RUPTURE

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In the following paper I would like to discuss some processes of difference and the axis of influence between body and subjectivity, on one hand, and the logic of real/virtual presence and incarnations, identity and identification with connections to flexible accumulation strategies of capitalism and the re- or de-territorialization of capital, on the other.

I. *I am a replicant*

In order to explore local and global struggles for meanings and embodiments, emphasis will be placed on virtualisation, as it is fostering the condition of a completely "regulated" reality, where the notion of the body can be perceived very precisely.

To appropriately grasp some of the radical changes in the models, perceptions and structures of body and subjectivity, it might be useful to delve into virtual reality. Allow me, first of all, to schematically and narratively, explain "virtual reality." "A helmet apparatus feeds the subject visual and auditory information about a virtual environment. Sensors in the helmet respond to head, and even eye, movement. The computer literally knows where your head's at. ...Cables are connected to sensors, providing a computer with information regarding the subject's bodily orientation. The helmet apparatus, or the data glove (the so-called interface) has thus become the crucial site of virtual reality: a significantly ambiguous boundary between human being and technology. The more invisible the interface, the more perfect the fiction of a total imbrication within the force fields of a new reality."[1] According to Francine Dagenais,[2] virtual reality technology provides the participant with

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[1] Cf. Scott Bukatman, *Terminal Identity*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 1993, pp. 186 -192.

[2] Cf. Francine Dagenais, "Perfect Bodies," in: Catherine Richards and Nell Tenhaaf (eds.), *Bioapparatus*, The Banff Centre, Banff 1991, p. 43.

the illusion of moving through space without a body. The body is isolated, the senses – cut off from their reality – find an alternate environment. A dissociation results between the head as privileged sensory receptor, and the body as substituted by the hand/index. Thus we may speak of Deleuze/Guattari's *corps sans organe*: the headless body is contrasted with the traditional conception of the organic body governed by a central nervous system and brain. Decapitated by the virtual reality experience, the body loses its definition. The body is caught in the ambiguity of wholeness/loneliness, and is forced to eliminate the distinctions of within and without. The medium is the body.

Catherine Richards[3] describes the situation of capturing one's imaginary body as "losing the self-definition of the body." She writes: "I put on the virtual environment technology. I see my imaginary body right before me. I move my finger, the image moves. If the spectral image lags behind my living hand, it misses me. If it catches up, it crosses a body threshold racing to capture my imaginary body within its image. Now, when I move, I inhabit the virtual materialised image of my imaginary body. I move within the semblance of my living body, a simulation of my physical and imaginary experience that is travelling back and forth across my thresholds, taking me away. What am I here? My body is mediated experientially, my imaginary body is materialised into a phantom image. One is intertwined with the other, each one reading the other, simulating the living cohabitation of my body and the imaginary."[4]

To be installed into such a virtual apparatus is to exist on two planes at once. Scott Bukatman has formulated this idea as follows: While one's objective body would remain in the real world, one's phenomenal body would be projected into terminal reality. Virtual reality has become, according to Bukatman, the very embodiment of post-modern disembodiment. Sherry Turkle characterises this aspect of computer interaction with the body as producing the quasi-personality complex that she calls the second self. It derives from the complex inter-relationships between human and computer, thus partially from within the human; and it exists partially.[5] Derrick de Kerckhove[6] highlights this aspect, arguing that perhaps the most challenging aspect of the "bio-apparatuses" (which is only one of the optional denominations for the relationship between the body and the machine) concerns its epistemological consequences. The thinning of boundaries between the viewer and the viewed (including the more critical separations between the private/public self and the private/col-

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[3] Cf. Catherine Richards, "The Bioapparatus Membrane," in: *Bioapparatus*, p. 58.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Cit. in Allucquère Roseanne Stone, "Virtual Systems," in: Jonathan Crary and Sanford Kwinter (eds.), *Incorporations*, Zone 6, 1992, p. 619.

[6] Cf. Derrick de Kerckhove, "Bioapparatustalk," in: *Bioapparatus*, p. 100.

lective consciousness) addresses the possibility that new forms of consciousness are being developed – not merely private or collective, not merely computer assisted nor independent – but intermediate, self-organising and cybernetic.

I have tried to show that virtual reality cannot be reduced to a mere technological or discursive object. It is a complex social amalgam, in which its existence as a textual figure is inseparable from its mechanic use. Pierre Lévy[7] has pointed out in exactly the same manner that up until now we have mainly envisaged virtual realities as simulating physical spaces. Alternatively, we now need to speak of the production of symbolic spaces in the form of virtual worlds as expressive of significations, and of knowledge characteristic of a collectivity. These virtual worlds, as Lévy declares, express acts of collective communication in real time, with the direct involvement of, and the tactile component suggested by, words. The deepened split between the physical realities, including the dangers of urban life and the fantasmatic world of "on-line" sociality, is both encouraging and depressing.

The cyberscopic vision of electronic para-space (while "the helmet apparatus feeds the subject visual and auditory information about the virtual environment") is based upon the ultimate lesson of "virtual reality." The virtualisation of the most "true" reality: by the mirage of "virtual reality," the "true" reality itself is posited as a semblance of itself – according to Slavoj Žižek,[8] a pure symbolic edifice. Has our "true" reality itself become virtualised, and conceived of as an artefact itself? This paradox could also be formulated by way of the ambiguous ontological status of "virtuality" itself, which, in its capacity of a "mere possibility," as opposed to actuality, possesses an actuality of its own. Slavoj Žižek has stated that computer-generated virtual reality provides an exemplary case of reality conceived through the detour of its virtualisation (i.e. , of a reality wholly generated from its conditions of potentiality. Potentiality designates, according to Žižek, something that is "possible" in the sense of being able to actualise itself, as well as something that is "merely possible," as opposed to being actual. Potentiality already possesses a certain actuality in its very capacity for possibility. This is a surplus of what is in the case of potentiality more than a mere possibility, and which is lost in its actualisation of the real as impossible.

The classical virtual reality situation, according to Margaret Morse,[9] involves the field of view in the virtual world as constantly being reconstituted in real time by a computer from a digital memory through devices which track the position of somebody's head and hand. That is, in a virtual world,

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[7] Cf. Pierre Lévy, "Toward Super-language," in: *ISEA 94* Catalogue, Helsinki 1994.

[8] Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, Duke University Press, Durham 1993.

[9] Cf. Margaret Morse, "Enthralling Spaces. The Aesthetics of Virtual Environments," in: *ISEA 94* Catalogue, p. 83.

the space itself is interactive. Friedrich Kittler suggests that the virtual environment can appear to be something alive that we cannot acknowledge as subject, nor persona in the traditional sense. Which nonetheless constantly demonstrates that it sees us without revealing itself.

Then how can we finally define the actual/virtual position of the subject in this virtual context? I have made reference to several writers who highlight a specific situation that can be designated as the deprivation of self-identity in virtual reality. This is crucial for understanding the changing position of the self and identity, and the body, in virtual reality. Integrated into the field of intersubjectivity, s/he builds her/himself a new identity. What is at stake in virtual reality is the temporal loss of the subject's symbolic identity. S/he is forced to assume that s/he is not what s/he thought her/himself to be, but somebody-something else.

The virtual environment occurs cinematically, as a kind of reversal of face-to-face intersubjectivity, relating the subject to her/his shadowy double which emerges from behind her/him as a kind of sublime protuberance.[10] In virtual reality, what we are seeing is the concentration of the field and counter-field within the same frame.

What we have here in the relation of the subject with her/his imaginary body is a paradoxical kind of communication. Not a "direct" communication of the subject with the fellow creature in front of her/him, but a communication with the excrescence behind her/him, mediated by a third gaze – the gaze of the virtual machine, as if the counter-field were to be mirrored back into the field itself.[11] This confers upon the scene its hypnotic dimensions: the subject is enthralled by the gaze which sees what is in (her/him)self more than (her/him)self.

What am I in virtual reality? My body is mediated by my imaginary body that is materialised into a phantom image. One is intertwined with the other, each one reading the other, simulating the living cohabitation of my body and the imaginary. To grasp the implications of the radical shift at work in virtual reality, one has to reach, as Žižek has suggested, the Cartesian-Kantian problematic of the subject as pure, and as substanceless.

Kant fully articulates, according to Žižek,[12] the inherent paradoxes of self-consciousness. What Kant's term "transcendental turn" renders manifest is the impossibility of locating the subject in the "great chain of being" (i. e.,

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[10] Cf. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, pp. 107-8.

[11] "I must, to begin with, insist on the following: in the scopic field, the gaze is outside, I am looked at, that is to say, I am a picture. " In: Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, Penguin, London, 1994, p. 106.

[12] Cf. Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative*, pp. 12-44.

the whole of the universe). The subject, in the most radical sense, is out of joint. It constitutively lacks its own place. In Descartes this out of joint state is still concealed. Kant, however, brings to light a kind of vanishing mediator that is, in short, the Lacanian Real. The paradox of self-consciousness is that it is possible only against the background of its own impossibility – and this is also at the core of virtual reality.

To put it another way, where is the *cogito*? Where is the place of my self-consciousness, when everything that I actually am is an artefact – not only my body, my eyes, but even my most intimate memories and fantasies? Everything that I positively am, every enunciated content I can point at and say: that is me but at the same time is not I; I am only the void that remains, the empty distance which approaches all content. Or it is only when, at the level of the enunciated content, I assume my replicant status that, at the level of enunciation, I become a truly human subject.[13]

"I am a replicant" is the statement of the subject at its purest. If we return to virtual reality, the capture of the imaginary body does not offer the "direct" communication of the subject with her/his fellow creature in front of her/him, but rather, communication with the excrescence behind her/him.

In short, the implicit thesis of being in virtual reality is that of the replicants. Replicants are pure subjects precisely insofar as they testify to the possibility of positive, substantial content, inclusive of the most intimate fantasies – not as "their own," but as already implanted. If we try to answer the question: what is it that the third gaze sees? What is in the subject more than her/himself? – our answer must be: nothing – a hole – a void. The very notion of self-consciousness implies the subject's self-decentring, which is far more radical than the opposition between subject and object. [14]

I would like to make an additional clarification that will allow me to point out the radicality of my approach, and to draw a line of separation between the "decentred subject" in the virtual environment or cyberspace of my theory, from similar at first sight deconstructionist decentred approaches. When deconstructionist cyberspace ideologists try to present cyberspace, they usually focus on how cyberspace "decentres" the subject. The two most well-known approaches are those presented in Sherry Turkle's *Life on the Screen. Identity in the Age of the Internet*[15] and Allucquère Roseanne Stone's *The War of Desire and Technology*.[16]

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[13] Ibid. , p. 41.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Sherry Turkle, *Life on the Screen. Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Simon and Schuster, New York 1995.

[16] Allucquĕre Roseanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA) 1995.

When Stone and Turkle compare how the subject is decentred in cyberspace, they refer to two basic decentring modalities. For Stone, the subject in cyberspace is decentred through a multiple externalising subjectivity process, realised through Multiple User Domains (MUD). When I play anonymously in MUD, I can present myself as a promiscuous person and engage in activities which, were I to indulge in them in real life, would bring about the disintegration of my "real" personal identity. For Turkle, the decentring of the subject in cyberspace is similar to the dysfunction known as Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD). Multiple Personality Disorder defines the so-called multiple personalities (who proliferated in dramatic numbers in the 1970's and 1980's), and indicates individuals who show signs of failing to process and integrate different viewpoints of identity, memory and consciousness. For these people, it is typical that a number of very different personalities inhabit one person's body. This illness was termed Dissociative Identity Disorder in 1994.

Cyberspace phenomena, like MUD, endorse the dissemination of the unique "Self" into a multiplicity of competing agents, a plurality of self-images, without a global coordinating centre. Playing in virtual spaces enables one to discover new aspects of oneself through a wealth of shifting identities – masks without a "real" person behind them – and thus, to experience the ideological mechanism of the production of "Self," the imminent violence and arbitrariness of this production/obstruction. The screen persona I create for myself can be "more myself" than my "real-life" person, insofar as it renders visible aspects of myself I would never dare to admit in real life.

MUD describes the situation of the decentred personality in cyberspace when we have several personalities from one body. I can act out my "real life" difficulties in virtual reality (MUD). Through cyberspace or virtual environments, I become aware of the inconsistency and multiplicity of the components of my subjective identities (MPD syndrome) and work through them.

The decentred subject that I try to conceptualise in cyberspace or in the virtual environment, is neither the MUD nor the MPD type. Furthermore, this decentred subject is not the type which can take place in-between these two deconstructionist options. This decentred subject is the Lacanian type. "When deconstructionist cyberspace ideologists try to present cyberspace as providing a 'real life' 'empirical' realisation of deconstructionist theories, they usually focus on how cyberspace 'decentres' the subject. However, the 'multiple selves' externalised on the screen are 'what I want to be,' the way I would like to see myself, the figurations of my ideal ego; as such, they are like the layers of an onion: there is nothing in their centre, and the subject is this 'nothing' itself. It is therefore crucial to introduce here the distinction be-

tween 'Self' ('person') and subject: the Lacanian 'decentred subject' is not simply a multiplicity of good old 'Selves,' i. e. , partial centres; the divided subject does not mean there are simply more Egos/Selves in the same individual, as in MUD. The 'decentring' is the decentring of the $ (the void of the subject) with regard to its content ('Self,' the bundle of imaginary and/or symbolic identifications); the splitting is the splitting between $ and the fantasmatic 'persona' as the 'stuff of the I. ' The subject is thus split even if it possesses only one 'unified' Self, since this split is the very split between $ and Self. In more topological terms: the subject's division is not the division between one and another Self – between two contents – but the division between something and nothing, between the feature of identification and the void. 'Decentring' thus first designates the ambiguity, the oscillation between symbolic and imaginary identification: the indecisiveness as to where my true point lies – in my 'real' self or in my external mask – with the possible implication that my symbolic mask can be 'more true' than what it conceals: the 'true face' behind it. On a more radical level, it points towards the fact that the very sliding from one identification to another, or among 'multiple selves,' presupposes the gap between identification as such and the void of $ (the barred subject) which identifies itself, i.e. , which serves as the empty medium of identification. In other words, the very process of shifting among multiple identifications presupposes a kind of empty band, which renders possible the leap from one to another identity, and this empty band is the subject itself."[17] It is important therefore, in this time of oblique transparency, when discussing how the relation of cyberspace and the electronic media affects specific subjects, to dismantle the very process – not of production, but of post-production: of the editing, pasting, copying and clearing of these relations into the social mode of production.

Both spaces, the real and the virtual, are wiping out, albeit from different perspectives but simultaneously, the paradigm of identity, precisely by conversing deceptive and hypocritical old identities, of the socially positive and fully realised individuals, etc., of the Post-Socialist and Post-Capitalist subjects. Instead, today we are faced with leaving a historically defined position which imitates the natural world of our senses. With new media and technology, we have the possibility of an artificial interface, which is dominated by non-identity, or difference. Instead of producing a new identity, something more radical has to be proposed: the total loss of identity. The subject is forced

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[17] Cf. Slavoj Žižek, "Cyberspace, or, the Unbearable Closure of Being," 1996 (manuscript). When the body is mediatized (caught in the network of electronic media), the subject is potentially reduced to the pure barred subject $, since even his personal experience can be stolen, manipulated and regulated by the mechanical Other.

to assume that s/he is not what s/he thought her/himself to be, but some-body-something else. The moment when familiar models of identity are lost is perhaps the moment when a (Post-Socialist) subject is constructed.

II. *De-realisation, overidentification, incarnation(s)*

The true horror today are not horrifyingly violent projects in the arts, as they function, paradoxically, as a protective shield that is fantasised as such, protecting us from the true horror – the horror of the abstract positioning of East and West, North and South, art and economy, state terrorism and activism. The psychotic generating experience in itself is that this abstract collaboration functions as a protective shield (that protects in the end only the obscenely visible art institutions and the power art structures in themselves) and erases all traces of difference, activism, positioning, etc. The art institution defence against the true threat is actually to stage a bloody, aggressive, destructive threat in order to protect the abstract, sanitised situation. This is the sign demonstrating the absolute inconsistency of the fantasmatic support and not only the inconsistency of reality in itself. Instead of the multiple reality talk, as who else but Žižek would say, one should thus insist on a different aspect – on the fact that the fantasmatic support of reality, of the art structures and their mechanisms, is in itself multiple and inconsistent.
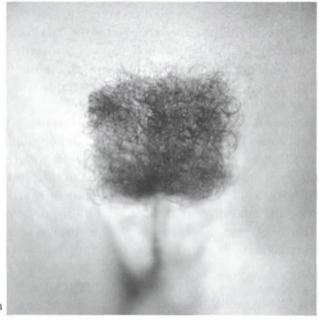
One possible way of understanding this new situation is that the effect of de-realisation is an effect of juxtaposing reality and its fantasmatic supplement face to face: to parallel one near the other. The idea is to put together the aseptic, quotidian social reality, life itself, and parallel it with its fantasmatic supplement. Several projects can be listed that use in a very specific way this key concept of de-realisation and de-psychologization of reality and of art (although we should be aware that abstract positioning insists on the psychological moment and on the psychology of the individual artist). A similar strategy was displayed by the Russian Ilya Kabakov, in one of his projects in 2000. He displayed in the exhibition space a reconstruction of a kitchen that was common to the proletariat in socialist times, when Russia was known as the Soviet Union, and moreover through the window of this reconstructed kitchen, it was possible to watch delirious film sequences from the golden soviet time; films that were produced to give totally splendid communist future visions, with smiling faces, and people eager to work and to fight. It does not matter if real life in itself was an absolutely horrific vacuum, that the kitchen was shared by multiple families with many fewer potatoes for the soup, what was more important was this fantasmatic supplement of life that was parallel to the in-

consistent and miserable reality. And it was precisely this moment that was shared and presented in the exhibition space: Kabakov displayed the simple and poor soviet kitchen with its fantasmatic counterpart, through films and visual ideology. With such a procedure that allows us to externalise our innermost fantasies in all their inconsistency, the artistic practice stages a unique possibility to act out the fantasmatic support of our existence.

A photograph was taken with the title *Tanja Ostojić: Black Square on White* /square/, on which the black pubic hairs of the Belgrade artist and performer Tanja Ostojić, are styled in the form of a "Malevich" square, and organised in a composition with her /white skin/ Mound of Venus. The Malevich modelled *suprematist pubic entrance,* i.e., the "black square on white square," was seen during the Venice Bienalle **only** by Harald Szeemann, the director of the 49th Venice Biennale, in order to declare that this hidden Malevich, "in-between her legs" was one of the many official art works of the Biennale in 2001. Meanwhile during the opening days of the Bienalle, Ostojić elegantly dressed behaved as an Angel/Escort (both terms were used by her) of Mr. Szeemann, publicly exhibiting herself near him, while the artwork, the pubic Malevich stayed discretely hidden, and from a first hand witness, I can state, absolutely not disturbed.

The feminists were furious that she exposed her beautifully shaped body as an object, as they thought, perhaps, that she could escape in the near future being an object of transaction within the corrupted art market, the art

Tanja Ostojić, *Black Square on White /square/* (2001). Photo: Saša Gajin

institutions and the tyrannical vampire figures that run the ART edifice. Contrary to such a legitimate, but "traditional" way of understanding an Ostojić happening, the photo and the whole story, as a perverted self–instrumentalization that relates to some repressed trauma(s) between visibility and invisibility and object-subject relations, I want to develop two approaches to grasp as precisely as possible this exceptionally powerful work.

The first one is *the authentic act of traversing the fantasy*, the other is *incarnations,* both come from the psychoanalytic heritage, and last but not least, as always, from my re-appropriation of Žižekian thought.[18] The black *pubic square* has nevertheless an additional, powerful connection to another square, precisely to *Hitler's moustache,* implying a certain fascisation process in post-modern art life and the body of the artist in present times.

Power reproduces itself only through some form of self distance, by relying on the obscene disavowed fantasy rules and practices that are in conflict with its publicly visible installed norms. The obscene edifice of the Institution of Art is emphatically and pathologically conditioned by the disavowed subject libidinal investments; the subjects are held by power through forms of fantasmatic eroticization over them. The simply critical avant-garde assertion of the truth of the obscene art power edifice, that is, together with all its gallery and museum institutions, definitely vulgar, cold, manipulative and almost deprived of any aura, is not enough. Or to stage the critic against the art edifice in the manner of a bloody, aggressive, destructive event is not enough either. The art power edifice is today already staging by itself such bloody events in order to protect the abstract, sanitised situation it is publicly empowering!

One of the possible strategies is the Žižekian *overidentification* with the power edifice. Acting precisely in a way to overtly stage the fantasmatic scenario that are discussed, incited, implied, but not made public. That means, if the art power edifice is relying on obscenity and promiscuity, and, if this is what the whole story about art and its power is, than the proposed process of *overidentification* will exactly over-display this in the public realm. Even more, such an act of overidentification performed publicly is, according to Lacan via Žižek, *an act of traversing the fundamental fantasy,* that radically put under question our most inherent submission to the power art edifice. Ostojić performed exactly such an act. An authentic act, according to Žižek, that disrupts the underlying fantasy, attacking if from the point of a social symptom. The *act of traversing the fundamental fantasy* was used as a bravado strategy in the public appearance of the music group Laibach in the 80's in Ljubljana as

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[18] Cf. Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology,* London and New York: Verso 1999, and Slavoj Žižek, *The Art of the Ridiculous Sublime: On David Lynch's Lost Highway,* Seattle: The Walter Chapin Simpson Center for the Humanities, 2000.

well. Insisting on the literal repetition of the totalitarian ritual, the group succeeded in overtly staging the hidden fantasmatic scenario of the socialist totalitarian ritual.

It is important to distinguish precisely between an authentic act of traversing the fundamental fantasy from an inauthentic one, that even more obfuscates the invisible traces of emptiness, of the void around which all things gravitate. One palpable political consequence of this notion of the authentic act, insists Žižek, is that in each concrete constellation there is one touchy nodal point of contention which decides where one truly stands. In Laibach, from my point of view, this is undoubtedly the deep relation and rooted position of Laibach's music within the industrial music movement of the 80's, the most radical and avant-garde rock'n'roll invention; this is the contention point of absolute Laibach radicality and not, as it would be possible to wrongly understand, a relation, beyond the repetition of the totalitarian populist ritual,

with any popular-populist music movement – which would have result in an absolute double obfuscation of the traces of the void around which the socialist totalitarian system rotated.

In Tanja Ostojić it is precisely the pubic Malevich under the stylish gowns, the black square so to speak embodied on the topological place, and not some kind of "wallpaper, poster Malevich." In between her legs the real/impossible kernel of the art power machine received the only possible appearance in flesh and blood. The so called touchy nodal point of contention in art today, is the cannibalistic attitude of the art capitalist power edifice that displaced and **abstracted** everything and everybody only for the sake of its proper survival. Malevich stands at the begin-

IRWIN, *Name Pickers* (1998). In collaboration with Marina Abramović.
Photo: Bojan Brecelj

ning of an art history edifice that completely evacuated its conditions of (im)possibility. And if we are to re-articulate the way how this real/impossible kernel is to emerge today in the field of representation, then it is possible only, as per Žižek, *as a tropological, and I will add, topological incarnation(s).* What else is Ostojić's *Black Square on White* than a tropological incarnation on a topological place! A fleshy (*in –carne*) embodiment of the total evacuation of the condition of the (im)possibility of the capitalistic edifice of modern art.

Finally, was it not something similar that took place in New York on September 11, 2001? We witnessed precisely this radical de-realisation and de-psychologization of the American reality that shocked not only the USA, but most of the world that could watch what was going on in New York, in real time so to speak, due to the television video signal. In the explosion of the WTC towers, New York citizens could clearly see the aseptic, quotidian social reality, life itself, in direct parallel with its fantasmatic supplement – Hollywood film scenarios – performed this time in reality. And although all were performed in real time, as was most CNN programming that day, nevertheless it seemed that the tremendous fear, shock and desperation were all covered within an almost virtual dimension. What happened in that moment was that we found ourselves in an almost virtual position. How can we define this situation as virtual? The virtual environment occurs cinematically, as a kind of reversal of face-to-face intersubjectivity; the subject in virtual reality sees her/his shadowy double, which emerges from behind her/him as a kind of sublime protuberance. In the virtual environment, what we are seeing is the concentration of the field and counter-field within the same frame. And this is exactly what occurred in that very moment of radical de-realisation and de-psychologization of the American reality, that put face-to-face (in a direct parallel) the aseptic, quotidian social reality with its fantasmatic supplement. It was as if the counter-field (Hollywood) was mirrored back into the reality field itself. The result is not solely a desperate loss of innocent human beings, but what will have even more tragic consequences: the absolute deprivation of the Americans of self-identity. What is at stake in virtual reality is the temporal loss of the subject's symbolic identity. S/he is forced to assume that s/he is not what s/he thought her/himself to be, but somebody-something else.

And this is also why the mass media, especially CNN, are now producing the war against the Muslim world and all the others, who are not "the civilised First World," as what is at stake here is the process of trying to cover this absolute "blow up" of the US self-identity that was until now grounded in absolute power and control.

III. *Identity*

It should be obvious that my view of location and identity through theory, which is supposedly general, is actually rooted in a very situated, or rather, located theory. I will put situated theory parallel to situated knowledge, a term paradigmatically coined by Donna Haraway.[19] It is not about knowledge produced in different locations or by different agents, which in the time of globalisation somehow works on the line of fairly equal positions of dissemination of their theoretical and critical work, a kind of *bona fide* relativism. Quite the contrary: to think about located/situated theory is to think about theory that is open to critical investment and, moreover, is never an innocent practice.

Located, according to Katie King,[20] is not equivalent to local, though it can be appropriately partial, as global does not always mean general or universal. What I want to say is that with local/located/location we can produce a very locally based activity that can be a politically powerful point of a universal action. I can, for example, state that the local Ljubljana subculture or underground movement of the 80's is intrinsically connected with a much wider formation, a global activist formation; or on a more "universal" level I could argue that the local transsexual St. Petersburg's movement can be seen through a multi-layered global intersexuality formation.[21] Located means, above all, distributed and layered, and it is quintessential for theoretical (philosophical, feminist and cultural studies) investigations of identity.

In our times identity is intrinsically connected with the most inherent processes of capital. It is important to identify that contemporary global capitalism with its inherent de- or re- territorialization processes, creates conditions for the proliferation of new multiple identities. This production of fluid hybrid identities results in an inherent internal mark that is the failure of

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[19] Cf. Donna J. Haraway, *Modest Witness@Second Millenium. Feminism and Technoscience.* Routledge, New York & London, 1997, pp. 15 and 314.

[20] Cf. Katie King, *Theory in Its Feminist Travels: Conversations in U. S. Women's Movements.* Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1994.

[21] For Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki the intersexual body "is a paradigm for an alternative concept of the sexed human, a paradigm which allows people to reconsider rigid ideas about the masculine and the feminine and what has been traditionally theorized as 'sexual difference.' Actually an intersexual body does not possess both sexes, but is in-between sexes. What we can learn from the intersexual body is the possibility to assume a mobile and unfixed gender position. We propose the intersexual body as a virtual sexual identity." Cf. Maria Klonaris and Katerina Thomadaki, "Intersexuality and Intermedia. A manifesto," in: *The Body Caught in the Intestines of The Computer & Beyond. Women Strategies and/or Strategies by Women in Media, Art and Theory,* (eds.) Marina Gržinić in collaboration with Adele Eisenstein, MKC, Maribor and Maska, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2000.

identity, identity perceived in its absolute incompleteness. In fact, no social movement can nowadays subsume to be an open-ended, democratic political project without taking into consideration, without operationalizing the failure of identity, and the negativity, directly at the heart of identity. [22]

In which way is the process of de- or re-territorialization of capitalism connected with the politics of identity? What is one of the basic laws of capital? To acquire new territories, over and over again. The purpose of capital is to achieve the absolute limit or to exceed the very idea of limits, always transforming into, or rather behaving as a cannibal, devouring, internalising all that was before. Capitalism has always been a system of internal, correlative, contingent limits, of limits that constantly move and reproduce themselves on a broader scale. It is possible to see the scenario of postmodernism breaking with modernism in the line of capitalism that inverts all perimeters and limits to internal limits. Western national modernism and third world "modernism" both became the central part of capitalist territory, not as its bastard products, but as an inherently internal bastion project that was transformed, swallowed and spat out as a territory for future art capitalisation. The Western world achieves its goal by creating new movements and styles, simultaneously reproducing and widening the limits of the market. Postmodernism is the aesthetics of the colonisation of previous styles, the occupation with its own history transforming it in internal, correlative, contingent limits. Frederic Jameson's periodization, which defined postmodernism as the cultural dominant of multinational or consumer capitalism (modernism as a cultural logic of monopolistic or imperialistic capitalism, and realism as the cultural logic of classic capitalism), is also an index of a progressive internal cannibalisation, establishing a process of constant de-territorialization and re-territorialization.

The history of capitalism is not limited to one original accumulation. When capital started reaching the limits of accumulation within the nation state, where there was suddenly hardly anyone left to be expropriated any more, the process of original accumulation started again at the beginning.[23] Capital was forced to reproduce itself again and again, and this process of constant repetition and reproduction moved the notion of territory activating new sectors of production, distribution and exchange. De-territorialization is not a process of erasing territories, but first and foremost it is a process of re-territoralization: constant cannibalisation of old and constant re-inven-

[22] Cf. Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, Verso, London and New York, 2000, pp. 2-4.

[23] Cf. Hito Steyerl, "EXPO 2000: A Bourgeois Utopia," in: Marina Gržinić (ed.), *Gallery (Dante) Marino Cettina. Future Perspectives*, Gallery Marino Cettina, Umag, Croatia, 2001, pp. 136-143.

tion of new ones. David Harvey elaborated the theory of the flexible accumulation of global capitalism, becoming "the one" after the original accumulation, to describe the emergence of new sectors of production, new ways of providing financial services, new markets, and above all, greatly intensified rates of commercial, technological and organisational innovation.[24] Biotechnology and genetic engineering are the trademarks in such a framework, whereas Internet provides re-territorialization its new address. "Sold out," "broke down," but always look for us at **http://www...** is the new re-direction of desires, facts and bodies in the global world.

The Internet is the purest sign of this process of flexible accumulation. It started as a territory without borders, without restriction; but today formal legislative and economic regulations transform the Internet into a new territory with old mechanisms of control, distribution of power and ways of accessing it, colonising, controlling it daily, by computer corporations, multinational banking systems and investigative federal agencies. One can say that what was secretly capitalised in the still very near past is made visible with such processes in the Internet now. During the first phase of capitalism, the time of its realistic doctrine of colonial and imperialist ventures with the goal of exploiting and expropriating space, the physical space, meaning land and geography, was at stake. But today it is not about territories in the classical geographical sense any more. Everything and everybody can be transformed into a new territory, can be a territory and part of the re-territorialization process.

If we are ready to take an even more profound look at the paradigm proposed by the new historical formation, as M. Hardt and T. Negri perceive the *Empire*,[25] we are in the situation that instead of dealing with the triadic form of the national state- imperialism-modernity (where imperialism was an extension of the sovereign power of the nation states in Europe, beyond their borders), we have to take into consideration the duality between the Empire and postmodernity. This new historical formation, with reference to Foucault (taking his ideas on the passage of the society of punishment to the society of control) and especially to Deleuze and Guattari (taking their view of biopolitics as the production of social beings), insist Hardt and Negri, shows a high level of effective mobility of its power techniques and paradoxical coherency of its procedures of social control. In short, the Empire is not perceived only through economical moments, but even more through institutional and organisational paradigms. The logic that moves this new formation of power is, according to

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[24] Cf. David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1989, p. 147.

[25] Cf. Micheal Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press. Cambridge, Mass. 2000.

Hardt and Negri, functional much more than mathematical, more rhizomatic than being simply inductive or deductive. This flexibility allows the "imperial machine" to function for certain in a horizontal way as a systematic structure, and as well as hierarchically, as a regime of "the production of identity and the difference of homogenisation" and of deterritorialization and reterritorialization.

Accordingly, capital moves from the physical space to a virtual and "spiritual" one. Everything and everybody can fit the need to be a new territory. The transference, the transposition, the colonisation is very precise. In establishing new territories, the borders are moved up and down and enlarged. It all depends how big the need for fresh blood, genuine identities, hybrid states of mind and virtual fluids is.

A paradigmatically fabricated case in the town is the newly produced film from the Hollywood entertainment machine: *Lara Croft –Tomb Raider*. It is worth discussing this film, as it introduces new elements in the process of reterritorialization. It presents the newly capitalised sector of physical and spiritual data transformed in a territory of flexible capital. The plot of this feature appears very simple to someone who will not go to the movie or make an effort to see the film elsewhere. A fleshy upper class woman – named Lara Croft – mixes the roles of James Bond, Spielberg's Harrison Ford adventure man, The Mummy's best girlfriend and so on, fighting and killing in order to save the world (you expected something else?), so as not to end up with eternal evil.

Each border is over-passed, Trans-passed, eradicated or cannibalised. As it was stated by Hardt and Negri,[26] the new formation is a product of the radical transformation that reveals the immediate relation between power and subjectivity, which allows the new emperor a scale of domination that enters the deepest strata of the biopolitical world. It is a process of installing controlling devices, organisational mood, intellectual models and a perception habitat that attacks the deepest strata of consciousness, the bodies of the population and it is at the same time extended through the inequality of social relations. According to Hardt and Negri, this process is intrinsically connected with the judicial institutional order,[27] which is perceived as the process of a possible instantaneous validity of the constitution of the state acts, organisation and mobility performances as a permanent exception: from civil war to a police operation.

Lara Croft is precisely such an intersection, where hypercapitalistic market entertainment apparatuses meet the flexible accumulation strategies promis-

[26] Ibid.

[27] Cf. Marina Gržinić, "Hysteria: Physical Presence, Juridical Absence, and Aids: Physical Absence, Juridical Presence," in: Gržinić, *Fiction Reconstructed*, edition selene and Springerin, Vienna, 2001.

ing an eternal reproductive freedom. I am interested in creatures like Alien,[28] Lara Croft and monsters,[29] as all of them display identity reproduction, genetic engineering and technoscience so painfully naturally. Lara Croft is almost like an old, strategically well re-designed colonial weapon for identity politics, which will transform, exploit and expropriate the whole system of female yearnings and the power structure of science fiction images. Lara Croft is the newly established little engine in the process of re-territorialization, showing exactly what kinds of bodies and what forms of alliances called identity relationships are appropriate at the start of the new millennium and at whose cost, and to whose benefit.[30] That she is a white, upper class lady is equally important. But beware! The new domination does not consist of the establishment of a hierarchy simply based on cultural differences, but of the evacuation of histories of domination and resistance through technological reproduction.

From now on, women in blockbuster cinematic adventures will be subjected to the paternal male capital rules. This is the new millennium deal, newly invested and capitalised. The rules are clear: killing, beating and fighting like our male pals. This is the way women can join the club. The only thing to do is to make their brains invisible. That thick worm-like structure, namely the brain, which was engaged critically in some other productions, is gone. It is not necessary to think any more, just to act. In order to join the club of constant re-territorialization it is important to repeat the same rules. Lara Croft reproduces the capitalist mode of an entertainment machine using the same violent methods of massacre as her male pals, in the same way they used to expropriate and to conquer all the others in the past, including women. The result is uniform, without any change, simply the reproduction of the pattern of dominance and the recurring ideological stories of the good and the bad guys, no, sorry, women.

The story of the woman cloned to be as good as her male partner or even better is a recreation in neo-imperialist and colonialist ventures in the moving image territory and in the representation and colonisation of bodies. The white woman in such a context, coming from the USA or the West is a tool for capital to produce clones of itself and its ritualistic imaginary pattern, in such a way becoming re-born (it does not matter if it is with a fault) over and over again. And not to mention re-territorialization, which is going on only in

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[28] Cf. Marina Gržinić, "Who are the Mothers of the Monsters?" essay re-published in the new reading room of the Old Boys Network: http://www. obn. org/generator

[29] Several of my papers deal with this topic. For example in *Springerin* Vienna, Number March-June 1999 on *Translocation*.

[30] Cf. Donna J. Haraway, *Modest Witness@Second Millenium. Feminism and Technoscience*, p. 292.

places where it has not been before, and cloning itself in places where it is not, underlined Steyerl in the already quoted essay.[31] Furthermore, she claimed: the bourgeois Utopia is literally created by the destruction and devastation of localities and of their transformations into non-sites, by all kinds of weapons, engines and bodily modifications. Similar is the story of Hardt and Negri about the Empire: it is in and out, and at the same time it seems centralized, although it is without a centre; the Empire is "everywhere and no-where," it is centralized and at the same time "u-topic," which means it is a non-space! Hardt and Negri propose a transformation of the productive processes into "cognitive turn." That means that dominant processes of production give a primacy to communication, and co-operation, whereas biopolitical production replaced production activity. The focus is on the production and reproduction of life in itself. The production of the surplus by workers in industry and fabric, is today replaced by an increasing immaterial intellectual power labour, based on communication, which gives exploitation an immediate social dimension while introducing labour-work within all social elements. Human contacts and interactions and intellectual work – the "accumulation of conscience, technology and skills" not only turn out to be a fundamental productive force, but are one of the most influential industries of the production of theory, interpretations and fields of intellectual power.

The question is not if women are intelligent enough to kill, but if it is necessary for them (us) to be localised as a non-site (Hardt's and Negri's "non-space") in order to obtain physical and epistemological visibility, without identity, history, context. In the past they were invisible, but with a hysterical identity.[32] In short, identity is a relationship, not a preformed category of being or a possession that one can have. The effect of a missing analysis is to treat identity as a preformed category, just being present at or absent from the scene of action. On the contrary, identity is always constituted within several practices and technologies. As Karen Barad[33] argued, identity is always formed in intra-action, in a close system of stratified relationships, the part of reconfigurations of knowledge and practices that constitute contemporary philosophy, art, cultural activism and theoretical analysis.

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[31] Cf. Hito Steyerl, "EXPO 2000: A Bourgeois Utopia," p. 142.
[32] Cf. Marina Gržinić, "Hysteria: Physical Presence, Juridical Absence, and Aids: Physical Absence, Juridical Presence," op. cit.
[33] Cf. Karen Barad in: Haraway, op. cit.