversity makes a specific investigation of this trendy phenomenon difficult. The differences between the various approaches and platforms covered by this term are in many cases so great that they outweigh the similarities responsible for their classification. While Freecycle gives away items, eBay sells them. A hitchhiker who gets picked up on the side of the road uses a mechanism as a free passenger that is assigned to the Sharing Economy, as is the person who rents a car via a car sharing platform. By renting the villa of one of Airbnb's Superhosts for a week, you will belong to the same category as the numerous couch surfers who spend the night free of charge on other people's sofas. In addition, there are exchange platforms, collaborative usage models and open source software, which are available to people especially through the new digital possibilities. But old models beyond the internet are also part of the Sharing Economy, such as cooperatives. It is obvious that models are listed side by side which are diametrically opposed in aspects such as the profit orientation of donors or the participation of money. In addition, there are approaches in whose direct application money does play a role, but profit maximization does not – and vice versa.

3.3 Sharing Society

The preceding remarks on the Sharing Economy suggest to question whether the terminology is on the one hand sufficient to grasp the complexity of the models described and on the other hand practicable to examine the logic of these platforms and patterns of action. In view of

the often large differences between platforms in similar product ranges with regard to the underlying motivation and forms of reciprocity, a subdivision of the above-mentioned forms of sharing is appropriate. Models in which money does not play a role in the interaction or transaction of the good must be separated from models in which this is the case. Approaches of sharing, giving and lending unused or underused resources – whether online or offline – whose logic gets by without money, should be assigned to the Sharing Society.[4] These include concepts such as food sharing, Freecycle, couch surfing, lending exchanges and open source platforms. On the other hand there are all those approaches in which money is involved as a means of indirect reciprocity, such as the prominent examples of Airbnb and Uber, car sharing agencies, cooperatives, platforms for mediating microtasks, models of solidary agriculture and many comparable concepts.

4. Discussion of the New Definitions

To oppose the Sharing Economy along the trinity of economy, society and politics with the concept of the Sharing Society seems sensible and practicable on the basis of the preceding considerations. However, the concept of the Sharing Economy should also be examined more closely with regard to its accuracy of fit. While the current economic structure of capitalism is based on the pursuit of growth and profit, sharing describes the sharing of a resource. However, in view of the services Uber and Airbnb, which are currently most frequently associated with the Sharing Economy, it must be questioned whether this term still applies. While in many places the only difference between Uber and taxi companies is that the platform does not comply with the rules applicable to registered taxi drivers, so-called Superhosts on Airbnb make large profits from real estate which they never live in themselves, some of which they have only built or acquired in order to make profit on the platform – often without paying the taxes levied in the relevant industries. Airbnb still has providers of rooms and apartments which the owners also live in themselves. The platform's acceptance of the highly

profit-oriented Superhosts, however, suggests that this use of Airbnb is at least tolerated, if not welcomed. A circumstance which alienates this approach far from, for example, initiatives of solidarity agriculture, which should fall under the concept of the same Sharing Economy.

This issue makes it clear that the definition of the Sharing Economy as all those concepts of sharing in which money is involved is still too general to capture the diversity of the different models and to enable an investigation. Rather, the function of money must also be brought into focus. A distinction could be made here with regard to the intention: Does money serve the person who offers the good to maximize his profits or as a vehicle to finance this resource together with others? The former intention sounds more like conventional services or rentals, which now also cover the area of unused or underused resources, than a motive, which can be assigned to the concept of sharing. The use of money as a vehicle to enable the shared use of resources or goods is much more likely to implement the logic of sharing. The concept of the Sharing Economy should therefore, in accordance with its etymological meaning, be applied to all those models and practices whose logic is not directly designed to generate profits. This modified concept of the Sharing Economy would thus cover cooperatives, common use models and approaches to solidarity-based agriculture, while Uber and Airbnb by definition would fall out of this cluster. They are to be understood as ordinary companies, some of which exploit sharing potential commercially.

The concept of the Sharing Economy, thus freed from the principle of profit maximization, is now more tangible for assessing the potential of all practices falling under it. As a means of indirect reciprocity according to Nowak, related approaches use money as a transfer commodity. The concept of the Sharing Society mainly relies on network reciprocity and kin selection, but also partly on group selection. One mechanism that is not covered by the definitions in this form is the exchange of goods, which at the same time is to be assigned to direct reciprocity.

Due to the nature of the consideration provided in the form of a good or service, this pattern of action is much closer to the Sharing Economy construct than to the Sharing Society. If it can be clearly attributed to the barterers that an intrinsic motivation for cooperation is the driving force of bartering and that it is not merely used as a necessary means for maximizing profit, it makes sense to also assign the bartering of goods to the logic of the Sharing Economy.

The preceding redefinitions lead to a multitude of questions, which can be better examined at the economic and social levels due to the greater homogeneity of the individual dimensions of sharing. Three basic questions are particularly important here, which are aimed at the relationship between Sharing Economy and Sharing Society. Is the Sharing Economy, according to its new definition, a mechanism that prevents the expansion of a Sharing Society? Or does the Sharing Economy enable the Sharing Society only by reviving the typical human patterns of cooperation through the known mechanisms of the market? Is it conceivable that both concepts coexist and can work together – cooperatively and not competitively?[5] These questions should be discussed comprehensively and constructively in view of the consensus that we must develop a different, new way of using the limited resources of our planet in order to derive solutions from the findings.

5. Conclusion

The definition of the Sharing Economy currently used in politics, business and the media is proving to be largely unsuitable for investigating forward-looking sharing mechanisms. The separation into two different dimensions, which is made along the parameters of money and profit striving in the concepts of Sharing Economy and Sharing Society, creates in itself more homogeneous clusters. The redefinition of the concept of the Sharing Economy also makes it compatible with economic models that manage without the capitalist dogma of profit maximization. On the other hand, many concepts that have so far been subsumed

under the broad consensus of the Sharing Economy are not considered. Platforms such as Uber, Airbnb, eBay and comparable approaches can only be related to the other sharing concepts to the extent that they can promote the longest possible use of unused or underused goods. It is true that these services also make it possible to use them, which could also satisfy the new concept of the Sharing Economy. For example, a registered Uber driver could spontaneously respond to a booking on his way home and thereby split his own travel costs without making any profit. However, the structure of these companies suggests that their core concept is not, or is no longer, driven by the motivation to use resources as efficiently as possible, but is geared exclusively to maximizing company profits. The fact that these companies continue to be prominently named under the positively connoted term of the Sharing Economy seems inappropriate on closer inspection and is reminiscent of the practice of greenwashing.

The investigation of prerequisites, potentials and risks of cooperative approaches to consumption and the use of goods seems absolutely necessary in times when effective ideas for the sustainable use of resources are urgently needed. The questions to be asked in this context are versatile. What determines the decision of individuals to resort to sharing concepts? What demands do sharing approaches place on social norms such as trust and honesty? To what extent does digitization affect the development of collaborative forms of consumption? The pursuit of these questions is better and more profoundly possible with the division into the two sharing concepts outlined in this work than with the limitations/boundaries of concepts previously used.

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1   cf. Tomasello & Carpenter, 2007 and Tomasello & Moll, 2010.

2   See more on this in Tomasello, M. (2014): A Natural History of Human Thinking.

3   This is suggested by a study for Germany, which in the Sharing Economy "has become a further developing and disseminating phenomenon" (Heinrichs and Grunenberg, 2012, p. 18).

4   The concept of a Sharing Society has already been mentioned by Sara Horowitz (2013). In contrast to the present work, it refers to the formation of social institutions, which should especially benefit the growing number of freelancers in the course of the digitization of work.

5   There are also companies that generate profits even though their users exchange goods free of charge (Bulajewski, 2018). Since the present analysis focuses in particular on the level of direct interactants, these hybrid models, whose hybridity results from the additional company level under consideration, are not included. On the basis of the formulated definitions, however, these concepts could be assigned to the Sharing Society as long as the users of this platform continue to interact without direct consideration.

Moral Theological Deliberations on Multifetal Pregnancy Reduction in Higher-Order Pregnancies

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Getting pregnant with multiples may scare parents-to-be. Thoughts about the financial burden, the need for a bigger living space, as well as the physical and mental overload may come to one's mind when twins, triplets, quadruplets or quintuplets are on the way. Worries about the mother's and the children's health during the pregnancy may cause anxiety as well.

In recent decades, more and more children have been conceived by reproductive treatments (DIR, 2018, p. 43). Many reproductive treatments, for example in vitro fertilization (IVF), frequently cause pregnancies with triplets, quadruplets or even more fetuses (Steck, 2001, p. 79). The more fetuses are conceived, the higher are the risks of physical and mental deformities, and the risks for the mother's health increase as well (Gyr, 2013, p. 6f.; Weblus et al., 2011, p. 187-191; Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, p. 58). This poses a dilemma for women or couples with an unfulfilled wish for a child: Should they become pregnant in any way possible, even if the fertility treatment causes a pregnancy with multiples, who might have mental or physical deformities and maybe low chances of survival?

Due to these risks, there is the option to reduce the number of fetuses during the pregnancy, so that the remaining two or three fetuses can develop properly. Facing a higher-order pregnancy, i.e. a pregnancy with more than three fetuses, both doctors and parents are confronted with several ethical questions: Do all the fetuses have a right to live? Is it a responsible decision to give birth to several disabled children,

who would not be disabled if some of their siblings were killed? Is it more important to save the pregnancy or to have children, that are as healthy as possible? Is it too much to expect from mothers to give birth to quintuplets or quadruplets, and for parents to raise them and look after them?

All these questions lead to the main question, being whether it is ethically tolerable to reduce the number of fetuses in a multiple pregnancy with more than three fetuses, which is the result of a fertility treatment. In this essay, I would like to examine this question concerning the aspects of the fetus's right to life and the mother's right to self-determination and her freedom of procreation.

1 Medical Background

As I am no medic and since this essay is meant to be read by non-medics, too, I will explain why multifetal pregnancies occur more often in recent decades and which risks they pose for both mother and children. Then, I will state how a multifetal pregnancy reduction can be performed and which consequences this procedure may have. Lastly, I will give an outline of the multifetal pregnancy reduction's legal status in Germany and show, under which conditions it is legal to perform a multifetal pregnancy reduction.

1.1 Multiple Pregnancies and Their Risks

The frequent occurrence of pregnancies with multiples may be called the gravest problem of modern fertility treatment (Steck, 2001, p. 79). The more fetuses are involved in a pregnancy, the more risks for mother and children emerge (Gyr, 2013, pp. 6f.; Weblus et al., 2011, p. 187; Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, p. 58), Mothers, who are pregnant with multiples, suffer from pre-eclampsia, high blood pressure, diabetes or thromboembolism more often. Most dangerous for fetuses is the risk of premature birth, which may lead to several diseases or even to death. The likelihood of a minor or severe disability amounts to thirty percent

(Weblus et al., 2011, p. 187). Therefore, fertile treatments should always aim for singleton pregnancies (Würfel, 2008, p. 19; Weblus et al., 2011, p. 188).

To achieve a singleton pregnancy or at least lower the risk of a multiple pregnancy, doctors can continuously monitor and – as the circumstances require in case of an imminent multiple pregnancy – abort the insemination treatment. Alternatively, they can perform an in vitro fertilization (IVF) with only one or two embryos (Steck, 2001, p. 81; Berg et al., 2008, p. 527; Weblus et al., 2011, p. 188). To avoid multiple pregnancies, only one embryo can be transplanted. The best chance of getting pregnant with a single transplanted embryo is by means of pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), which means that the doctor checks whether there are any irregularities in the embryo's DNA. PGD is – at least in most cases – illegal in Germany. After several failing IVF treatments, couples often tolerate or even desire a multiple pregnancy (Weblus et al., 2011, p. 190). But after an actual multiple pregnancy occurred, many couples indicate that they were not informed about the risks sufficiently. Those statements potentially show how couples suppress possible risks of IVF (Weblus et al., 2011, p. 190).

1.2 Fetal Reductions in Multiple Pregnancies and Their Risks

If a woman or a couple decides on an in vitro fertilization with several embryos despite those risks and it eventually leads to a multifetal pregnancy with quadruplets, quintuplets, etc., there is the option to perform a multifetal pregnancy reduction. Multifetal pregnancy reduction is the intrauterine killing of one or several fetuses in order to give the pregnancy a chance. This means that one or several fetuses are selected to be killed by position, accessibility, developmental stage, etc. (Maier, 2000, p. 172). Some multifetal pregnancy reductions are performed to afford the remaining fetuses better chances to healthy lives (Weblus, Schlag, Entezami, & Kentenich, 2011, p. 187). Maier (2000) emphasizes that multifetal pregnancy reduction is no therapy, but a surgery having to be executed due to a problem caused by doctors (pp. 173 and 176).

Multifetal pregnancy reductions are normally performed by injecting potassium chloride into the fetus's heart (Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, p. 58; Steck, 2001, p. 82; Gyr, 2013, pp. 3 and 8). Another possibility is a lethal injection into the chest cavity (Weblus et al., 2011, p. 187) or the umbilical cord; the fetus may be preserved from possible pain through analgesia or anesthesia (Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, p. 56). Either of those options are only possible, if the fetuses are not fed by the same placenta (Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, p. 56).

A distinction is made between unselected fetal reduction, which is performed without examining the fetuses' health conditions during the first few weeks of pregnancy, and selective reduction. For a selective reduction the fetuses with the worst health conditions are killed. If the fetuses' health conditions are equal, the smallest fetus(es) or the fetus(es) within easiest reach will be killed (Weblus et al., 2011, pp. 188f.; Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, p. 59). Selective reductions can be performed between the twelfth and the fourteenth week of a pregnancy (Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, p. 58), in special cases even after the twenty-fifth week of a pregnancy (Berg, Gembruch, Rohde, & Geipel, 2008, p. 527).

Multifetal pregnancy reduction is not a riskless procedure. Some or all of the remaining fetuses may die in the uterus or by spontaneous abortion because of it (Steck, 2001, p. 82; Geipel & Gembruch, 2008, pp. 58f.). During a selective reduction, the other fetuses may accidentally be killed. Moreover, the decision for or against a multifetal pregnancy reduction may have psychological consequences for the parents (Weblus et al., 2011, pp. 189ff.).

1.3 The Legal Status of Multifetal Pregnancy Reduction in Germany

Even though multifetal pregnancy reductions aim to keep up the pregnancy, they are legally considered an abortion in Germany (Berg et al., 2008, p. 526; Weblus et al., 2011, p. 190). Therefore, a multifetal pregnancy reduction is prosecutable as laid down in § 218 in the German penal code (StGB) and can be punished with a fine or even imprisonment

(Berg et al., 2008, pp. 524 and 526). If a pregnant woman seeks certified pregnancy options counseling, requests an abortion or a multifetal pregnancy reduction after at least three days of respite and a doctor performs the abortion twelve weeks after the conception at longest, the abortion or multifetal pregnancy reduction is not a subject to prosecution (§ 218a StGB).

If an abortion or a multifetal pregnancy reduction is medically necessary, because only this may avoid endangering the mother's life, reduce the danger of grave bodily or mental impairment for her in a reasonable way, abortion or multifetal pregnancy reduction is not illegal, even until term (§ 218a Abs. 2; Berg et al., 2008, p. 524; Weblus et al., 2011, p. 190). In this case, it does not matter whether fetal damages exist or not (Berg et al., 2008, p. 524).

2 Ethical Discourse

Multifetal pregnancy reduction being exempt from punishment under certain circumstances does not mean that there are no ethical objections against multifetal pregnancy reduction. In this chapter, pro-choice arguments, which stress the mother's right to self-determination, and pro-life arguments, which stress the importance of the preservation of the unborn children's lives, (Graumann, 2011, pp. 125f.) are considered. Also, points of criticism on them are given.

2.1 Pro-life: The Fetuses' Right to Life

Some philosophers, for example Peter Singer, Norbert Hoerster or Julian Nida-Rümelin, connect a human being's right to life to traits like self-consciousness, self-respect, an interest in survival, and the ability to have preferences (Ernst, 2015, p. 97). In contrast, the first article of Germany's constitution says: "Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority. The German people therefore acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world."

Both positions lead to the question of whether unborn fetuses should be considered human beings. The Roman Catholic Church holds the view that every human being has the dignity of a person from the moment of their conception. Thus, embryo reduction is declared to be "always […] a grave moral disorder" (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, 2008, sec. 21). Ernst (2015) outlines the explanation of this statement on the basis of the keywords individuality, potentiality and continuity.

A zygote has to be considered human, he argues, because its genetic material is something new; it is not identical with its mother's or father's DNA (individuality). Furthermore, a zygote has got the active potential to evolve as a human (potentiality). Finally, a grown-up human can gaplessly retrace his or her development to the moment of fertilization (continuity). He concedes that this argument is not a proof for the existence of a new individual from the start of a pregnancy on, but there is a reasonable probability (Ernst, 2015, p. 101).

Ernst (2015) also points out that potential arguments against this explanation are not relevant in the context of the fetal right to life: A fetus's individuality cannot be denied, because the development of additional multiples during the fetal stage is not possible. Adversaries of the potentiality-argument may assume that the potential for development is not entirely given at the moment of insemination, but they normally do not doubt its existence during the fetal stage (pp. 101ff.). As a multifetal pregnancy reduction would not be performed during the embryonic stage, but during the fetal stage, those objections are not relevant in this discussion. Finally, there is the counterargument that due to the nidation, which is an important turning point, there is no real continuity of development, but even this argument cannot deny a fetus's right to life, because the fetus has already developed out of an implanted zygote (Gründel, 2004, pp. 133f.).

A fetus's right to life ex negativo means the prohibition to kill fetuses. Following a social contractarian approach, such a prohibition can only be in force if a community of people having equal rights agree

on the prohibition and would impose sanctions on people who violate this prohibition. Fetuses (as well as children, people in a coma or elderly people) may not be able to impose sanctions themselves, therefore, some social contract thinkers hold the opinion that they are not a part of the community of people having equal rights (Graumann, 2011, p. 126; Leist, 1990, p. 54). After all, every human being faces the danger of going comatose or suffer from dementia during his or her lifetime; therefore, some contractarian philosophers postulate that a membership of the community of people with equal rights lasts for a lifetime. According to this line of argument, even if a human being loses his or her self-consciousness, self-respect, interest in survival or ability to have preferences due to a disease, this human being still has to be considered a person with the corresponding rights (Graumann, 2011, p. 126). But since there is no possible scenario in which an adult would become a child or a fetus again, why should they be granted the same rights as adults by adults, including the right to life?

This contractarian approach does not consider that fetuses do not necessarily need to be able to impose sanctions themselves in order to reach the consent of the people having equal rights about the prohibition of killing fetuses. It is likely that most people do not become murderers because they fear sanctions imposed by the potential murder victim, but because they know that society would claim the murderer's penalization. Also, people possibly not only want to see murderers punished, because they are afraid to be killed themselves, but also because of moral disgust or because they were related to the victim in some way. Similarly, adults, who consider a multifetal pregnancy reduction to be morally wrong, may argue in favor of the fetus's right to life because they expect an enrichment of their own lives from the fetus or because a related fetus's death would mean the opposite. In such a case, there would be no consent in the community of all adult people about the fetus's rights anymore. Consequently, it would be impossible to agree on a contract for the legal killing of fetuses.

Graumann (2011) links the fetus's right to life to the fetal viability, which is the ability of a fetus to survive outside the uterus (extrauterine) (p. 133). In her opinion, a fetus with fetal viability has the right to initiated premature birth, if the mother does not want to proceed with the pregnancy, regardless of whether the fetus would be disabled or not. She does not take into account that a premature birth of individual fetuses during a multiple pregnancy in order to obtain more time in the uterus for the remaining fetuses is barely possible.

Nevertheless, the criterion of fetal viability can be helpful to assess multifetal pregnancy reduction from an ethical point of view. In my view, not only the actual fetal viability should be regarded, but also the potential fetal viability. If prenatal diagnostics reveal that all the fetuses are probably viable outside their mother's womb and possible disabilities will not lead to death, multifetal pregnancy reduction must not be approved.

A more difficult question is whether the right to life of a healthy or a disabled but viable fetus weighs more than that of a fetus who portends an infaust prognosis. To kill a fetus without fetal viability could even be ethically required to preserve the other fetuses' viability. But an infaust prognosis does not always prove to be true. Even if one assumes that a fetus without fetal viability has no unconditional right to life or no right to life at all, there is still the risk to kill a fetus actually being extrauterine viable due to a forecasting error and thus violating the fetus's right to life. In case one presumes the fetus's right to life exsists, the question arises, if the fetus's right to life is more weighty than the woman's right to self-determination, because the right to life is the precondition for the right to self-determination as well as for any other rights (Graumann, 2011, p. 128).

2.2 Pro-choice: The Mother's Right to Self-determination and Her Freedom of Procreation

An embryo or fetus cannot assert its right to life against its mother, because the mother is not obliged to provide her body for the embryo, respectively the fetus, for nine months (Schockenhoff, 2013, p. 524). The mother can point to her right to reproductive autonomy. Beier and Wiesemann (2013) mention the rights to individual self-determination, to physical integrity, and the right to privacy of family and procreation as aspects of reproductive autonomy (pp. 206ff.). Concrete scopes for application of reproductive autonomy can be the wish to have a child, the wish to have no child, and the wish to have a certain child (Beier & Wiesemann, 2013, pp. 207-213).

Multifetal pregnancy reduction may call up the wish to have certain children, for instance only three children or only healthy children, but also the wish to have a child in general, if a multifetal pregnancy reduction is the only possibility to give birth to a viable child. Nevertheless, a woman's reproductive autonomy will always be limited in those cases, because in Germany multifetal pregnancy reduction will not be performed only due to the pregnant woman's request – it always requires medical indication, as explained in chapter 1.3.

Fulfilling the wish to have a certain child or to have a child is non-enforceable, because there is no legal basis for the right to become pregnant. And even if there was, the enforcement by IVF would not be guaranteed, because the treatment fails quite often. Beier and Wiesemann (2013) criticize that the right to have no child is often misunderstood as an unrestricted right to have only certain or only healthy children (p. 217). They point out that procreation always exceeds the individual point of view, thus reproductive autonomy must not be understood as absolute freedom of choice and control of one's own life (Beyer & Wiesemann, 2013, pp. 217f.).

Nevertheless, women's reproductive autonomy must be respected to the point that getting pregnant and giving birth to children are no

woman's duties and must not be claimed or taken for granted. But this does not give a clear answer on the question, whether a woman may refer to her right to self-determination after she decided on a fertility treatment, knowing this could cause a multifetal pregnancy. Schockenhoff (2013) points out that a man and woman, who willingly have sex with each other, know that intercourse could lead to a pregnancy (p. 525). So, one could argue that a woman, who decides on a fertility treatment, knows that fertility treatments increase the probability of multiple pregnancies and consequently takes this risk consciously as well.

3 Assessment

As shown, there are objections against the pro-choice arguments as well as against the pro-life arguments. Concerning multifetal pregnancies as a consequence of fertility treatments, the pro-life arguments appear to be more substantial to me. The following assessment agrees with Schockenhoff about the idea that women's right to self-determination already exists prior to the pregnancy and that a woman deciding to become pregnant by fertility treatment must consider that decision with all its bearings and risks. Furthermore, a tutioristic view will be adopted: Human dignity must be acknowledged from the moment fertilization.

Patenge (2013) proposes the criteria of human dignity and responsible procreation to assess fertility treatments properly. Multifetal pregnancy reduction as a result of a fertility treatment can be assessed based on the same criteria. If a multifetal pregnancy results from an IVF with three embryos or an uncontrolled hormonal or insemination treatment, it is irresponsible procreation. This way of procreation is associated with the idea that if a multiple pregnancy occurs, this lapse could be easily corrected per multifetal pregnancy reduction. To calculate on the potential killing of fetuses may be regarded as an irresponsible way of dealing with human life. Furthermore, if human dignity

is acknowledged to fetuses and embryos, such calculation will violate their dignity.

If an IVF is performed with only one or two embryos or if an insemination treatment has been monitored continuously and yet a multifetal pregnancy occurs, it does not have to be rated an irresponsible procreation. Parents and doctors tried to achieve the goal of the treatment – a singleton pregnancy – with all available means and tried to lower the risk of a multiple pregnancy as much as possible.

Multifetal pregnancy reduction can be performed in different scenarios, which need to be assessed individually: the fetuses might (still) be healthy, there might an inescapable competitive situation between the mother and the fetuses or among the fetuses, or at least one fetus might portend an infaust prognosis. All scenarios will be analyzed in the following.

3.1 (Still) Healthy Fetuses

At an early stage of the pregnancy, when all fetuses are (still) healthy, a fetal reduction could be performed to ensure that the other fetuses develop in a healthy way. In my opinion, such a preventive multifetal pregnancy reduction is a massive violation of the fetuses' human dignity, regardless of whether they are conceived by responsible or irresponsible procreation. Of course, the children's health is desirable, but it should not be precipitated at the cost of other fetuses. The goal should be the preservation of as many lives as possible, not depending on health or illness. Preventive multifetal pregnancy reduction implies that handicapped children are not desired, which violates their dignity. Such practices may cause severe consequences for our society: Preventive multifetal pregnancy reduction may contribute to discrimination of disabled people. Parents who decide not to have a multifetal pregnancy reduction could be accused because of giving birth to a disabled child, even though they could have prevented it by killing a fetus.

The argument that a woman's right to self-determination allows her to have a multifetal pregnancy reduction, because raising many children would get over her head, is not plausible. There would be the option to give children up for adoption instead of killing them during the fetal stage. Of course, a multifetal pregnancy poses an additional physical burden compared to a singleton pregnancy, but in case of an IVF, the woman deliberately chose the pregnancy, knowing about the potential strain. Due to that, the perseverance of the fetuses' lives should justify this additional burden.
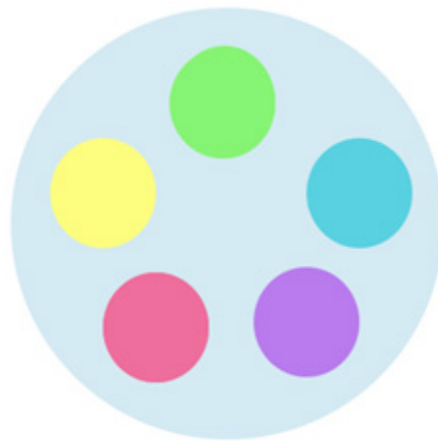

Figure 1. Preventive unselected multifetal pregnancy reduction: Random selection of the fetus(es) to be killed.

3.2 Inescapable Competitive Situation Between the Mother and the Fetuses or among the Fetuses

If one or more fetuses get into critical condition in the course of a pregnancy, the question about the ethical justification of multifetal pregnancy reduction arises again. Böckle (1989) postulates that a child's illness must not necessarily be a reason for abortion. But if there is a competitive situation between two innocent lives and after thorough diagnosis it becomes apparent that only one life can be saved, Böckle is of the opinion that the more rescuable life should be saved (col. 966). It seems that Böckle only imagines a case involving an inescapable competitive situation between mother and child here; he does not mention possible competitive situations among multiples.

Schockenhoff (2013) agrees with Böckle regarding a possible competitive situation between mother and children. He states that it appears to be ethically reasonable to accept the fetus's death in order to save the mother's life, if reliable diagnosis proves that both mother and child would die, if the pregnancy would be kept up. This does not mean that the mother's life is worth more than the fetus's life, but it is a decision between the options 'to act' and 'not to act'. Acting, i.e. performing an abortion or selective reduction, means to save at least the mother's life or even to save the mother's and the remaining fetuses' lives. Not acting, i.e. keeping up the pregnancy, will cause at least two people's deaths (Schockenhoff, 2013, pp. 523f.; Rhonheimer, 2004, p. 149). It must be considered that the mother's death usually causes the death of every fetus, but not the other way around.
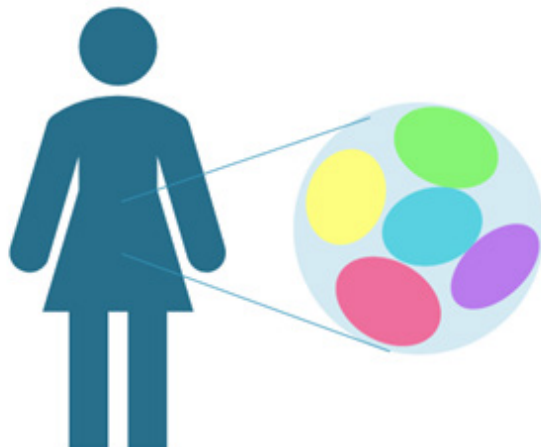

Figure 2. Inescapable competitive situation between the mother and the children: Without a multifetal pregnancy reduction, both mother and children would die.

But what about inescapable competitive situations among the fetuses? In such situations, it may not be evident which fetus's death could save the remaining fetuses. It might only be clear that every fetus would die without multifetal pregnancy reduction, but the death of fetus A could save the remaining siblings as well as the death of fetus B or fetus C or fetus D. According to Böckle's suggestion, doctors should choose the more rescuable fetuses over the less rescuable fetuses. This way, selective reduction could be ethically justified.

Figure 3. Inescapable competitive situations among the fetuses: Without a multifetal pregnancy reduction, every fetus would die. The death of each of the fetuses could save the remaining multiples lives.

But this poses a serious ethical dilemma: Which fetuses are more rescuable, which fetuses are less rescuable? Presuming that all the fetuses are viable outside their mother's womb, their health condition could be a criterion. But again, this would violate the dignity of handicapped people. On the other hand, if healthy fetuses are killed instead of viable, but disabled fetuses, the health conditions of the remaining fetuses might aggravate until there is no fetal viability at all, so none of the children could be born alive, despite the multifetal pregnancy reduction. At this point, I see no solution to how a responsible decision could be made in such a situation. However, in my opinion, it must not be an option to refrain from a multifetal pregnancy reduction and hereby accepting all the fetuses' deaths; this would be incompatible with the principle of sustainment.

3.3 Fetus with an Infaust Prognosis

The last possible scenario is fetuses portending an infaust prognosis. This means that at least one fetus will die during the pregnancy or at least one fetus will not be able to survive outside its mother's womb and this fetus's further development inside the uterus before its death would harm the other fetuses. If several doctors agree about the fact that a fetus portends an infaust prognosis and the risk of a false prog-

nosis is as low as possible, a fetal reduction may be ethically justifiable, according to the principle of saving the more rescuable.
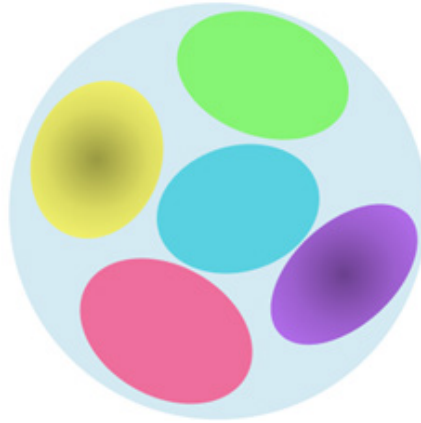

Figure 4. Fetuses with infaust prognoses: Some fetuses will die during the pregnancy or shortly after birth. Not performing a multifetal pregnancy reduction would harm the other fetuses.

4 Summary

Multifetal pregnancies carry more risks for mother and children than singleton pregnancies. This is why it is a huge problem that fertility treatments increase the probability of multifetal pregnancies. Therefore, it is crucial that both doctors and parents face up to the risks and consequences of different fertility treatments. Doing so, a fetal reduction must not be kept in mind as a subsequent curative treatment. At this point, the question about the relevance prenatal diagnostic testing (PDT) arises; it would be interesting to examine its relevance to avoid multiple pregnancies.

Multifetal pregnancy reduction should not be instrumentalized to give birth to the (most) healthy children only. The goal of the treatment should always be to sustain as many lives as possible, regardless of health or illness. This contradicts with the current medical custom, since in many cases, the weakest or sickest fetus is selected to be killed.

After discussing pro-life and pro-choice arguments, I come to believe that human life starts at the very moment of conception. Accordingly, a person's rights shall be acknowledged to a fetus as well, including the right to life. Nevertheless, I conclude that multifetal pregnancy

reduction may be justifiable in certain cases. In my opinion, multifetal pregnancy reduction in order to facilitate the other fetuses' health conditions can only be justified if the fetus selected to kill portends an infaust prognosis. The risk of a false prognosis needs to be minimized as much as possible. As far as I can see, preventive multifetal pregnancy reduction in order to avoid a premature birth or fetal disabilities cannot be ethically justified, because mortal danger for the fetuses can't be attested at this point.

In competitive situations, when lives can only be saved by ending lives, there is an ethical dilemma. Indeed, to let every fetus die is not an option, and the principle to choose the more rescuable life over the less rescuable life is reasonable, but it is still a problematic question whether a fetus's illness might be a criterion to consider its life less rescuable.

Other deliberations, which could not be considered in this article, could make the assessment more sophisticated. For instance, it would be interesting to examine if the knowledge about a performed multifetal pregnancy reduction has a mental impact on the multiples during their lives.

Up until now, this topic is only a side issue of bioethics, but a more intense analysis in the discourse of ethics is very desirable. More and more people will be confronted with this topic as the number of fertility treatments increases. Both moral theology and medicine owe it to the numerous fetuses dying due to multifetal pregnancy reduction to draw attention to the problems. Only if this procedure is widely recognized as a problem, it will be possible to find a way to effectively fulfill a woman's or couple's wish for child without the risk of multiple pregnancies and the killing of unborn life.

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The Future We Live In

Technology, Media, Visuality

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I n his 2003 novel *Pattern Recognition*, William Gibson reflects on the predictive nature of science fiction by commenting on our moment in history. He argues that speculations about the future are lost to us. Unlike our parents and grandparents, who had specific visions of what the future might bring, in the 21st century we have no future due to the nature of our present: "For us things can change so abruptly, so violently, so profoundly, that futures […] have insufficient 'now' to stand on" (p. 59). Technological progress and its social impact are no longer the subject of our fictional speculations, they change too radically, too fast. What we imagined as science fictional scenario has become a simple reflection of our contemporary technologically saturated society. The future is now, and it is already science fictional. So, instead of building a future on "insufficient 'now' to stand on," I am going to to argue, science fiction is a mode of thinking, that allows us to better understand our volatile present, it is a mode to counter what Gibson (2003) calls "risk management. The spinning of the given moment's scenarios. Pattern recognition" (ibid.). To start my speculations, I would like to venture into the past – to the point where the ground has been laid, culturally speaking, for a lot of what we consider the current state of affairs: to the moment when a science fictional future was still possible.

Cyberpunk Back in the Day

Back in the 1980s, when 'the future' was still a concept that was possible to imagine, a group of writers claimed to have been the first generation to "grow up […] in a truly science-fictional world," using literary techniques to parse the realities of daily life: "extrapolation, technological literacy" became "a means of understanding" (Sterling, 1986, p. xi). The cyberpunks, as they came to be known, embraced some key changes in technology and media of their late-capitalist lifeworld in the 1980s. Their fiction produced a vision of the future, that has since become iconic, and has lately been recognized to reflect a substantial part of our current status quo.

Central to cyberpunk aesthetics and themes are the drastically changing possibilities of science and technology – especially in their impact on the potential for humanity, not just socially but on an individual level. As Sterling (1986) makes clear, 1980s

> "technology is visceral […]; it is pervasive, utterly intimate. Not outside us, but next to us. Under our skin; often, inside our minds. Technology itself has changed. […] Eighties tech sticks to the skin, responds to the touch: the personal computer, the Sony Walkman, the portable telephone" (p. xiii).

His examples might seem quaint today, but these technologies were revolutionary at the time, giving freedom and informational processing power to the individual. With these technologies communication from and with any place on earth was possible, computer technology first became available at home on your desk, later even from your lap, and by today it is in the palm of your hand – the trajectory starts in the 1980s, but brings us to today's smartphone technology, which combines all three technologies that Sterling points out.

Cyberpunk extrapolates this new mobile and visceral technology, literalizing it as "under our skin" cyborg implants and new interfaces with computers "inside our minds". Cyberpunk imagines technology invading the human:

"The theme of body invasion: prosthetic limbs, implanted circuitry, cosmetic surgery, genetic alteration. The even more powerful theme of mind invasion: brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, neurochemistry-techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity, the nature of the self" (Sterling, 1986, p. xiii).

Csicseray-Ronay, Jr. (1992) refers to this trajectory of technology, its tendency to become smaller and more mobile, as "implosive" (p. 187). He categorizes scientific research as inwardly turned and requiring "the radical shrinking of focus onto microcosms" and:

"the impossibility of drawing clear boundaries among perceptual and cognitive, indeed, even ontological, categories. The current scientific scene is entranced by the microstudy of boundaries no longer believed to be fundamental: between life and nonlife, parasite and host, human and machine, great and small, body-brain and cosmos" (pp. 187-188).

Technology challenges boundaries: this central theme in cyberpunk has found its most famous embodiment in the figure of the cyborg. As an entity, like Gray et al. (1995) argue, it refers to the "melding of the organic and the machinic, or the engineering of a union between separate organic systems" (p. 2). The cyborg is the invasion of technology into our lifeworld; it is representative of the growing insistence that without technology we are not capable, not fully functional.

Placed in a framework of transhumanist thought, the cyborg becomes representative of a fully-technologized, "'postbiological' world in which the human race has been swept away by the tide of cultural change, usurped by its own artificial progeny," as Moravec (1988) argues (p. 1). For him, as well as for many early cyberpunk writers, the human body is a prison of flesh and blood – the world conceived as mere 'meat space'. For humanity to evolve, we will need to rely on technology, "to imagine human thought freed from bondage to a mortal body" (p. 4). Bostrom (1998) argues that technology can improve our flawed human biology. He believes that we will be able "to transcend our biological limitations by means of technology" (n.pag.). Inherent in this, though, is the view that humanity has an exceptional position, that human nature is universal and essential and through technology we can attain our

purest human form – transhumanism is humanism being reinscribed and intensified, as Wolfe (2010) has argued (p. xv).

Exemplifying this position are the cyborgs often found in popular culture and early expressions of cyberpunk. From *RoboCop* (Verhoeven, 1987) to *The Terminator* (Cameron, 1984) as Haraway (1995) has pointed out, many cyborgs are "enhanced warriors" (p. xiv), that limit the possibilities inherent in this concept. For Haraway, this imaginary of the "metal-flesh warrior" is driven by "multinational capital, ascendant technoscience, and constitutively militarized post-World War II nation states" (ibid.). It can be found in today's drone technology and virtual realities, wherever "the great technology transfer game from military practices to the civilian economy" (p. xv) takes place. Cyborgs as warriors are thus connected with a specific technocratic view of the world that places an "overarching emphasis on the machination of humans and the humanization of machines," as Nayar (2014) puts it (p. 7). Technology here becomes the utopian solution to any and all problems, even those caused by technology itself.

But cyberpunk takes this techno-utopian, human-machine hybridity one step further. In addition to the augmentation of human bodies, cyberpunk also imagines the complete dissolution of the body into virtual existence. Here, technology and media conflate to create a new reality in which all that was material can be reimagined as information. Cyberspace – the "consensual hallucination that was the matrix" as Gibson (1984) has coined it (p. 5) – is a space of complete freedom as much from the biological limitations of the body, as from the constraints of embodied reality such as the laws of physics. A perfect example of this representation thus would be the matrix (inspired by Gibson, made famous by the Wachowski siblings in *The Matrix,* 1999), in which protagonist *Neo* (Keanu Reeves) receives a god-like status for his ability to manipulate reality through his mind.

Human existence can thus, in cybernetic terms, be understood as informational patterns – as Hayles (1999) has argued. She claims that

cybernetics as a philosophy and field of thought has shaped our understanding of the human, in fact creating the concept of the cybernetic posthuman. This cybernetic posthuman, like it is dominant in cyberpunk fiction, separates the informational patterns of human consciousness from its embodiment, and stresses the Cartesian humanist position of the mind controlling the body – any body, biologcal or machinal: "In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals" (Hayles, 1999, p. 3). The self – as informational pattern – simply becomes transported into the realm of technology.

Every aspect of our life has become mediated through technology. Cyberspace, as cyberpunk imagined it, is a complete representation of the world, a simulacrum – as described by Baudrillard (1994) – replacing the world with an artificial version, a mediated image. Csicseray-Ronay, Jr. (1992) describes it as "the possibility of modeling everything that exists in the phenomenal world, of breaking down into information and then simulating perfectly in infinitely replicable form" (p. 189). What is real and what is mere representation becomes blurred and non-distinguishable.

Though cyberspace is non-material, its representation nonetheless hinges on certain metaphors of structure and control taken from material culture. Heuser (2003) has pointed out that information, data, and processes become rematerialized in the form of virtual geographies and architecture-like artifacts:

> "Cyberspace is constructed from representations of information. […] These artifacts need to be seen as functioning on several levels. A building like a pyramid symbolizes a structure of information as well as a power structure. Buildings in cyberspace are representations of data, information which stands in turn for knowledge, money, or memories. Buildings have walls (albeit virtual ones) which contain information and keep unwanted users out. The way these buildings are arranged creates a particular landscape of information" (pp. 28-29).

These types of virtual geography and other forms of visual representation of power are a central component of cyberpunk.

In fact, visuality, as defined by Mirzoeff (2011), as the "visualization of history" (p. 2), meaning an authoritative and interpretative frame for what has happened and is happening, is a key component of cyberpunk's "vaguely countercultural and romantically antiauthoritarian politics" (Bould, 2005, p. 218). Mirzoeff (2011) explains visuality as a simple idea. His example is the following sentence, uttered by police, politician, and corporation alike: "'Move on, there's nothing to see here.' Only there is, and we know it and so do they" (p. 1). Visuality is power to erase from view. It is authority to claim an interpretation of what is seen. It is the force that deters us from seeing. And the filter that determines how we are seen and by whom.

Visuality works in much the same way that current trends of digitization function – according to Mirzoeff (2011) there are three distinct 'operations': (1) classification, categorization and definition, (2) separation and social organization, and (3) justification, normalization, anesthetization (pp. 3-4).

Taking the dual forces of the digital body and the digital community for an example, the self becomes quantified through self-measurement and social algorithms. Fitness trackers report heart rate, blood pressure, activity levels, and calories burnt, while we are linked to our social media, digitally tracking events, friendships, and locations. A network of data categorizes and defines our every move. This data also separates us into unique social niches, as well as broad organizational structures, into fit and active or lazy and anti-social. In a last step, it normalizes the quantified and transparent self. Those of us without active Instagram accounts and continuous live feeds of our daily activities become outcasts – to be a digital quantified self is the normative aesthetic: fit, young, active, and visible. An ideal visualization of what we are supposed to be, what part of society can claim the right to be seen in

(social) media and in real life. Disability, old age, sickness, loneliness, on the other hand, get erased.

In cyberpunk, visuality is central to the discourse on many levels. For one, it is found in the widely-used settings of cyberpunk, in the urban sprawls and far-reaching cityscapes – from *Neuromancer's* (Gibson, 1984) Boston-Atlanta-Metropolitan Axis to *Judge Dredd*'s (Cannon, 1995) Mega-City One. It is the image of power distribution that is relevant to the city's function in visuality. The design of the city is key, as Mirzoeff (2009) argues: a "vertically segregated world in which power means being above everyone else" (p. 247). The cityscape of a future Los Angeles, as seen in *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), has become the most recognized example of this. In the opening sequence the camera slowly moves through the night sky, over densely packed vista of skyscrapers, intermixed with chimneys spouting open flames, the city lights visible all the way to the horizon. The camera then moves towards two columns of light that emanate from huge stepped pyramidal structures dominating the view. The next shot shows a flying passenger car approaching one of the pyramids, close in design to Mesoamerican structures but much bigger, shrinking as it approaches and finally being swallowed by the building.

The massive structure of *Tyrell Corporation's* pyramidal headquarters represents the architecture of power, towering over the cityscape. Nothing that happens below escapes its view and control. The structure is designed to evoke associations with ritual and faith, its resemblance to sacrificial pyramids and religious temples hinting at a connection with something beyond this earth – something godlike like *Tyrell's* power, a god among men, creator of the replicants and richest man alive.

But in *Blade Runner*, power and control also lie in the mobility to not only reign above the masses, but to move freely. In another iconic scene, when *Gaff* retrieves *Deckard* by flying a police cruiser, the camera follows *Deckard's* view on the city. As the car ascends, it passes beyond the neon lights and moving billboards of advertising and retreats

from streets and houses. Life is visible merely as lights in the night, the car gliding over any buildings, leaving the crowded streets below. In the film, authority is characterized by a lack of geographical entanglement thanks to personal aircrafts. The police and elites are granted the ultimate mobility, while the majority of people is tethered to the ground. It is the imagery of power connected to mobility in the limits of city space that functions according to the logics of visuality.

It is notable here that the authority enacting visuality is a corporation – in *Blade Runner*, *Tyrell* not only provides the labor force that literally runs the expansion of humanity into the universe, but also controls the police force and its executive powers. As Bould (2005) has pointed out, cyberpunk „inaugurated the SF of multinational capital and corporate globalization, its depiction of information circulating in cyberspace a potent metaphor for the global circulation of capital" (p. 220). In cyberpunk fiction, hegemony is control over information – any kind of information. Essentially, in the mindset of cyberpunk late-stage capitalism, information encompasses all of reality, bodies included. Everything is subsumed by corporate interest, even human and non-human bodies become the object of biopolitical control. Another classic cyberpunk film exemplifies this to an extreme: *RoboCop* (Verhoeven, 1988).

In the film the police have become subsumed by *OCP*, a private, for-profit security firm. The company has taken a form of 'ownership' of the police including the use of biological remains, should an officer die in the line of duty. When Officer *Alex Murphy* (Peter Weller) is sent into a highly crime-ridden part of town, he is killed and immediately transferred into the *OCP RoboCop* program. His body is replaced with a mechanical chassis and limbs, only parts of his brain are used as a biological control unit. The 'initiation scene' of the film reveals how the corporation enacts biopolitical power. When the newly created *RoboCop* is initially turned on, the camera shows his subjective view, scientists and managers looking down on him. One scientist announces that "we were able to save the left arm," but the project leader rejects this and

tells her to "loose the arm" (Verhoeven, 1988), thus revealing *Murphy's* body to be subject to managerial decisions.

Murphy's access to the technology of his body is restricted, the decision over which power should be granted to *RoboCop* is made by others. He is programmed; decision-making is based on algorithms that *OCP* has determined. Cadora (1995) has pointed out that technology itself is the divisive instrument to uphold hierarchies of control:

> "cyberpunk imagines a world where technology is a tool of both oppression and liberation. Poverty is pervasive in cyberpunk, and technological resources are expensive luxuries. Those without access to computers are effectively kept in the underclass" (p. 359).

The police in *RoboCop* are helplessly understaffed and outgunned, especially in terms of access to technology. *OCP* on the other hand has free access to technology and uses it to establish dominance and control. *RoboCop* is thus not a person, that is free to use the technology as a police officer, but part of *OCP's* property and restricted by its corporate interests.

In essence, the last vision of a possible future, produced from the solid now of the 1980s, is deeply entrenched in the corporatization of culture, the commodification of all aspects of life, and a cybernetic posthumanism. The Reagan-Thatcher-Kohl era of globalized, neoliberal markets and pervasive informational technology has produced a vision of the future, that has us headed for dystopia. In this world the strongest (or those with the most money) survive and everybody else needs to eke out a living, arrange themselves within the new world order. It is thus not surprising that this kind of vision garnered criticism, brought forward for example by Easterbrook (1992), who claimed that cyberpunk (via its ur-text *Neuromancer*) was "wed to exploitive technologies, obeisance to authority, and the effluence of fashion" (p. 391). Cyberpunk, then, did not challenge the status quo and critically reflect the new technologies; instead it reveled in technocratic fantasies of power and individual forms of resistance and ultimately transcendence. "You want out of this squalor?", the genre seemed to say. "[T]hen be smart,

cheat, and kill if necessary, but make it happen for yourself. You won't change the world, but you will be better off – that is all you can hope for."

Csicseray-Ronay, Jr. (1992) claims that all these "ambivalent solutions" (p. 193) of egotistical transcendence are an expression of postmodern times, of a world in which reliance on solidity and reality has become meaningless. He calls cyberpunk the "apotheosis of bad faith," ignoring the nagging "question of whether some political controls over technology are desirable, if not exactly possible" (ibid.). Instead, cyberpunk opts to reveal and depict how unreliable our world has become – what he claims is "a world of absolute bad faith" (ibid.).

A New Perspective on Cyberpunk

This was the 1980s, the height of cyberpunk as a visionary future. One could even argue that cyberpunk's current resurgence happens due to its almost prophetic description of the digitized present. Augmented and virtual worlds, commodified bodies, and smart technology that invades the body as well as our lifeworlds: current technological trends reflect developments first described in the cyberpunk imaginary, which seems to have a renaissance in current cultural formats. It seems that bad faith determines our politics, economies, media and basically every aspect of our lives. Cyberpunk has thus become a description of our reality, not of a science fictional future, but our present situation.

It would be a bleak outlook on our present to take the specific view of cyberpunk as a given that I described above, and that is also displayed by many Hollywood productions and early cyberpunk writers. But there is an alternative already embedded in cyberpunk culture: a cyberpunk imaginary that is a politically radical description of our present beyond the neo-liberal techno fantasy of early cyberpunk film and literature. A good example of this radicality of cyberpunk can be found in Haraway's (1986) appropriation of the cyborg for feminist theory. Her *Cyborg Manifesto* (1986) is a rewriting of the techno-warrior figure

as enacting "three crucial boundary breakdowns" (p. 151): that between human and animal, that between human-animal and machine, and that between the physical and the non-physical, meaning between the material and the virtual. In this, Haraway (1986) sees the potential of the cyborg as a feminist myth – a "cyborg myth […] about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work" (p. 154).

To make this contrast of positions explicit, Haraway explains the potential for unity inherent in the cyborg myth:

> "From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, about the final abstraction embodied in a Star Wars apocalypse waged in the name of defence, about the final appropriation of women's bodies in a masculinist orgy of war. From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints." (ibid.)

From this perspective, cyborgs present an identity of fragmentation and hybridity – yet nonetheless empowered by technology and able to navigate the unstable realities presented in cyberpunk. As Cadora (1995) points out:

> "The blurring between real and unreal has profound implications for notions of identity. Stable, coherent concepts of self are impossible if there is no universally consensual reality upon which to ground them. Feminist cyberpunk is full of fragmented and partial selves" (p. 368).

Identity markers, such as race, gender, sex, physical ability, and even materiality are thus challenged by cyborg identity.

This fragmented but empowered cyborg identity then allows cyberpunk to challenge the transhumanist techno fantasy of a universal and stable humanity and the male warrior-cyborg image. In recent cyberpunk fictions, this political stance has been cautiously applied, representations of posthumanity become more varied and diverse, mostly in terms of race, but also regarding gender and sex – though one has to be

aware that Hollywood and other mainstream cultural productions are somewhat resistant to incorporate too radical a change.

Nonetheless, progressive views of hybridity are found in films such as *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2017), that update the original film's positioning of women. In the 1982 original for example, *Deckard* (Harrison Ford) asserts his dominance over the frightened and insecure *Rachel* (Sean Young) in a scene that borders on assault, claiming the female replicant as an object of desire. In the sequel, *K's* (Ryan Gosling) incorporeal virtual companion *Joi* (Ana de Armas) seeks out the help of the replicant sex worker *Mariette* (Mackenzie Davis) and synchronizes their movement in order to be fully embodied in her relationship with *K*. The scene's (and the wider film's) cyborg politics are complicated: on the one hand, *Joi* is the dominant actor: she initiates the encounter, and afterwards asserts her position in her relationship with *K* by sending *Mariette* out. Moreover, all three participants are cyborg beings, replicants and virtual companions – humanist normativity is undermined by their status as non-human. On the other hand, female objectification is still very much existent in *Blade Runner 2049's* cyberpunk world. *Joi* is a companion designed to please, an object to be manipulated by (male) consumers for their own desires. There is a scene, after 'his' *Joi* is destroyed and a beaten and devastated *K* walks the dark city, in which he encounters a larger-than-life advertisement hologram of the *Joi*-brand. A naked 50-foot version of *Joi* addresses him with "Hello handsome!" and then steps out of the billboard displaying her body and flirting with *K*: "You look lonely … I can fix that." The slogan advertising the companion makes clear who will have power and subjectivity: "Everything you want … to hear … to see". Similarly, *Mariette* is a sex worker, though corporeal, she is bought for pleasure and thus an object of desire. By displaying their bodies, camera lingering on body parts and revealing outfits, and centering their stories on sexuality and desire, the film offers the women up to the male gaze of both *K* and the viewer.

What challenges this view, is the fact that *Blade Runner 2049*'s cast has become more female than its predecessor – central roles are played by women, all of which are cyborg characters, from *K's* virtual companion *Joi* to resistance fighter *Mariette* to main villain *Luv* (Sylvia Hoeks). Many smaller, but equally important roles are also played by women: *K's* police captain, the resistance elder, and above all the messiah-like figure of the replicant child. Other Hollywood productions have followed suit and presented more female characters, some even creating more diversity through inclusion of people of color, especially women of color.

For example, this is similarly present in the cyberpunk TV-production *Altered Carbon* (Kalogridis, 2018-), where three central characters are performed by women of color, adding more diversity to the cast in ethnic representation. But the most diverse cast can probably be found in the TV series *Sense8*, created by the Wachowski siblings (2015-18). The show represents equal parts men and women, features people of color from Korea, India, Kenya, and Mexico, and famously has gay and transsexual characters in lead roles.

But cyberpunk can challenge a unified and stable identity construction in more than mere casting choices. *Altered Carbon*, for example, undermines the notion that consciousness is the seat of human identity by pushing the idea to the extreme. In the show, consciousness is separated from the body via the technology of cortical stacks, which house personality traits and memory. Embodiment can be exchanged at will (given that one has the money) via both biological and artificial bodies: so-called sleeves. In the show, money affords the possibility to live forever via cloning, the use of artificial bodies and regular backups to insure against destruction of the stack. This, of course, is the ultimate transhumanist fantasy; biological limitation has been solved by technology. But the show stresses the consequences of this – a general moral decay, especially among the near-immortal methuselahs ('meths') signals a loss of humanity. Further, the series comments on the connec-

tion of identity with embodiment by repeatedly causing newly sleeved persons to be reduced to their body in interactions with other people. Protagonist *Takeshi Kovacs* (Joel Kinnaman) is re-sleeved at the beginning of the show and constantly has to resolve the conflicts that new his 'body', i.e. the police officer *Elias Ryker*, brings with it. *Kovacs* is often identified as *Ryker*, even when pointing out that he is just using *Ryker* as sleeve, a procedure relatively common in the world of *Altered Carbon*. This is usually ignored and he is still treated as *Ryker*.

An enlightening and amusing scene in "Force of Evil" (*Altered Carbon*, Kalogridis, 2018-) has the deceased grandmother of Officer *Kristin Ortega* (Martha Higareda) return in the body of a hulking criminal (Matt Biedel) for Dia de Muertos celebrations. In the scene, the family reacts shocked and irritated to *Abuela's* appearance, staring unbelievingly and constantly watchful. When the old lady gets up to use the bathroom, she makes a spectacle out of it: "Look, I am peeing standing up…!" The scene shows that identity and embodiment are linked, no one can really ignore Abuela's new body and its physical presence. She enjoys confronting everyone with her male physicality, and in dinner conversation even challenges the ideology of stacks and sleeves, pushing for a singular embodiment: "Maybe we should only get one body. But then you have to enjoy it, huh?" The show here claims an alternative to the seductions of power and immortality, "celebrating the finitude of life" – enjoying what you are given and seeing "human life … embedded in a material world of great complexity", as Hayles (1999) has argued (p. 5). By presenting embodiment as precarious and dependent on wealth, the show also points to limitations of the transhumanist fantasy. *Abuela's* new body is the only one available and affordable – even for just one night. Having to be re-sleeved in the body of a tattooed gang member is a direct consequence of *Ortega's* socioeconomic reality. The use of this technology is dependent on one's affluence, its potential is granted to the elite and not universally available.

Cultural interventions in the discourses of posthumanism are not limited to prototypical cyberpunk, as literature or film (especially in its mainstream Hollywood variety) but rather extend into cyberpunk as cultural formation and its related radical futurisms, such as Afrofuturism or Indigenous Futurisms. These are post-colonial practices of claiming the political power offered by information technology to promote non-white experiences and histories. Afrofuturist art practices, such as the photocollages from Olalekan Jeyifous and Wale Oyejide's *Africa 2081: Our Future Heritage* series or the comic series *Wakanda Forever* (Okorafor, 2018) and *Shuri* (Okorafor, 2019), celebrate African cultural heritage as well as an embeddedness in material culture and the complex web of technologies and posthuman becomings. Afrofuturism, according to Womack (2013), is "an artistic aesthetic and a framework for critical theory […] an intersection of imagination, technology, the future, and liberation" (p. 9). The cyborg figure, in the Afrofuturist perspective, becomes retooled to deal with "power imbalances and cyberculture in the West," as Bristow (2012, n. pag.) argues.

Challenging the idea of technology as a tool for oppression and instead claiming it for resistance and liberation, singer and artist Janelle Monáe, for example, uses the cyborg to present a fragmented, hybrid, and posthuman identity. She says that "the android represents the new 'other'. You can compare it to being a lesbian or being a gay man or being a black woman" (*Evening Standard*, 2011, n. pag.). With both *Cindi Mayweather* on her *Archandroid* (2010) and *Electric Lady* (2013) albums, and *Jane 57821* on her latest album *Dirty Computer* (2018), Monáe gives those others a representation. *Cindy* is directly linked to Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927) and a political renegotiation of class division and the objectification of the labor force, whereas *Jane's* presence on *Dirty Computer* challenges hegemonic biopolitical control over identity, both in terms of race and gender. As Capetola (2019) argues: "In mobilizing music to investigate the slippage between human and machine, *Dirty Computer* illustrates how cyberpunk is sonic as well as visual" (p. 2). Monáe has created what she calls an 'emotion picture' to

accompany the album and in the intro to the film explains a vision of the future in which androids – the other – are being subjected to biopolitical control and thought cleansing.

A low base-note melody sounds over a dark screen, when some smoke/fog, and two naked people appear. A cut and both are dressed in some kind of work uniform, they draw back into the dark. Monáe's voice is audible: "They started calling us computers, people began vanishing and the cleaning began." On the screen, a digital profile of an African-American man, data read-outs, and the denomination in yellow "Computer #57815" appear. The latter changes to red with the marker "Dirty", as Monáe continues: "You were dirty if you looked different, you were dirty if you refused to live the way they dictated, you were dirty if you showed any form of opposition, at all. And if you were dirty … it was only a matter of time". During the monologue images of 'dirty computers' appear, mainly women and people of color, suggesting a clear message of what normativity constitutes.

In the story frame of *Dirty Computer*, *Jane 57821* is such a non-normative being that is captured and has to undergo a memory wipe to get her to conform to the expectations of society. Her mind is manipulated by two white, male technicians, and her memories, which represent her non-conformist behavior, are extracted: "Cleaners, please initiate the nevermind," their boss orders. The first such action is connected to the song *Crazy, Classic, Life* and to a highly diverse party: people of color, queer and non-binary people, punks, and other musical and fashion deviancies (tribal markings, piercings, hairstyles) are presented. The music and the party are an expression of freedom and playfulness. The video starts with a recounting of the Declaration of Independence ("We hold these truths to be self-evident…") overlaying a police round-up of the assorted dirty computers before flashing back to the party that led to the arrest.

Capetola (2019) argues that the music represents the revolutionary potential of technology: the computers "transition to choreography,

moving in tandem with the song's synthesizer melody. They mold themselves to the beats of the song, taking more control over their movements with each verse" (p. 4). Instead of the biopolitical control they are subjected to by the system through police and technicians, Capetola continues, the "technology of synthesizers and drum machines offers a space where they can move freely. In this moment, the collective of black, female, and (gender)queer computers counters the technology of surveillance with the power of sound – and vibration" (ibid.). Cyborg identities, in their fragmented state, are shown to interact with and derive power from technology, reclaiming cybertechnology from its use for authoritative control.

At the end of the 'emotion picture', *Jane* resists the technology of systemic control through the power of her music and her cyborg identity. Instead of conforming to the system, she reclaims her otherness and escapes with both her male and her female lover. Monáe uses the radical potential of posthumanism, cyberpunk, and Afrofuturism to resist the power-fantasies of cybernetic transhumanism and offers us a different perspective.

At some point in the 'emotion picture', the center's technicians realize that what they believe to be memories are in fact not. The music videos are too stylized, they are creative inventions of the cyborg, virtual realities of otherness: of radical black resistance and non-binary gender queerness. In the context of the film, though, their status is contested, which is typical in the virtual worlds of cyberpunk. Reality is unstable, the music video's performance is another world to inhabit for the android mind. But in contrast to the fantasies of escaping the prison of flesh that classic cyberpunk imagines, these virtual realities are grounded in embodiment and reference back to material difference, to race, gender, sexuality. They manifest Hayles' (1999) rejection of "absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation" (p. 3).

And indeed, current interpretations of cyberpunk reject virtual reality as mere fantasy and as the transhumanist escape from the limitations of biology. Instead, they re-inscribe physicality, reconnecting the mind with its body; their materiality suggesting their use as technologies of both oppression and liberation. In *Altered Carbon* for example, virtual reality is used as a torture instrument by trapping a stack in a computer and forcing simulated bodily harm on a person, even repeatedly killing them. The series also reveals the possibility of using different bodies for the same procedure to make the pain more real – since bodies can be replaced, a stack can be revived after death in a new body. The body itself thus becomes the host of the simulation, a new death in each new body.

One victim of such torture, the prostitute *Lizzie Elliot* (Hayley Law), is even driven insane by the violence, after her sleeve murdered and disposed and her stack placed in a virtual world to keep her alive. *Lizzie's* brain keeps traumatically returning to her torture and her stack continues to degenerate without a body. The show introduces the artificial intelligence *Poe* (Chris Conner), who suggests trauma therapy and uses a new virtual world in order to save *Lizzie*, grow her self-esteem, and nurse her back to agency. In the end, *Lizzie* reacts to a physical rehabilitation in the form of martial arts, which allows her to regain her confidence, and even claim power and autonomy. Her stack is then placed in an artificial body, which has synthetic abilities, that allow her to manifest a cyborg identity and choose any desired appearance – prompting *Lizzy* to return to her original biological form, which is racially marked through dark skin tone and an unrestrained Afro and is thus representative of *Lizzie's* newfound stable posthuman subjectivity. While the show ignores overt mentions of race, silently presuming a post-racial society, the visual dominance of whiteness within the 'meths' and the dominance of people of color in the poorer society reveal embodied reality to still be dependent on racial difference. Choosing a racially marked body thus carries meaning for *Lizzie*, it is a statement

of a (re)discovered empowered subjectivity through cyborgian posthuman technology.

A more radical notion of the virtual and its interconnection with the material is proposed by Vint (2010), who argues that "our lives are constituted by the interpenetrations of virtual and material worlds" (p. 230). For her, both are aspects of our lifeworld and do not exist outside of each other. She says:

> "We live in a cultural moment characterized not by the replacement of the material with its simulation but rather one in which the material and the simulated are intertwined like a Möbius strip: they each have distinct identities, but we never inhabit a moment that is purely one or the other" (p. 229).

Representation and reality merge in the fully technologized and mediated world that we live in. This is most visible in military practice, where – as Vint (2010) points out – "the virtual and discursive existence of weapons of mass destruction […] merge seamlessly with the material and pragmatic reality of troop deployments, devastated cities, and body bags" (p. 231). This blending of virtual and material warfare echoes Mirzoeff's (2011) category of the "post-panoptic visuality" (p. 20), which is essentially linked to the digital technology of satellites and the analysis of big data sets. Post-panoptic visuality, Mirzoeff argues, is able to "toggle between image sets, zoom in and out of an image […] compare them to databases of previous imagery" and thus able to provide additional layers of digital information on any given material object (ibid.).

Leaving cyberpunk proper behind again, we can see such a cyberpunk-inspired visuality at play in films such as *Good Kill* (Niccol, 2014), which realistically depicts the practices of warfare as they are enacted in current US campaigns. It shows US drone pilots in the Nevada desert through virtual reality displays with post-panoptical data overlay acting through remote in Afghanistan. The film focuses on the disconnection between tactical decisions made in Washington, the virtual control of the war machine through the pilots in Nevada, and their necropolitical consequences in the war-torn material reality of Afghan-

istan. The pilots engage a simulated reality, which is connected – via our conceptual Möbius strip – with the material reality of the targets.

This connection is even more explicit and critically reflected in the Mexican independent science fictionfilm *Sleep Dealer* (Rivera, 2008). The film presents a connection of virtual and material realities foremost via the economics of labor and thus echoes Bould's (2005) claim that "cyberspace [is] a potent metaphor for the global circulation of capital" (p. 218). Vint (2010) strengthens this link by claiming that "it is essential to understand the workings of global capitalism to understand the far-reaching effects of information technology on social existence" (p. 230). In the film, nationalist forces have closed US-borders for immigration. Cheap labor is provided via virtual link and robotic remote control instead. Mexican workers are commodified to become operators of robots, completely exchangeable regarding the employer and fully restricted in their movements. As Vint (2010) points out and the film makes painfully clear for labor in the Global South, economic power, access to technology, and freedom are directly related:

> "Our exchanges with our digital fantasy worlds are mediated by economics, […] the restructuring of our work lives and prospects as we find that capital has been able to take flight globally while we have remained immured in the body and in local time and space" (p. 231).

When protagonist *Memo Cruz* (Luis Fernando Peña) starts working in one of the sleep dealer factories, he needs to physically connect with a machine. Stepping up onto a platform surrounded by wires hanging from the ceiling, he is instructed to inject large metal needles into pre-installed jacks in his body. His skeptical glance shows his doubts about this very physical act of penetration. He puts on a breathing mask and contact lenses. In a disorienting eye-line cross-cut, we see a virtual image of a robot waking up (first-person perspective) on a site in the US, on a construction of a skyscraper high above the ground. *Memo* is disoriented, has never been this high off the ground and feels vertigo set in. As the robot, he grips on to a crossbeam, whereas his physical body has no such grip, nonetheless steadying and reasserting gravity.

As the scene shows, the transition from one world (material) to another (virtual) is a physical sensation, the sensory input of height evokes vertigo. Simulation and reality are intertwined. In another scene, the controller hub in Mexico has a mechanical failure and the resulting burst of electricity kills a worker, as well as causing a failure in the robot. The film clearly shows how the virtual world is controlled via physically invasive technology that the Mexican workers have to get installed in themselves. Not only are they taking the full financial risk of getting the implants as a prerequisite to even apply for a job, they also take on any medical risks, both with the installation (e.g. sepsis) and with malfunctions that are potentially fatal. In the end, then, both the physical reality in the US and in Mexico are impacted through their virtual connection.

But the nexus of capitalism, technology, and cybernetic control is more pervasive than the sector of virtual professions. In fact, Vint (2010) has pointed out that "capitalism expands to fill all previously non-commodified spaces in private life" (p. 229) via our personal computing technology and ubiquitous devices. O'Connell (2019) connects this all-pervasive digitization of our lives with a Marxist critique of 'real subsumption' arguing that the "extraction of data and commodified information from the internet of things or our own unpaid labor in providing information/data/labor for Facebook, YouTube etc." are the basis of this subsumption (p. 11).

Shaviro (2015) sees real subsumption as

"the key to our globalized network society. Everything without exception is subordinated to an economic logic, an economic rationality. Everything must be measured, and made commensurable, through the mediation of some sort of 'universal equivalent': money or information" (p. 29).

Any and all objects, processes and goals are placed within this framework of economics. It is central here to point out that this logic of subsumption is made possible by cybertechnology. As Shaviro says: "Today we live in a digital world, a world of financial derivatives and big data.

Virtual reality supplements and enhances physical, 'face-to-face' reality, rather than being, as we used to naively think, opposed to it" (ibid.).

Cyberpunk is thus directly related to real subsumption and has consequently provided the imaginary for this enhanced reality. In the TV series *Person of Interest* (Nolan, 2011-16), for example, cybertechnology allows the complete surveillance of anyone on earth. The show centers around an AI system, that is able to predict acts of violence and can enact countermeasures – it acts through human intermediaries but uses the full range of data collected from cameras, satellites, and devices. The show thus projects visuality through real subsumption – the purchase of chemicals online, search histories of street routes to a specific public location, angry Facebook rants about the government – all register as economic interactions with digital technology.

Andrew Niccol's latest film *Anon* (2018) extrapolates on this concept even further. Through implants in their brain and eyes, everyone on earth is connected to an all-pervasive database via a technology called Mind's Eye. A constant stream of information is overlaid onto reality, filtering all kinds of available data on each person and object into the perspective of the viewer. Everyone is connected to a cloud upload called the Ether and thus, authority has complete visuality, controlling the movement and actions of everyone living. Police work consists of excavating the needed data streams from the Ether and putting together a data package that proves the crime. That is, until a string of murders happen that are not captured by the Ether – and a countervisuality is revealed. It seems possible to remove any and all traces of identity from the systems, thus becoming anonymous to the Mind's Eye and the Ether. This suggests a radical rejection of subsumption, of visuality, of biopolitical control and by that points out the potential of cybernetic technology for both oppression and liberation.

And this returns us full circle to the idea that this is not the description of a future, but a detailed account of our present. Greenfield's (2017) book on *Radical Technologies*, for example, is far from being a cy-

berpunk text, and yet his description of a typical night in Paris evokes the imaginary presented by cyberpunk:

> "In this city, everyone with a mobile phone reveals their location […]. Every transaction in the bistros and shops and cafes generates a trail, just as every bus and car and Vélib bicycle throws its own data shadow. Even the joggers in the Bois du Boulgone cast a constant, incrementing tally of miles logged and calories burned" (p. 2).

Our dependence on technology and the dominance of global corporations exerting visuality through the economics of surveillance are clear signs hinting to the fact that we are living, in the words of O'Connell (2019), in "the landscape of postcyberpunk as the fulfillment and actualization of the earlier […] imaginary" (p. 12). Cyberpunk has moved beyond being a vision of the future. Instead its perspective on the pervasiveness of information technologies, its linkages of virtual and material worlds, and finally its presentation of shifting towards a visuality of corporate control all have come to rather represent our present.

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The Horse as Topos of Imperial Whim

Lucius Verus in the Tradition of Caligula in the *Historia Augusta*

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Introduction

I f the reporting of the *Historia Augusta* is to be believed, in the 160s AD the Roman Empire was ruled by a philosopher and his philanderer step-brother. If one were to read more into the stereotypes which are used in the *Historia Augusta*, then there would be less which would reflect well on Lucius Verus, the co-emperor of Marcus Aurelius.

In what follows, it shall be reflected more precisely how, with the help of the horse as topos, Lucius Verus is partly depicted as one of the *mali principes* – that is bad emperors. Verus ruled the Roman Empire together with the famous so-called philosopher Marcus Aurelius. He was appointed as Augustus at 161 AD and was to hold this position until his death in 169 AD. Moreover, some comments providing socio-political context, which are based on the investigation of Aloys Winterling (e.g. [3]2004), should be taken into account. He points out that topic elements, that means stylistic elements or allocations which are reused in the literary context, could indicate an ambiguous form of communication which revealed that the power was not shared between the emperor and the senate. After an explanation of the sources consulted, the term 'topos of imperial whim' will be explained. Afterwards, a closer look at the topos of the horse in the senatorial historiography of Caligula will be taken in order to better contextualize the use of this topos in the historical accounts of Lucius Verus. Thus, it shall not be discussed, whether the topos of the horse was part of the real behavior of Lucius

Verus, but rather *how* the author of the *Historia Augusta* wanted to categorize him. In addition, because Verus was termed as "second Nero" in his vita, some equivalents should be highlighted.

Suetonius and Cassius Dio are the sources which report on the consulship of the horse for Caligula. Both belonged to the roman upper class, which is why their writings could be classified as critical senatorial historiography (Walter, 2011, 237). In such texts, the interaction between the princeps and the senate is in the center of the report (Schulz, 2011, 405–407).[1]

The Historia Augusta serves as a basis for the following examination of Lucius Verus. Beside an account of Lucius Verus, it comprises biographies of several other emperors. However, the dating of this source is highly controversial. Most of today's investigators adhere to the opinion that the Historia Augusta was created in the last quarter of 4th century (Fündling, 2006, 40–47).[2] This implies, that the time between the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus as well as the creation of the Historia Augusta is quite a bit further apart than assumed by most other opinions. For that reason, the images of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus could have become further divorced from reality. In addition, there are not many contemporary testimonies about Lucius Verus, which could have given us more information about his character and his behavior (Stein, 1899, 1832–1834).

When imagining the/an author of the Historia Augusta, one thinks of a person who was close to the senatorial class (Wallinger, 1990, 12), because the Historia Augusta is clearly part of a historical account centered on this class.[3] Due to the heterogeneity of the corpus, a special aim for writing the Historia Augusta could not be determined. In the vita Veri, at least two possible tendencies could be spotted: firstly, the appraisal of an emperor between a bonus and a malus princeps, so that their acts and behavior could be judged. Secondly, the promotion of Marcus Aurelius's status by the criticism of Verus. This is also supported by the fact that Verus was never called a malus princeps in his vita and

is just moved close to such a princeps. This was done because a malus princeps could not rule at the same time with the revered Marcus Aurelius. If Verus would have been called a malus princeps, it would have been simultaneously the fault of Marcus Aurelius. On the one hand, because he announced Lucius Verus as a princeps and on the other hand, because he could not take responsibility for his behavior. Thus, making Lucius Verus a malus princeps would have tarnished Marcus Aurelius' reputation (Hose, 2011, 119).

In order to outline Verus's inferiority in contrast to Marcus Aurelius, the author uses the "topos of imperial whim." This expression could be set in relation or in contrast to the tyrant topic or 'Caesarenwahn' and is a more neutral form for the topos which is burdened by neither the Greek origin of the tyrant topic nor the historically difficult history of the concept of 'Caesarenwahn'. While the expression 'tyrannis' was used as a politically tendentious term in archaic lyric by aristocrats to defame each other (Cobet, 2002, 948), the term 'Caesarenwahn' got popular in Germany after Ludwig Quidde's essay about Caligula (Quidde, 311926). Because the last term often contains the question of mental illness (Kurz, 2005, 184–185) highlighted with the help of tyrant topic, the term 'topos of imperial whim' is preferred for the following investigation. All in all, expressions like 'tyrant topic' or 'Caesarenwahn' are used to help explaining the actions of emperors. Tyrant topic and the accusation of Caesarenwahn could be found against emperors like Caligula, Nero, or Commodus among others. In the time of the principate, tyrant topic was used in the contexts of moral acts (Priwitzer, 2009, 110). Thus, the most common accusation used is luxuria in the form of prodigality, compulsive eating and alcoholism. Moreover, those expressions are used in the context of excessive banquets for the lower class or the wearing of luxurious clothes. In addition, the criticism of crudelitas often manifests as form of politically motivated murder, mistreatment, mutilation, and cruel fun (for every accusation mentioned above, see Priwitzer, 2009, 115–155).[4] With the help of Flaig (1992) and Winterling (32004), it is possible to examine the seemingly arbitrary

acts of emperors as an attempt to stabilize and legitimize their rule. Therefore, the topos of imperial whim describes all acts of an emperor, which the military, the senate or the plebs urbana could interpret as a transgression.

Caligula and Incitatus

A topic element of imperial whim which remains preserved for centuries, is the element of the horse. One of the best-known examples is Caligula's wish to make a horse, Incitatus, a consul. Following Winterling's concept, this act shows Caligula's attempt to demonstrate the aristocracy's powerlessness and to criticize its lifestyle (e.g. Winterling, 32004, 99–100),[5] so that the consulship of the horse ultimately aims at the destruction of the old hierarchy (Winterling, 2008, 132).[6] Caligula pushed this destruction ahead by experimenting with new, but apparently non-adaptable forms of rule (Winterling, 1999, 204). By offering the consulship to an animal, Caligula both insults the most important career goal and the highest honorary title within the aristocracy, and simultaneously reveals their powerlessness (Winterling, 32004, 95–96).

Incitatus is only mentioned in two surviving documents of the time of the principate, those by Suetonius and Cassius Dio.[7] Suetonius reports that Caligula gave Incitatus a stable of marble, purple blankets, collars with precious stones, and domestic servants (Suet. Cal. 55,3).[8] The servants and the other recorded utensils are all needed for the reception of guests. The horse gets its own domus, its own household, and consequently its own power of decision. All in all, the materials must get special attention in this context because the representation of splendor and magnificence is often used in imperial discourse to appraise single emperors (Cordes, 2017, 24). Especially purple was a status symbol of the rich upper class in antiquity (Kloft, 2007, 67), and in the high imperial period was a part of the emperor's symbolic power (Brok, 1982, 357). By giving the horse purple materials it is therefore associated with the domus principis. Moreover, purple was for example used

in the literary discourse as trademark of the tyrant (Priwitzer, 2009, 136). Clothes with gold or precious stones could be also refused by the aristocracy as being too luxurious. In summary, it becomes clear, that Caligula deprives the aristocracy of the only part through which they could compete with the emperor by making their actions in the context of luxuria look ridiculous (Winterling, 32004, 76).

While Suetonius ascribes Incitatus a whole *domus*, Cassius Dio reports that Caligula invited Incitatus to a banquet (Cass. Dio. 59,14,7). The banquet was a considerable element of status manifestation for the aristocracy (Winterling, 2011b, 32). It is not clear, whether (or not) Caligula invited the horse together with other aristocrats. If so, Caligula would have directly demonstrated to them their powerlessness and unimportance. He discredited the aristocracy by making them aware of being equal to animals and this in a field, which was a central element of their social status (Winterling, 2011b, 32).

Furthermore, Caligula satirized the amicitia,[9] the relation to the emperor, which could give aristocrats a prospective of promotion and therefore the courting for imperial favor (Winterling, 2011, 216). This was accomplished through Caligulas' willful actions or interference, and demonstrated the aristocracy's ambiguous communication with the emperor (Winterling, 2011a, 208–209). Those forms of communication become very clear in Suetonius (Cal. 27,2):

27 [2] […] Another, who has offered his life for the same reason [for the health of Caligula; MBS], but delayed to kill himself, he turned over to his slaves, with orders to drive him decked with sacred boughs and fillets through the streets, calling for the fulfilment of his vow, and finally hurl him from the embankment.

Here, Caligula insists on the observance of the oath that a senator had sworn during Caligula's illness. He had promised to die for the health of the emperor, which is why, according to the tradition at Suetonius after Caligula's recover he was thrown to his death from an embankment.

Cassius Dio, whose main emphasis in the Caligula-biography on the presentation of food, tells that Incitatus is served golden barley and it gets to drink from golden goblets (Cass. Dio 59,14,7). If the horse were to stand as a symbol for the aristocracy this would underline the aristocratic decadence seen in the writings of Suetonius. Altogether a contemporary could have seen these acts as transgressive. The representation of the horse in the context of the emperor's change in the social rank stems from those transgressions (Ronning, 2011, 260). Caligula, with the help of symbolic political actions, made the aristocracy aware of their ambiguous communication (Winterling, [3]2004, 100).

Acts of transgression could also be found in the area of circus games. Because Caligula was described as a supporter of the green circus faction, his subjective interests for Incitatus are further reinforced (Suet. Cal. 55,2–3; Cass. Dio 59,14,7; Flaig, 2014, 272). The favoring of the green faction was described by other emperors too – especially by those who are moved towards or described as mali principes like Nero and Elagabalus.[10] Moreover, the estrangement from the aristocracy was increased with Caligula's acting "like one of the crowd" (Cass. Dio 59,5,4). Because of this partisanship in the context of chariot races and therefore in public space, not just the aristocracy would be affected by the acts of Caligula, but the plebs urbana also. During public games, this group was able to get in direct contact with the center of power (Flaig, 1992, 58) and, thusly, to make demands[11]. Because of the partisanship of the princeps, however, the communication gets more difficult for the plebs because they cannot express their preferences without hindrance (Flaig, 1992, 91).[12] All in all, the tradition of the topos of imperial whim assured the aristocratic memory of those incidents in different areas of living and helped the aristocracy to assess emperors on a scale of good or bad.

Lucius Verus and Volucer

Like Caligula, Lucius Verus is described as a man of the masses. Differences to the aristocratic behavior which were violated by Verus and Caligula can be seen. The Historia Augusta tells of Verus's life before his proclamation as princeps, that he would have lived as "a private citizen" (Hist. Aug. Ver. 3,4). The expression of 'private citizen' must be taken with a grain of salt, because during this period he was part of the emperor's family. Because of that he was still in the center of public attention. Nevertheless, the postponement in succession enabled him to run more freely in chariot races than a princeps.[13] Should he not have changed his behavior when he was princeps, it is easily possible that exactly this attitude caused a lack of understanding on the part of the aristocracy.

A reason for using the topos of the horse might have been the rejection of the aristocracy due to the new form of rule – the double principate. Similar to Caligula it could therefore have been an attempt to protest against an unpopular political development (Schrömbges, 1988, 189). This development came about because Marcus Aurelius changed the structure of rule abruptly (Flaig, 2014, 271) and announced a second *princeps*. This announcement was to date an unprecedented development in principate. As Marcus Aurelius was propagated as successor over a long period (Kuhoff, 1993, 196) and behaved exemplarily, it is possible that negative associations are transferred to the more unknown *princeps*.

In the vita Veri, there are several mentions of Verus's affection for circus games; the horse Volucer is mentioned twice. The first mention focuses on Verus's interest in circus games (Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,1).[14] It was already possible to observe Caligula's interest in circus games. By depicting this great interest in the games, the author could make it clear that in the eyes of the aristocracy, Verus comes too close to the plebs. In fact, a possible goal of Verus's could well have been the demonstration of a civilis princeps, a ruler who did not despise the pleasures

of the plebs. For such a princeps it was important to support a faction no matter its color (Cameron, 1976, 104). Thereby, he could have contrasted himself from Marcus Aurelius and performed a different role in the double principate. But as a result, he may have lost acceptance among the aristocracy, as he apparently attached more value to the games than to political affairs. These political affairs included not only answering administrative inquiries, but also planning war. Thus, this passage is also an indication of Lucius Verus's portrayal as a poor general, which is often highlighted by tyrant topic; this despite the fact, that Verus spent a large part of his reign in the east of the Roman Empire, where he had to defend the Roman Empire against the Parthians (Priwitzer, 2009, 147; Schmidt, 1984, 23). In contrast to Verus, Marcus Aurelius clarifies his aversion to all kinds of games (M. Aur. ad se ipsum 1,5), which means that Marcus Aurelius devoted himself to the games on an appropriate scale. Because games simultaneously ensured acceptance for the emperor by the people, it seems that Marcus Aurelius was aware of the importance of the games regarding his acceptance (Schmidt, 1984, 28). In contrast to Marcus Aurelius, who in his meditations renounces any partiality for a circus faction, Lucius Verus has a clear favorite: like Caligula, he is said to have openly sided with the Greens (Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,2). The green faction's support may have disrupted communications between emperor and plebs urbana. As with Caligula, the latter could barely support their favorites without fear of attracting negative attention. This finds its climax when Lucius Verus, "was constantly abused by the Blues" what Cameron called "an undignified spectacle" (Cameron, 1976, 179).[15] In this context, "Blues" can be interpreted in two different ways. On the one hand, it could refer to the factiones, the racing stable and its team. On the other hand, it could stand for the followers of the Blues from the plebs urbana and the aristocracy..[16] Thus, these abuses can be related to the fact that the author might have wanted to highlight that either the Blues triumphed more in chariot races and Verus therefore had to suffer latent abuse, or

that the followers of the Blues, due to a perceived transgression within the framework of circus games, openly rebelled against the emperor.

We see Verus's partisanship reaching its peak, when it is said of him that "he had a golden statue made of the 'Green' horse Volucer" (Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,3). Suetonius reports similar to Nero: that "he [Nero; MBS] used to play every day with ivory cars on a board" (Suet. Nero 22,2), like Verus, favored the faction of the Greens, and later even appeared in the circus as a charioteer (Suet. Nero, inter alia 22,2; 24,2; Cass. Dio 62,15,1 [=Xiph. 166,17–169,10 R. St.] and Cass. Dio 63,6,2–3). While in the description of Nero, however, it is more likely to assume that he played with a toy and showed overall only a general interest in chariot races, the statuette has more far-reaching meaning in the vita Veri; it can be seen as a symbol of exaggerated partisanship for one horse.[17]

From the fourth section of the vita Veri, significant parallels are drawn to Caligula. For example, the horse Volucer is served "raisins and nuts instead of barley", it is wrapped in purple blankets and gets a right to visit in the palace of Verus (Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,4). While the accusation of luxuria in Caligula's is evidenced only by the materiality (marble stall, gilded grains etc.), the author of the vita Veri explicitly refers to various foods. With regard to Volucer, the taking of macabre traits of prodigality[18] play a decisive role (Haehling, 1991, 102). By feeding raisins to an animal, the ancient roman ideal of austerity and modesty (Haehling, 1991, 100) could have been suspended.

To wrap the horse in purple blankets is another clue that there may have been a transgression. But in the example of Verus, the provision of purple fabrics seems to be more of a sign of favor for the horse, rather than a mocking of the aristocracy. Nonetheless, this could lead to a disruption of communication between the emperor and the aristocracy as purple was normally reserved for this social class, as we heard by Caligula before. Additionally, the reproach of the racehorses' humanization can also be found in the accounts of Nero, which further connects

him to Caligula. For example, Cassius Dio mentions that Nero dressed "even the famous racehorses who had their best time behind them, like people with the ordinary street dress [...] and [honored] them with donations for their feeding" (Cass. Dio 61,6,1 [=Xiph. 149,30–150,10 R. St.]).

Less pronounced than in the sources concerning Caligula is the element of 'imperial reception'. While Caligula allows the horse to attend a banquet[19] and grants him his own domus, in the Historia Augusta, Verus merely had the horse guided to the "House of Tiberius" (Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,4). Thus, the latter focuses on the reception of the guests, so that one can speculate that Verus either mocked the aristocratic habits of receiving guests or – more likely – he himself is criticized by the author of the vita, because of the guests he received. For among the 'bad emperors', it is narrated, that they meddled with charioteers, gladiators, and stage artists and were influenced by them (Priwitzer, 2009, 120).

The horse Volucer is also credited with a tomb at the Vatican hill. The fact that a racehorse got its own tomb was not uncommon (Junkelmann, 2000, 93). Junkelmann names a grave inscription for the racehorse Spendusa. More revealing here seems to be the place of its burial, which is located near Hadrian's Crypt, so that the horse was posthumously treated like a human and received with posthumous veneration.

Through Verus's favoritism, the role of racehorses in the plebs seems to have boomed. Thus, it is described that also prizes for the animals began to be awarded and that the Green faction increased the prices for the performance of Volucer (Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,5–6).[20] The latter again draws parallels with Nero. Due to Nero's enthusiasm for chariot races the factiones demanded prices that the praetors and consuls were no longer willing to pay (Cass. Dio 61,6,2 [=Xiph. 149,30–150,10 R. St.]). Cassius Dio reports that because of this, a praetor trained dogs instead of horses for the chariot race (Cass. Dio 61,6,2 [=Xiph. 149,30–150,10 R. St.]).

In another passage, after the author calls Verus a "second Nero" (Hist. Aug. Ver. 10,8),[21] Verus is given "a crystal goblet", which he called "Volucer" after the horse's name (Hist. Aug. Ver. 10,9). In antiquity, crystal goblets were considered to be the most precious of all glasses (Bischop, 2007, 165). Nero in particular is known for his collection of magnificent glasses (Bischop, 2007, 165). Additionally, the fact that this glass "surpassed the capacity of any human draught," (Hist. Aug. Ver. 10,9) once again criticizes the alleged excess of Verus and makes him comparable to Nero in the field of luxuria.

Contrary to the tradition of Caligula, the author of the vita Veri did not assume Lucius Verus to have conferred the consulate to a horse. This may also be due to the fact that the area of competence for the granting of the consulship lies not only with one emperor, but with Marcus Aurelius *and* Lucius Verus. Therefore, the rumor that Verus had planned to grant the consulship to a horse ultimately would have defamated Marcus Aurelius.

Overall the vita Veri discusses many aspects of luxury, excess, and forms of reception in the context of the horse to criticize Verus. But, moreover, I believe that only a few connections to Verus in the vita Veri can be seen as factual, as the references to Caligula predominate in the vita 200 years after Verus's death.

Conclusion

If one believes in Marcus Aurelius's annotations, Lucius Verus seems to have been quite a fan and supporter of chariot races. The parallels to Caligula and Nero shown above permit us to draw conclusions about the use of the topos of imperial whim in the vita Veri. It seems to predominate due to the many clear parallels to Caligula. The reason for this can be found in the large time interval and the higher regard for Marcus Aurelius. Verus spent the majority of his co-reign in the East, far away from the metropolitan aristocracy. Maybe because of this, there is so little known about him. Moreover, his absence from Rome made it

easier to apply topoi on him. It must not be forgotten, in stark contrast to the whole topos, that Verus successfully fended off the Parthians in the East.

Since the use of topoi of imperial whim often include transgressions, Verus's actions – especially in the context of circus games and chariot races – could have been perceived by the aristocracy as exceeding the norms of his time. At the time of the *Historia Augusta's* creation, it is likely that the author wanted to bring to mind exactly those transgressions that became clear in the description of Verus. In addition, the author could have used such topic elements to highlight Marcus Aurelius's position. References to Nero connected with the horse can be found, when the author wants to highlight Verus's prodigality.

Moreover, the similarity to Caligula is expressed by material elements in connection with *luxuria* as well as by the element of a horse having its own household or banquet, which are all to be found in the *Historia Augusta*, albeit in a slightly modified form. By referring to Caligula it becomes clear that the author of the *Historia Augusta* above all wanted to emphasize Verus's excess and the possible transgressions affiliated with them.

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1 For another classification of Cassius Dios s. Schmidt (1999) and Kemezis (2012). Since Cassius Dio and Suetonius belonged to the Roman upper class (Suetonius came from the courtly milieu, Cassius Dio from the senatorial rank [Walter, 2011, 237]). It should be noted in the case of Dio that although he names the transgressions of the emperor but does not refer to any misconduct of the senate (Hose, 2011, 120 and 123).

2 Fündling gives a brief summary in his examination of the vita Hadriani. There he points out, that before 1889 the period of 293 to 330/337 AD was accepted as creation period of the corpus. The period between 337 to 351 which was postulated until 1953, is mostly not supported in today's investigation. The time of emperor Iulian, around the year of 362 was given up. The creation in the 6th century is refuted nowadays (Fündling, 2006, 40–47).

3 Just by noticing the testimonials handed down from earlier times one could make out as target group a pagan upper class with senatorial origins (Wallinger, 1990, 11–12). The reception in other circles should not be excluded. But they would have missed some allusions and parodies.

4 The term includes incest, rape and feminine behavior as well (Priwitzer, 2009, 137–145).

5 The horse is mentioned at a time, in which – following Winterling – the transgressions of Caligula were limited on linguistic and symbolic acts (Winterling, 2011b, 32). This changed 39 AD, when Caligula began to take aristocrats to court (Winterling, 32004, 90).

6 David Woods points out that the horse's consulate could be seen in the context of the candidature for the position as consul of Asinius Celer or Claudius (Woods, 2014, 775–776), therefore Caligula would have merely mocked single aristocrats instead of the whole aristocracy.

7 Flavius Iosephus, who was born during the reign of Caligula, just writes about Caligula's favorite charioteer Eutychus (Ioseph. ant. Iud. 19,257).

8 Cf. Suet. Cal. 55, 3: "[…] Besides a stall of marble, a manger of ivory, purple blankets and a collar of precious stones, he even gave this horse a house, a troop of slaves and furniture, for the more elegant entertainment of the guests invited in his name; […]." Suetonius cites Incitatus especially in the context of luxuria (Suet. Cal. 55, 3; Cass. Dio. 59,14,7). Kloft defines luxury according to Sombart as what goes beyond what is necessary in quantity and / or quality (Kloft, 2007, 65).

9   Cf. for this term the essay from Winterling (2011a). An amicitia-relationship with the emperor was particularly important for the aristocracy, for example, to improve their own career opportunities (Winterling, 2011a, 216).

10   It is interesting to observe that the faction of the Greens is called primarily by the emperors, who later went down in history as tyrants. See Caligula (Suet. Cal. 55,2; Cass. Dio 59,14,6), Nero (Plin. n. h. 33,90; Suet. Nero 22,1; Cass. Dio 63,6,3 [=Xiph. 172,18–175,26 R. St.]), Commodus (Cass. Dio 73,17,1 [=Xiph. 275,19–278,4 R. St., Exc. Val. 321–324) and Elagabalus (Cass. Dio 80,14,2 [= Xiph. 349,31–350,26 R. St., Exc. Val. 411]); Lucius Verus is also referred to as a follower of the Greens (Hist. Aug. Ver. 4,8) (Pollack, 1909, 1955).

11   Chariot races were usually held during the ludi publici but could always be organized by an emperor outside of these games (Hönle, 1997, 1214 and Weeber, 2007, 186). The plebs could use their power by spreading rumors as it can be seen by Nero as Flaig (2003) points out. In contrast to the plebs, the senate was an essential opponent of the princeps (Timpe, 2011, 132). Moreover, if the princeps fancied a charioteer party, he could show himself as part of the masses. Thus, the princeps can use his presentation as political calculation (Junkelmann, 1990, 134).

12   This had taken on extreme traits in Nero, who had publicly acted as a charioteer and, despite being defeated, was named the winner of the race (Suet. Nero 24,2 and Cass. Dio 63,14,1 [=Xiph.177,26–178,25 R. St.]). Cassius Dio accuses Caligula of having poisoned the best and most famous horses and charioteers of the other faction (Cass. Dio 59,14,5), thereby depriving the princeps of partiality in an arbitrary manner. The term mali principes includes inter alia Caligula, Nero, Vitellius and Domitian; Priwitzer counts Lucius Verus to the mali princeps. too (Priwitzer, 2009, 120).

13   Winterling emphasizes that even Caligula's interest in chariot races has hardly differed from that of the noble youth of Rome (Winterling, 32004, 77).

14   Cf. Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,1: „Such interest did Verus take in the circus-games that frequently even in his province he dispatched and received letters pertaining to them."

15   Moreover, Cameron disputes the thesis that the overwhelming majority of blue members belong to the upper class and members of the Greens belong to the lower classes (Cameron, 1976, 74).

16   Junkelmann (1990, 131) points out that the word 'factiones' in ancient parlance refers to the organizational structure – driver, stableman, wagon-builder and 'management'

17   If one regards gold and silver as materials of the gods (Cordes: Kaiser, 38), aristocratic readers maybe attribute to Verus a god-like worship to the horse. This could then have been perceived as a transgression. Furthermore, with the help of the possible godly representation of the horse through the golden statuette, the author of the vita Veri may have wanted to show that Verus snubbed the aristocracy, as Volucer was assigned a position between man and God in the rank order 'Animal – Man – God' (Winterling, 2011b, 33).

18   According to Haehling (1991, 104–105), the writer of the Historia Augusta served, the eating habits of rulers as an indicator for evaluating ruler qualities. The feeding of explicitly mentioned foods can be interpreted as an indication of Verus's wastefulness so that he is moved here near bad emperors.

19   On the importance of banquets see Winterling, 2011a and Stein-Hölkeskamp, 2015.

20   Hist. Aug. Ver. 6,5–6: "It was because of this horse that gold pieces and prizes first began to be demanded for horses, and in such honor was this horse held, that frequently a whole peck of gold pieces was demanded for him by the faction of the 'Greens'."

21   The author explicitly points out, that Verus was not well known for cruelties (Hist Aug. Ver. 10,8).

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