

Cosmopolitics and Biopolitics

*Ethics and Aesthetics
in Contemporary Art*

Edited by Modesta Di Paola

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Placing life at the centre: towards a more-than-human cosmopolitics

Christian Alonso

Introduction

To be an artisan and no longer an artist, creator, or founder, is the only way to become cosmic, to leave the milieus and the earth behind. The invocation to the Cosmos does not at all operate as a metaphor; on the contrary, the operation is an effective one, from the moment the artist connects a material with forces of consistency or consolidation.¹

Ce and Kina are members of Quimera Rosa, self-defined as a laboratory for experimentation at the intersection of identity, gender, sexuality and technology through performance and bio-art practices. On occasion of the residency at Barcelona-based art centre Hangar they have been unfolding the research project *TransPlant* in the frame of the programme *Prototyp_ome* from March 2017 onwards. Conceived as a co-laboratory cluster comprised by Hangar (Barcelona), Barcelona Biomedical Research Park (PRBB), DiYBioBarcelona Faborytory (Barcelona) and Pechblenda (Calafou, Anoia), the open residencies programme under the name of *Prototype_ome* aims at re-visiting and rethinking co-design and co-developing processes, tools and technologies for biological exploration focussing on low-cost diagnoses for health co-management. It stands for experimentation in the field of artistic creation with open-source technology engaged in health prevention, treatment and diagnosis from a feminist, Do it Yourself (DIY) and Do it with others (DIWO) perspective. The main objective of the programme as stated in the public call is twofold: on the one hand it is aimed at obtaining easy-to-use replicable, and understandable prototypes involving both grassroots collectives and citizens in their development. On the other hand, it is intended to contribute to the critical mass of existing processes

¹ DELEUZE, Gilles; GUATTARI, Félix (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, p. 345; Bian Massumi, trans.

and tools in the field of biological research by rethinking and re-designing them according to needs of the artists, users, makers and scientists, fostering knowledge transfer and empowerment within the collective involved.²

The project *TransPlant* by Quimera Rosa is inscribed in the specific theme on *tools and techniques*, oriented towards the reproduction of low-cost tests and the implementation of a human papillomavirus (HPV) mobile laboratory. These guidelines give shape to the research process entitled *TransPlant: my disease is an artistic creation*, a branch of the general project *TransPlant: green is the new red* that seeks to articulate multiple processes of transition towards becoming plant - cyborg - machine through biohacking tactics. Transplant had an earlier unfolding in the context of the exhibition “Entropy” and on the occasion of the Bandits-Mages gatherings at the Transpalette Art Center in Bourges, where former member of Quimera Rosa Yan, got an RFID chip implanted into this body and decided to change his name to Kina, a way of signalling the transition started. This session also included a tattoo with chlorophyll ink on Kina’s body depicting an *Elysia Clorothica*, a green sea slug that is capable of performing photosynthesis using solar energy via chloroplasts from its algal food.

TransPlant has evolved ever since towards the development of photodynamic therapy to treat *Condyloma acuminata* or genital warts caused by human papilloma virus of certain subtypes within the 150 types known.³ The point of departure of their research-based artistic project is a situated one: the nomadism as methodological, embodied and embedded practice of resistance from the side of the two members of Quimera Rosa,⁴ the lack of medical coverage to treat Kina’s HPV, and the search for a chlorophyll derivative to treat condyloma. These ingredients intertwine with the transversal question of medical assistance and drug access: Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is not an alternative medicine practice. On the contrary, it is being investigated by mainstream medicine in public health institutions such as Hospital Clínic (Barcelona) and only used in private health centres to treat HPV. As an addition, the required gel for PDT is patented, and costs five euros if one is a legal European resident enjoying public medical coverage, being 200 euros otherwise. At this point, the goal of TransPlant is to replicate this treatment in order to make it accessible through experimentation, and the publication of the

² https://hangar.org/en/news/convocatoria-per-a-tres-residencies-en-el-colaboratori-prototyp_ome

³ <http://quimerarosa.net/transplant/>

⁴ I would like to thank Helen Torres for bringing this question into the discussion that took place on occasion of one of the open labs on June 2017. <https://helenatorres.wordpress.com>

process and the results. It is in this sense that the project defines itself as feminist: to replicate an affordable therapy for people excluded from medical public health systems to treat a widely spread sexually transmitted virus, to foster a research, experimentation and dissemination network on DIY-DIWO therapies, and the empowerment of classified bodies targeted as both abject and disposable.⁵

Thinking about how this ethical-aesthetical-political, situated and embodied practice counteracts mechanisms of production of sexualized, naturalized otherness by undermining dualisms that justify hierarchical systems of dominance and building instead human and non-human sustainable assemblages, it seems pertinent to bring the notion of cosmopolitanism into the foreground, asking how useful it may be today, what problems it may resolve and what problems it may bring. As we feel the chained and multifaceted effects of climate change, resource depletion, raising inequalities, and the diverse political and cultural crises that distinguish our societies, it becomes imperative to address these problems not in an isolated way but as relational, urging us to imagining and inhabiting forms of *being together otherwise*.

Given the different challenges we face in a moment when it is easier to think about the end of the world than the end of capitalism, the notion of cosmopolitics as the tool invested in the task of thinking mutual coexistence developed by contemporary thinkers may cast light in this respect. In this essay I will first present a general outline of historical roots of cosmopolitanism as divergent from current accounts of cosmopolitics, this later seen as a fundamental tactic of estrangement when building more-than-human world based on co-dependency and reciprocity. I then move on to a reflection on the role of vital materialism and feminist posthuman thought in fostering new attachments and care for absent and excluded participants in a deeply stratified world through the politics of location. Finally, I will conclude by arguing how in my view *TransPlant* can be considered an expression of what I call more-than-human cosmopolitics.

From cosmopolitanism to cosmopolitics

Since its first formulation in the sixth century BC by Diogenes the Cynic, the concept of cosmopolitanism, (from the Greek ‘kosmos’ and ‘politês’ or ‘cit-

⁵ <https://www.gridspinoza.net/researchers/quimera-rosa>

izen of the world” as opposed to the preeminent idea of City-State or Greek community) has evolved and expanded to include very diverse perspectives that may encompass a sense of belonging to a global community. Beyond their nuances, one could argue that cosmopolitanism has been traditionally understood as the belief that claims that human beings considered as a whole, regardless of their religion or nationality, conform a single community that is governed by a shared morality. Subjects who belong to this community are called *cosmopolitans*. Together with the Cynical school, the foundations of the philosophical tradition of cosmopolitan thought must be found in the Stoics, who developed this notion departing from the idea of concentric circles (subject, family, citizens, humanity) recognized by affinity or the sense of belonging (*oikeiôsis*). It is Immanuel Kant, however, who lay the ground through the concept of the cosmopolitical law (*ius cosmopoliticum*), based on the principle of universal hospitality, which had to be extended towards the surface of the earth, understood as shared heritage, to ensure the common good.⁶

While modern philosophy has configured a conception of cosmopolitanism around the notion of “world” or “earth” understanding humans as the only members of this “big community”, contemporary thinkers on the cosmopolitan predicament extend this sense of belonging to the entities that inhabit a “cosmos” or the “universe”, subverting moral universalism for the politics of common world and decidedly linking *being cosmopolitan* with *being ethical*. This shift could be considered as a response to the consequences of war, the burden of colonialism, and social and economic inequalities engendered by Western colonialism. These showed that it is not enough to be part of this community, but one has to undertake commitments for active citizenship to be exercised. Furthermore, the current destructive forces of events encourage us, as Claire Colebrook notes, to think not-globally, for it is precisely that all-encompassing thought that precludes a form of thinking on the consequences of globalism:

The usual figures of the bounded earth, the ideally-self-balancing cosmos, the interconnectedness of this great organic home of “ours” are modes of narrative self-enclosure that have shielded us from confronting the forces of the present [...] there can be no encompassing global thought, for insofar as we think we are fragmented by various locales, figures, lexicons, disciplines and desire, but we

⁶ This was first developed by Immanuel Kant in his essay *To Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch* (German: *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein Philosophischer Entwurf*, 1795).

nevertheless are caught up in a globe of action where no intent or prediction will be enough to secure or predict the outcome of any action.⁷

Against a static notion of cosmopolitanism understood as a vehicle of tolerance that presupposes a common good, contemporary thinkers use the term “cosmopolitics”, recognizing politics (*politikus*) as the diverse ways of building a common world that is perpetually in constant constitution. This approach does not limit its scope to human beings but encompasses every living entity in its planetary dimension. Politics is understood here as “the building of the cosmos in which everyone lives, the progressive composition of the common world”, as argued by Bruno Latour (2007: 813). And here the important word is *composition*, understood as the very act of making the world we want to compose, including the question of the entities we want to build it with.

Contrary to the notion of a naturalized-given, pre-existing “common good world”, the world is here seen as “something we will have to build, tooth and nail together” (LATOUR, 2014: 450-462). Against the politics-as-usual that stands for a politics of divergent visions of a given factual world, with its given agents and systems, this neo-materialist approach enables a politics of world-making, that is, it is preoccupied with the dynamics and processes of how this world is being brought into existence (assembled and enacted). The operability of the use of the term *cosmopolitics* as a combination of “cosmos” as the element that prevents reducing politics to a question of transaction within the limits of what counts to be human, and “politics” as the activity engaged in the task of exploring the articulation of divergent worlds, it is explained by Latour as follows:

The presence of cosmos in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of politics to mean the give-and-take in an exclusive human club. The presence of politics in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of cosmos to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account. Cosmos protects against the premature closure of politics, and politics against the premature closure of cosmos.⁸

Philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers, who first proposed the term “cosmopolitics”, provides a specific meaning of the term as a compound of *cosmos*, as an operator of “putting into equality” as opposed to “putting into equiva-

7 COLEBROOK, Claire (2014). *Death of the Posthuman*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, p. 63.

8 LATOUR, Bruno (2004). “Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck”. *Common Knowledge*, vol. 10, no. 3, p. 454.

lence”, and *politics*, in relation to a political ecology considered as a politization of affirmative knowledge-related issues or practices concerning things and our gatherings among things. This approach rejects at least three aspects on which Kantian transcendent cosmopolitanism is grounded: in the first place, the understanding of cosmopolitanism as a vehicle of tolerance and as an all-encompassing universalist project; in the second place, the reductionism of the cosmos as a simple transfer between human entities, and in the third place, the existence of an already-given “good common world”.

Far from understanding the cosmos as a “world in which citizens of antiquity asserted themselves everywhere on their home ground or to an Earth finally united, in which everyone is a citizen” (STENGERS, 2005: 994), Stengers argues for a cosmopolitics as the tool to build a world from a situated location where practitioners operate. Stengers expands upon these questions in her *Cosmopolitical Proposal*, where she encourages us to slow down reasoning, questioning authority and generality associated with theory and knowledge, inviting us to generate a space for hesitation where notions of “good” and “common” could be analysed and resignified. The author warns us: the term “political” that asserts the *Cosmopolitical proposal* is not aimed at allowing a cosmos or a good “common world” to exist, but divergently to “slow down the construction of this common world, to create a space of hesitation regarding what it means to say “good” (*ibid.*: 995).

The attitude of the cosmopolitical proposal is inspired in the figuration of the idiot as conceived by Gilles Deleuze. Finding its roots in Ancient Greece and defined as the person who didn’t speak Greek language and was thus excluded from the civilized community, the idiot is described by Stengers as someone:

who resists the consensual way in which the situation is presented and in which emergencies mobilize thought or action [...] not because the presentation would be false or because emergencies are believed to be lies, but because “there is something more important”.⁹

In his incapability to both discuss the situation and distinguish what is more important, the idiot becomes a presence that generates an interstice by bringing the question: *what I am busy doing?* This attitude slows others down by interrupting the authority of the sense of possession of meaning:

9 STENGERS, I. (2005). “The Cosmopolitical Proposal”, in LATOUR, Bruno and WEIBEL, Peter (eds.), *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, p. 994.

When it is a matter of the world, of the issues, threats and problems whose repercussions appear to be global, it is “our” knowledge, the facts produced by “our” technical equipment but also the judgments associated with “our” practices that are primarily in charge. Good will and “respect for others” are not enough to remove this difference, and denying it in the name of an “equal before the law” of all people of the earth will not prevent subsequent condemnation of the fanatic blindness or selfishness of those who refuse to acknowledge that they cannot escape “planetary issues”.¹⁰

Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari’s notion of rhizome as the understanding of thought as both creative and dynamic activity, and political ecology as an eco-ethological assemblage, Stengers suggests recovering the *potentia* of animism to challenge “capitalist sorcery” by acknowledging non-human agency and decolonizing knowledge, in a long-term project that transforms the “living together” to the “becoming together”. For Stengers, the term cosmos, far from seeing it as a “particular cosmos, or world, as a particular tradition may conceive it”, is a virtual space formed by the “the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable” (STENGER, 2005: 995). In this sense, cosmopolitics, understood as a question of matter and intention, operates as the activity for the virtual becoming actual.

As an operator of equality (*mise en égalité*) that is opposed to equivalence (*mise en équivalence*), the cosmopolitical proposal is about creating or “imbuing political voices with the feeling that they do not master the situation they discuss, that the political arena is peopled with shadows of that which does not have a political voice, cannot have or does not want to have one”. Its idiocy is given by its incapability of providing a good definition or the procedures to achieve a “good common world”, but also because it is not pursuing consent as a goal: “adding a cosmopolitical dimension to the problems that we consider from a political angle does not lead to answers everyone should finally accept”. The cosmopolitical proposal raises the question of the way the interstice created by the murmur of the idiot “can be heard collectively in the assemblage created around a political issue” (*ibid.*: 996).

The proposal thus proceeds “in presence of” absent entities who do not have, cannot have or do not want to have a political voice. This is aimed at seizing the impact of our choices upon others, “the victims of our decisions”.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 995.

Stengers gives two examples of this thought “in the presence of”. The first one is provided by the now politicized issue of animal experimentation, and more specifically by “the difficult cases where the refusal of experimentation and a legitimate cause – the struggle against an epidemic, for instance, are balanced against each other”. But far from focussing on the predictable reaction consisting of “creat(ing) value scales for ‘measuring’ both human interests and the suffering inflicted on each type of animal”, what interests Stengers is the cosmic mechanism that unveils how the “grand narratives on the rationality defined against sentimentality and the necessities of a method” are part of the rites to protect researchers from themselves”. By accounting for these protective manoeuvres forcing researchers to decide “in the presence of”, the cosmopolitical proposal then results to a form of “self-regulation” having the advantage of presenting the *self* as an *issue*: “what would the researcher decide ‘on his/her own’ if ‘he/she’ were actively shed of the kinds of protection current decisions seem to need?” (*ibid.*: 996-997).

The second example she brings is the one of magic, referred to by Stengers as the practice being carried out not only by surviving “genuine” witches but by contemporary activists, which she calls the “neo-pagan witches”. The art of these pagan witches cultivated in the political domain is considered by Stengers to be an *art of convocation*, since the rituals appeal to a presence that is not intended to answer to what should be done (a prophetic revelation) but to “catalyse a regime of thought and feeling that bestows the power to become a cause for thinking, on that around which there is gathering [...] a presence which transforms each protagonist’s relations with his or her own knowledge, hopes, fears and memories, and allows the whole to generate what each one would have been unable to produce separately” (*ibid.*: 1002). This art of convocation as an act of empowerment, action and resistance is an expression of what Stengers calls the *ecology of practices*. This is seen as analogous to the practical challenge of political ecology: “enlarging ‘politics’ not only to ‘things’ but maybe also to what would artfully enable us to gather around ‘things’”.¹¹

The question is, of course, an ethical one. Or as Stengers likes to put it, “ethos, the way of behaving peculiar to a being, and oikos, the habitat of that being and the way in which that habitat satisfies or opposes the demands associated with the ethos, or affords opportunities for an original

¹¹ I took this quotation from an earlier version of the *Cosmopolitical Proposal* by Isabelle Stengers that can be found in the on-line site: <https://balkanexpress.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/stengers-the-cosmopolitical-proposal.pdf> (page 13. Checked: June 4, 2017, p. 13).

ethos to risk itself”. The ethos is thus “not contingent on its environment, its oikos; it will always belong to the being that proves capable of it. It cannot be transformed in any predictable way by transforming the environment”. What provides the cosmopolitical proposal is then an articulation between the necessities of the research itself and its consequences for its victims, “a cosmic event”. In other words, it brings a cartography or “diagnoses of our etho-ecological stable acceptance of economic war as framing our common fate” (*ibid.*: 997-998).

Non-human, inhuman, post-human

In this section I will discuss how the tradition of feminist vital-materialist philosophy as a post-dualistic model of political ecology and as a relational form of making and undoing politics is useful when trying to imagine how to live and institute together otherwise. This model of thought engages in the dismantling of nature-culture binary oppositions and the connection of nature, culture, machines, humans and non-humans through a variety of approaches. This can take the form of networks, assemblages, entanglements, nature-cultures or more-than human compositions of worlds, these being always created by different agents and processes. In this sense, concepts such as “distributed agency” (BENNETT, 2011) and process-oriented relational ontologies (BRAIDOTTI, 2006) are fundamental references. Acknowledging all the important nuances of the different models of thought, we could argue that what they have in common (and what explains the relationality of their ethical-political projects) is their interest towards the situatedness of the knowledge, the historicity of the body, the intersectionality of the forms of oppression, and the question of care and affects. This heritage is of paramount importance for the cosmopolitical task when exploring unexpected possibilities for the recomposition of communities and ethical forms of belonging.

Let us retrieve the force of the Deleuzian figure of the idiot towards humanist fundamental beliefs, exploring the opportunities it may bring for the forging of sustainable relationships with otherness. We suggest seeing this as a prior requirement for ethical action and the political responsibility of contemporaneous subjects. The proposal consists of understanding that meaning is not added, but rather made or produced. As philosopher Pere Saborit puts it, “meaning will not be an offering to man by the world, or a gift by man to the world giving it consistency, but rather the result of introducing arbitrary determinations in the richness of what exists, and putting the ones into rela-

tion with the others” (SABORIT, 1997: 13). The idea is to be at the level of the wonder of living, but not only as a provisional or transitory moment, but as a permanent state of idiocy which refuses to integrate phenomena into a single explanatory network, totalising, of shared wisdom, as the ultimate mission of individuals, in an irreversible process of the acquisition of knowledge.

The incorporation of a cosmopolitical dimension to the problems that we consider may be understood as a condition when envisioning any political horizon invested in imagining forms of living together otherwise. The technologically-mediated context we find ourselves in is establishing new great meta-narratives: the capitalist economies as a historical form of progress, biological essentialism and the return of religion. In this new and fluidic ‘global arena’ – characterised by structural injustice, war and the regimes of deterritorialization and controlled mobility – political economy, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, arises as a sort of *abstract fear* that spreads all over, leaving little margin for alternative approaches (BRAIDOTTI, 2010: 289). The systemic crisis we are witnessing, however, should invite us not so much to take shelter in the rhetoric of lament, but rather to explore the conditions of possibility, working not “against the times”, but rather testing propositions *in spite of the times*. This vision implies, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, an exercise that operates not according to “a belligerent mode of oppositional consciousness” but becomes “a humble and empowering gesture of co-construction of sustainable futures” (BRAIDOTTI, 2005: 270).

The last proposition would consist then of “living well deceived”, experimenting with new ethical relationships as a new way of producing forms of resistance. To do this, it is necessary to subvert the postmodern nihilist spirit (which emerges as a reaction to understanding the death of God as a decisive event which marks a before and an after, forming a subject of spiritual sadness) in a *desire for life*, a desire for change, movement and transformation. And it is here that *affirmative ethics*, as a philosophy of vital focus directed to the future, provides us with very valuable tools to navigate present-day conditions imposed by advanced capitalism.

The starting point of *affirmative ethics* is recovery of the criticism by Foucault and Deleuze of the view of the subject in Western humanist philosophy, according to which it was essential to inscribe according to the effects of *truth* and *power* of their actions over others, instead of basing their moral intentionality on the cognitive universalism of rational individualism. The basic proposal of affirmative ethics is to advocate in favour of *relational ethics* as a habitual practice more than the essentialist and Universalist moral of the subject. This pragmatic approach defines ethics as the *affirmative modes of relationships*,

and good ethics as that which promulgates the *forms of development proper to qualification* (BRAIDOTTI, 2010: 291).

For qualification we understand the creation of alternative relationships which are not found tied to the present (“here and now”) in the form of negation, nor restricted to the limits of what is human, but depend on the capacity of *becoming the other* in the frame of a transforming, long-term project. In short, *affirmative ethics* is articulated in a triple theoretical and action scheme: standing up for radical ethics of transformation, process-ontology, and the linking of subjectivity with affirmative otherness, that is to say, linked to the capacity of becoming woman, gay and transsexual, capacity to become native or racialized, and the capacity to become animal and become earth. But not through the logic of recognition of the sameness (as empathy would operate), rather by understanding *reciprocity as creation* (*ibid.*: 292).

Going beyond thanatopolitics and biopolitics, *affirmative ethics* advocates for the generating powers of *zoe* as the force that flows across all species, understanding *affective forces* as a driving impulse which are captured in material relationships in the form of positive passions. These would constitute a network of interconnection with the other. As Rosi Braidotti says, “A vitalist concept of Life understood as *zoe*, or generating force, has here a notable importance which emphasises that the Life in which I live is not mine, nor does it bear my name, but it is a generating force for development, for individuation and differentiation. What is denied by means of negative passions is therefore the power of life itself, with dynamic force, as a vital flow of connections and of change” (*ibid.*: 301).

The adequate ethical question would be, then, what would guarantee sustainability of the subject in its relationship with the sexualized, racialized and naturalized other, fostering a *life-centred egalitarianism* which replaces the logic of recognition with the notion of co-dependence between species and the moral philosophy of rights for an ethics of sustainability? It is in this sense that affirmative ethics offers an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings and the adscription of subjects constituted in multiplicity, which is deployed on the basis of a political imperative which assumes that “we are all in this together”, that we all share the same planet, but recognises that we are not all the same. This resonates with Stenger’s cosmopolitics as an operator of equality that is opposed to equivalence. For Braidotti, however, the cosmopolitical dimension arises with the affinity with *zoe* as the last act of the critique of dominant subject positions through the return of the animal, or earth life in all its potency: “the breakdown of species distinction (human/non-human) and the explosion of *zoe*-power, therefore, shifts the grounds of the problem of the breakdown of

categories of individuation (gender and sexuality; ethnicity and race). This introduces the issue of becoming into a planetary or worldwide dimension, the earth being not one element among others, but rather that which brings them all together” (BRAIDOTTI, 2006: 97).

The possibilities for the creation of new forms of resistance, transformations and sustainable futures will thus emerge inasmuch as we understand life not as an estimate, but as a project; not organised around need but around *desire*, understood as an ontological force of becoming, which encourages us to go on living. A project in which the nomadic subject – not unitary, hybrid, impure, process-oriented and denaturalized – generates new systems of affinities, kinship systems and relationships with otherness in a perpetual process of change, fighting the negativity of the present misery with affirmation, and always linking its unfolding on the basis of an awareness of the asymmetrical power relations and structural inequalities, in the sense in which Nietzsche suggested that it is not the human who is born from freedom, but rather freedom is obtained from the awareness of man’s own limitations.

Artisan becoming cosmic

The complexity of *TransPlant* is given by the many, simultaneous transpositions, transitions and translations in the field of subjectivity they implement through their ethical-political-aesthetical practice. Driven by a deep concern for the material conditions of our time, *TransPlant* invites us to rethink how we come together and what hold us apart. It does so by articulating a relational model of post-human cosmopolitics engaged in the development of sustainable ethics based on a notion of life-centred egalitarianism and triggering multiple becomings with sexualized, racialized and naturalized otherness.

The transdisciplinary research-based project operates as a plant - human - animal - machine hybridisation through different processes of becoming. The development of the trans-identity project is based on interaction between different axes that, through different bio-hacking practices, aims at generating changes of subjectivity while developing sustainable ethics, undermining narratives that present the body as a universality, transcendent subject of reason, building instead human - non-human assemblages. These axis, or tentacles, as the artists like to call them, have been so far: implantation of an RFID chip storing the trans-identity process; external translation of the process by chlorophyll tattoos; hybridization of human blood with chlorophyll by a regular protocol of intravenous injections; medical self-experimentation on condylo-

mata acuminata cells through photodynamic therapy and, finally, the creation of public open-source data of the experiments.¹²



RFID chip attachment. Video projection – Installation “TransPlant #1”. Transpalette Art Center, Bourges, France. November 2016. Picture taken by Amar Belma Belmabrouk.

The main idea of *TransPlant* is thus one of *transition*. Transition from human to other living forms, exodus from entrepreneurial, liberal, autonomous narrative of the subject to the becoming cosmic-imperceptible as a way to acknowledge co-dependency. As such, their point of departure resonates with Braidotti’s nomadic subject – as a non unitary, hybrid, impure, process-oriented and denaturalized subject – that generates new systems of affinities, kinship systems and relationships with otherness. This is the nomadic subject in its posthuman condition in a technologically-mediated society (BRAIDOTTI, 2015). Within this context, the body is being built as a material, multi-stratified entity located at the intersection of a variety of biological, genetic social and cultural codes. Braidotti encourages us to realize how technological and scientific advancements of our biotechnological societies have dismantled human - non-human categorical distinctions in at least three senses: the market value of animals and all living entities with the only aim of profit, genetic engineering practices and the circulation of cellular matter among different species, and the timid attempts of inclusion of animals within the logic of human rights (BRAIDOTTI, 2006: 105). These mutual contaminations and crossings that define

¹² I would like to thank Ce and Kina for the insightful conversation we held on June 3rd, 2017 at Hangar research centre that touched upon these questions.



First chlorophyll tattoo. Transplant: Performance #1 “Devenir chienne pour devenir plant”. Transpalette Art Center, Bourges, France. November 2016. Picture taken by Maria F. Dolores.

our era constitute fertile terrain to build new alliances.

TransPlant acts out these alliances by incorporating a post-anthropocentric vision of the world that does not presupposes the existence of any passive nature / life and a consciousness that should be only human, and by exploring generative intersubjective relations with plants, rejecting principles of profit, greed, productivity and instrumentalization. The idea is not to experiment with plants but with themselves: the alliance with the productive forces of life in its inhuman aspects is oriented towards the critique of dominant subject positions, that is, the return of animal or earth life in all its potency. Becoming animal - plant is thus the key process. This has nothing to do with metaphors of animality nor does it operate as an analogy, but entails the transformation of the ontological foundations of embodiment: “The process of becoming a cyborg is, above all, an animal process, despite

the displeasure of the transhumanist dreams on human enhancement and fusion with technology. I am a dog. Or rather, a [female] dog”.¹³

Quimera Rosa’s plant-human-machine hybridization recalls Donna Haraway’s *FemaleMale* and *OncoMouse* artifactual chimeras. These two figurations conceived by Haraway as modest witnesses of the Scientific Revolution (the *FemaleMan*©) and of commodified transnational feminism of the biotechnical war on cancer (*OncoMouse* TM) are figures in secular technoscientific salvation stories full of promise. The intertwining of feminism and technoscience from the field of art is aimed at generating difference: “in the wombs of technoscience, as well as of postfetal science studies, chimeras of humans and non-humans, machines and organisms, subjects and objects, are the obligatory passage points, the embodiments and articulations, through which

¹³ Original translation from spanish language, where gramatical gender is applied to both non-human and human animals. Available at: http://paroledequeer.blogspot.com.es/2017/03/quimera-rosa_6.html (Checked: July 20, 2017).



Skin book. Chlorophyll tattoo on microbial cellulose. Picture taken by Quimera Rosa.

travellers must pass to get much of anywhere in the world. The chip, gene, bomb, fetus, seed, brain, ecosystem, and database are the wormholes that dump contemporary travellers out into contemporary worlds” (HARAWAY, 1997: 43). TransPlant engages in current debates about the Anthropocene from a perspective that is not based on human exceptionalism and methodological individualism, but that addresses the world and its inhabitants as the product of cyborg processes, sympoiesis or becoming-with in “multispecies muddles” (HARAWAY, 2016: 32).

This impetus is given by an acknowledgment of the nature-culture continuum that resonates in turn with Deleuze and Guattari’s geophilosophy, developed upon the basis of monistic tradition of living matter and the plane of radical immanence. This approach manages to account for the world without falling into determinism because, for Deleuze and Guattari, matter is *life itself*:

[...] man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other, not even in the sense of bipolar opposites within a relationship of causation, ideation, or expression (cause and effect, subject and object, etc.); rather, they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product.¹⁴

¹⁴ DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 4-5.

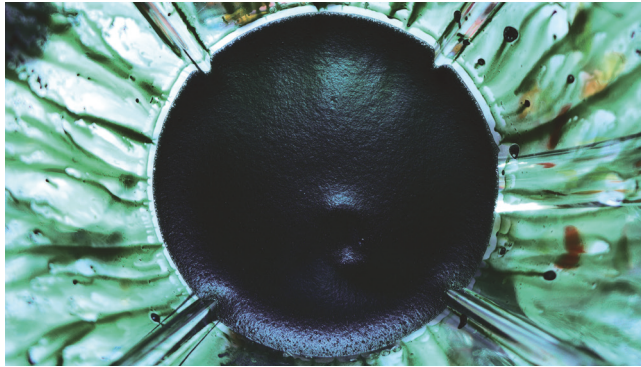
Quimera Rosa's proposal consists of folding this nature-culture continuum in our psyche by means of contaminations, transpositions and transplants as technologies aimed at disorganizing and dismantling the integrity of the unitary subject, in order to become cosmic as a precondition to making the world (cosmo-politics). This is being achieved, to borrow Deleuze's use, by the mobilization of the figuration of the becoming-imperceptible process, the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula par excellence:

Becoming everybody/everything (tout le monde) is to world (j'aire monde), to make a world (j'aire un monde). By process of elimination, one is no longer anything more than an abstract line, or a piece in a puzzle that is itself abstract. It is by conjugating, by continuing with other lines, other pieces, that one makes a world that can overlay the firstone, like a transparency. Animal elegance, the camouflage fish, the clandestine: this fish is crisscrossed by abstract lines that resemble nothing, that do not even follow its organic divisions; but thus disorganized, disarticulated, becoming-everybody/everything, making the world a becoming, is to world, to make a world or worlds, in other words, to find one's proximities and zones of indiscernibility.¹⁵

In Deleuze and Guattari's thought, the cosmos is an abstract machine, and each world is an assemblage effectuating it: "we thus leave behind the assemblages to enter the age of the Machine, the immense mechanosphere, the plane of cosmicization of forces to be harnessed (DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 1987: 343). For the philosophers, art contributes to counteracting "depopulation of the people" by making a cosmic people, and deterritorialization by making a cosmic earth: the artisan-artist as a vector of cosmos that carries them off "opens up to the Cosmos in order to harness forces in a 'work' (without which the opening onto the Cosmos would only be a reverie incapable of enlarging the limits of the earth)" (*ibid.*: 337). But far from operating as a metaphor, the invocation to the Cosmos "is an effective one, from the moment the artist connects a material with forces of consistency or consolidation (*ibid.*: 345).

For Deleuze and Guattari, nature is similarly an immense Abstract Machine, "abstract yet real and individual; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations". (*ibid.*: 254). From this perspective, the notion of the environment will only be the negotiations

¹⁵ DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, p. 280; Brian Massumi, trans.



Chlorophyll tattoo ink. Picture taken by Quimera Rosa.

of dynamic adjustments between human and non-human elements, influencing one-another. Quimera Rosa explores nature-culture-machine, feedback loops through a close cartography of how these three dimensions are being produced, advancing a generative proposal of what life is capable of, in other words, understanding life as an *emergent potentiality* rather than actuality, since “life is not reducible to what has actually been produced, to the world as it has unfolded; for life, when thought properly, is a power or potential to create (and not the creation of some proper or destined end) as Claire Colebrook claims” (COLEBROOK, 2004: 4).

The insistence on the inhuman as the unthought, the accidental and the unthinking and the porosity of the subject brought by the cosmopolitical dimension is aimed at exploring the full potential of thinking. That is why Deleuze places technology at the heart of philosophy and life: “human life does have a power or potential to think, but we can only understand this power, not when life unfolds from itself, but when this power encounters other powers. Only when the human brain confronts what is not itself can it be pushed to the maximum [...] only when the human encounters the inhuman will we know what the human body can do, and only when life opens itself up to violence, destruction, death and zero intensity will we be able to discern just what counts as ‘a’ single life – its precarious distance and emergence from all its potentials not to be” (COLEBROOK, 2006: 4).

Conclusion

TransPlant operates as a model of more-than human cosmopolitics insofar as the ethical-political-aesthetical collective practice they enact brings tools to

engage us in the task of undertaking such a posthuman cosmopolitical endeavour, a de-humanizing, ethical force. They become cosmic by means of a post-anthropocentric trans-identity process as modelling tactic of the not-One, generating an ethical territory and an affective community that is not bound to a common soil nor operates as a citizen holder of human rights, but as a virtual cosmos that has always been there. The utopian dimension is not brought by the “denouncing (of) this world in the name of an ideal [...] but [in the very proposal of] an interpretation that indicates how a transformation could take place that leaves no one unaffected” (STENGERS, 2015: 7). This practice is located at the intersection of the artisan, the alchemist, and the activist, drawing from disciplines such as arts, philosophy, biology, ecology, physics, botany, medicine, caring, nursing, pharmacology and electronics. It inhabits a variety of transversal entanglements among the practices that we customarily refer to as art, thinking, and politics. They manage to elaborate other ways of knowing-doing through feeling-thinking processes invested in hacking dualistic anthropocentric violence and becoming imperceptible by merging with the environment (oikos).

As a model of *art-as-cosmopolitics*, *TransPlant* can be thus seen as a collective negotiation of *how to be together otherwise*. Art-as-cosmopolitics engages thus in the ongoing task of imagining, embodying and inhabiting a vision of the world that moves beyond what we consider thinkable today. The notion of political collectivity here extends further than the colloquial understanding of society, as it entangles the human and non-human, organic and non-organic, masculine-feminine, mind-body, reason-emotion, sick body-healthy body, modelling an artistic alternative that is simultaneously social and ecological. Both social and environmental crises we inhabit urge us to address the cosmopolitical endeavour. As Claire Colebrook states, “climate change calls for the most cosmopolitical of responses: the taking hold of the world’s resources away from nation states and local polities for the sake of the viability of ongoing life” (COLEBROOK, 2014: 114). But such an imperative would be in the name of the sustaining of human life as already politicized and organized. If we are to think differently, as Colebrook suggests,

[...] it may be in a cosmic and inhuman mode, asking [...] what the elements of this earth are, what force they bear, how we are composed in relation to those forces [...] perhaps something other than a discursive politics among communicating individuals needs to open up to forces that are not our own, to consider the elemental and inhuman, so that it might be possible to think what life may be worthy of living on. Such an approach would require a thought of the cos-

mos – of life and its durations – that would be destructive of the polity, that would not return all elements and forces into what they mean for “us”.¹⁶

As we have argued in this essay, the precondition for thinking of a more-than-human cosmopolitical way is the assertion of the radical immanence of the subject as the starting point that allows for the envisioning of a web of situated accountability and a new ethical system. Quimera Rosa’s craftwork can be thus seen as one of magic that, as argued by Stengers, acts out as a power of convocation, insofar as it appeals to a presence that is not intended to deliver a prophetic revelation but to “catalyse a regime of thought and feeling that bestows the power to become a cause for thinking, on that around which there is gathering [...] a presence which transforms each protagonist’s relations with his or her own knowledge, hopes, fears and memories, and allows the whole to generate what each one would have been unable to produce separately” (STENGERS, 2005: 1002). What is convoked is, precisely, the very material act of thinking the plane of radical immanence through vitalistic ethics and alternative modes of desire, something as creative as the act of magic. Magic, according to Stengers, is itself an art of radical immanence, but “immanence is precisely what has to be artfully created, the usual regime of thinking, being that of transcendence that authorizes a standpoint on a judgement”.¹⁷

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16 COLEBROOK, C. (2014). *Death of the Posthuman*, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

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Lecturers' biographies

Anna Maria Guasch is a full-time Professor of History of Contemporary Art at the University of Barcelona, having taught at the University of Seville (1979-1983) and the Complutense University of Madrid (1983-1986). She is director of the online magazine *Revista de Estudios Culturales y Arte Contemporáneo*. From 1994 up to the present her research and teaching have been centered on the analysis of the creative processes of the international art of the second half of the twentieth century, with publications such as: *El arte del siglo xx en sus exposiciones* (1997), *Los manifiestos del arte posmoderno. Textos de exposiciones 1980-1995* (Madrid, 2000), *El arte último del siglo xx. Del posminimalismo a lo multicultural* (Madrid, 2000, with seven editions), *Arte y archivo, 1920-2010. Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades* (Akal/Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid, 2011), *Critical Cartography on arte and visuality in the Global Age* (Cambridge Scholars, 2014) and *El arte en la era de lo global, 1989-2015* (Alianza Forma, Madrid, 2016). In the theoretical and critical field, she has edited books such as *La crítica de Arte: Historia, Teoría y praxis* (Barcelona, 2003), *La crítica dialogada: entrevistas de arte y pensamiento* (Murcia, 2006), *Arte y globalización* (Bogotá, 2004), *Learning from the Bilbao Guggenheim* co-edited with Joseba Zulaika (Reno, Nevada, 2005), and translated into the Castilian *Aprendiendo del Guggenheim Bilbao* (Madrid, 2007).

Alpesh Kantilal Patel is Associate Professor of Contemporary Art at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami. His art historical scholarship, criticism and curating reflects his queer, anti-racist, and transnational approach to contemporary art. He is the author of *Productive failure: writing queer transnational South Asian art histories* (Manchester University Press, 2017) and a contributor to numerous scholarly volumes and peer-reviewed journals. His research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the National Endowment of Humanities, Arts Council England, Fulbright Foundation, and Cranbrook Academy of Art. A frequent contributor to artforum.com, he also writes for *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *frieze*, and *hyperallergic.com*. A curator of exhibitions in both the US and Europe, he is the editor of four exhibition catalogues. Dr. Patel received his PhD in Art History & Visual Studies from the University of Manchester and a BA in History of Art with distinction from Yale University.

Renate Dohemen is a lecturer in Art History at the Open University. She is editor and co-author of *Art and Empire: British India* (MUP & The Open University, 2018). Her previous book *Encounters beyond the Gallery: Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference* (I.B. Tauris, 2016) draws on Deleuze-Guattarian aesthetics to examine issues of contemporary art, aesthetics, anthropology and the global. She is currently working on a book-length study of nineteenth-century exhibition culture in British India, and has published on cosmopolitanism, nineteenth-century women's memory cultures and contemporary women's street art in India. Her work explores trans-cultural perspectives in contemporary and colonial visuality and is interested in post-human epistemologies, the cosmopolitical and ecologies of knowledge.

Emma Brasó is an art historian and curator. Currently, she works as Cultural Programme Curator at the University for the Creative Arts in the UK, in charge of programming the Herbert Read Gallery (Canterbury) and the Zandra Rhodes Gallery (Rochester). In this position, she has developed projects with artists, writers and designers, and collaborated with institutions like the Serpentine Galleries, Turner Contemporary, the Whitstable Biennale, and the Canterbury Cathedral. Previously, Brasó acted as Visual Arts Advisor at the Spanish Ministry of Culture, and was involved in negotiations to transform an abandoned tobacco factory in Madrid into the cultural centre La Tabacalera. She holds a BA in Art History (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid – “special mention” in the Spanish National Awards for best academic records) and an MA in Curatorial Studies (Columbia University, New York – with the support of a scholarship from “la Caixa” Foundation). Her current PhD research at Royal College of Art, London, analyses the intersection of fiction and authorship in art practices from the 1980s until today.

Modesta Di Paola holds a European PhD in Art History, Theory and Criticism from the University of Barcelona (Spain, 2015) and another PhD in European Cultural Studies Internationally/Europäische Kulturstudien from the University of Palermo (Italy, 2016). She was a visiting scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, Cambridge, Boston) and awarded a fellowship from the Mellow Foundation to participate in the seminar “The Problem of Translation” at the Department of Comparative Literature of New York University (NYU). She is the author of the book *L'arte che traduce. La traduzione visuale nell'opera di Antoni Muntadas* (Mimesis, Milan, 2017) and co-editor of the book *Nous Somme Ici. We are here* (Glifo Edizioni, Palermo, 2017; translated in Italian, French and English), supported by the Polo Museale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Palermo (Italy) and the MuCEM of Marseille (France). She has published many articles on critical theories that use cultural translation, linguistic hospitality, and ethics of relation in artistic production. In 2008, she co-founded the on-line magazine *Interartive*.

Christian Alonso is a predoctoral researcher and teacher at the Department of Art History of the University of Barcelona, where he is developing his PhD thesis on the relations of artistic practice and ecology in the period of anthropogenic climate change. He is a writer, researcher and curator. His interests focus on the role of aesthetics, theory and historiography in the analysis of the intersections between critical art, visual culture, activism and education when addressing the environment. Christian has been coordinator of the four editions of the experimental programme on curatorial studies *On Mediation* (2013-2017), curator of *Eulalia Valldosera: Plastic Mantra* (Loop City Screen, Oleoteca La Chinata, 2017), *Machinic Recompositions* (Can Felipa, 2017) and coordinator of the exhibitions *Javier Peñafiel: Agencia en Porvenir* (Arts Santa Mònica, 2017), *Enésima Intempestiva* (àngels barcelona – Espai 2, 2016), *Tedium Vitae* (ADN Platform, 2015) and *Barcelona Inspira* (Cercle Artístic Sant Lluc, 2014). <http://caosmosis.net/>.

Cosmopolitics and Biopolitics seeks to trace cosmopolitical aesthetics understood not only as the union of art, science, and the right to survive, but also as the prism through which artistic practices are developed around questions connected to transculturality, migration, nomadism, post-gender subjectivities, social and natural sustainability, and new digital technologies. This book's authors fashion a narrative that moves in the territory of "inbetweenness", between hospitality and hostility, between welcoming and conflict, between languages and intermediate languages, science, and survival in a world that is "common" more than global.