“BECOMING ARTISTIC”
Race, Gender & the Nature-Culture Relationship in New Media Art

By

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Abstract

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Scholars have argued that we are currently seeing new tendencies in the social that are effects of the expansion and intensification of information, biological, digital, and nanotechnologies in advanced capitalist societies. In response to this expansion, scholars claim the increasing importance of affect and affectivity, the tendency toward the "mattering" of information, the new role of complicity in societies of control, and that attention is being given to non-organic life such that the stark opposition between it and organic life are modulated and we are pressured to redefine life and the human. Further, these tendencies require new understandings of ethics, politics and subjectivities.

Taken together, these changes are illustrated and exemplified in new media and contemporary art, specifically in the work of Tana Hargest, Daniela Rossell, and Natalie Jeremijenko. In taking up these artworks as cultural objects, I suggest that as material aspects of the social world, the art objects themselves exist as changes in sociality as well as exemplifying broader social change. In

the field of cultural studies, there has been an increasing interest in using the work of Gilles Deleuze to theorize social relations, and to draw on his writings as a way to use aesthetics to address the relations of art and sociality. Following Deleuze and writings by scholars of his work, this dissertation frames the new ethics, politics and subjectivities that are exemplified in the artwork as "ethico-politics" and "new formations of subjectivity."

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I would like to thank my dissertation advisor Patricia Ticineto Clough for creating the context in which the seeds of this dissertation could be possible. I am grateful for extended conversations and guidance over the years that I have been privileged to work for and with her. She has been a mentor who has always had an openness to new thought, who has allowed room for creativity and movement across disciplinary boundaries, and who above all leads by example as a feminist and postfeminist scholar committed to ethics, politics and criticism that is intent on the future. Thank you Patricia.

I would also like to acknowledge the members of my dissertation committee, Stanley Aronowitz who first introduced me to social theory by way of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment,* and Victoria Pitts for showing how sociology might successfully incorporate aesthetics, bodies and critique.

The work of artists Tana Hargest, Daniela Rossell, and Natalie Jeremijenko inspired and sustained my efforts during the writing of this dissertation. Their art held my interest and attention throughout. I am grateful for permission to print their work, and for its engagement with their own worlds and the broader social world.

Many thanks to the numerous feminist colleagues and compadres current and past for collaboration and commiseration.

Friends near and far have offered support and inspiration: Carra Wilkes, Charles Chang, Erin Heiser and Kelli Muddell, Barbra Conkin, Dorothy Moore, Markus Schneider, Thomas Tradler, Leslie Dutcher, Ellen and Joel Mandelbaum and the community at CCNY-UU.

Much gratitude to my dear extended family that has waited patiently for the completion of this project, offering good advice and only when it was requested.

Finally, unending appreciation to my father John Gambs and my sister Denise Morales Gambs for always being there.

Forward

When I was a child, my mother more or less refused to purchase coloring books for my sister and me. I remember standing in the kitchen, six or seven years old, rifling through the drawers of the Hoosier cabinet she and my grandfather had restored, looking for a pad of paper on which to color. I have the sense I claimed boredom, and was looking for some entertainment, expecting my mother to provide it. Most likely I whined, "I'm bored, I don't have anything to do. I wish we had some coloring books." Instead, she found the pad of paper and said, "You don't need a coloring book, make your own pictures."

"I can't do it!" I complained in return.

"Yes you can. You can make your own picture—draw the lines, and then color them in," she said determinedly.

In exasperation, I yanked the notepad from her, stomped out into the other room, and flopped onto the floor to color with the crayons and paper.

Make your own pictures, she said. She didn't even necessarily encourage coloring inside the lines when someone else had put them there on the page. I'm sure many things would be easier for me if my mother had just been like other mothers, gone the usual route, and bought the coloring books and Crayolas. Instead, as an artist, she readily shared her own "real" art supplies with me.

My mother passed away in August 2004, in the midst of my beginning work on this dissertation. In *Time Travels*, Elizabeth Grosz writes of the *double orientation of temporality*, that it is "one force directed to the past, the other to the

future…a splitting of time, the generation of time's divided present, a present that is never fully present." As I read these lines, I understand them because of and in relation to my mother's death. "Temporality is the dual force of *preservation* (time is preserved in and as the past) and *dissipation* (the present dissipates its force in producing a future that differs from it)." Within my own body, I have experienced the conflict of forces directed toward both past and future. My ties to my mother, my keeping her present, have sometimes kept me in the past. I have feared that moving forward into the future would create a vast gap of time between my mother and I. For as Grosz suggests, I live *in* time, and its transformative processes must change me— yet my mother must remain as she was.

Despite the impossibility of imagining her here with me today, I see that her way of being in the world lives on and that it is possible to forge new relationships to the past. And while I am not a visual artist, in this project I am "making my own pictures" and I am in some cases coloring outside the lines, although increasingly I appreciate what lines are capable of producing. The pictures I am making are, as Gilles Deleuze would say, images of thought.

I also engage the art of other artists who have tended to push beyond boundaries and who do so in order to say something new. I believe it was the "new" that my mother found exciting in a blank sheet of paper, its potentially infinite possibilities. This dissertation is dedicated to those artists and thinkers who are willing to experiment in their search for and response to the new.

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Chapter 1. Responding to New Technologies and New Socialities

Introduction

For some time, news of developments in information, biological, digital and nano-technologies have permeated our world. In the case of information and biotechnologies, we have seen developments for at least the past 40 years, with an increased intensification, dissemination and becoming quotidian since the 1990s. Digital and nano-technologies are more recent, with nano-technologies still being in their early phases of development. This inclusive list of new technologies might seem an unwieldy and surprisingly comprehensive one upon which to open a conversation. They are diverse yet increasingly inter-related technologies. If we think of the speeded up transmission of sound and image, the recent profusion of online social networking sites and Web 2.0, the now commonplace technologies of artificial insemination, GMO, cloning and gene therapy, and the newer developments of nano-particles and nano-robotics, taken together, with the changes in sociality that are occurring alongside a profound transformation is underway.

The current intensification of these particular technologies has drawn the attention of scholars and cultural critics as their impact has begun to be felt and experienced in many arenas. Throughout the dissertation I will focus on how an array of several new tendencies in sociality linked to the intensification of these information, biological, digital and nanotechnologies have effects that can be seen in the more narrowly delimited arenas that are important to social theory: race, gender, and the nature-culture relationship. The new tendencies I will

address are the increasing importance of affect and affectivity, the tendency toward the “mattering” of information, the new role of complicity in societies of control, and the attention being given to non-organic life such that the stark opposition between it and organic life are modulated and we are pressured to redefine life and the human. Later in the introduction, I address these new tendencies in sociality in more depth and respond to these questions, but first, a word about the ethical questions raised by the changes wrought by information, biological, digital and nano-technologies raise questions of ethics.

On March 13, 2004, in an article for the New York Times, cultural critic Edward Rothstein noted an unusual publication by the President’s Council on Bioethics. Responding to the then alleged cloning of human embryos in South Korea, and the advances in stem cell research, the council organized through their meetings and discussion an anthology of writings that consider questions of what it has meant to be human. This 628 page anthology, entitled *Being Human: Readings from the President’s Council on Bioethics*, was available for order, gratis, through the Council’s website. Questions of technology, science, and human-ness~~,~~ swirl together unendingly in the developments of stem cell research and the potential for human cloning. At one moment, ethical questions are raised, at another, simply the speed of changes in technology strikes one as noteworthy. Even when considering less charged technological developments such as the actual practices in the labs in which these developments are taking place, for instance, the less controversial yet still significant use of DNA as code/information, the increasing wetness of the dry and dry-ness of the wet in

laboratories, the fleshing of code and the coding of flesh and the shrinking of robotics to the size of the nano, we are challenged to rethink how to understand and theorize the politics and identifications of the human at this moment.

What is especially notable in the publication *Being Human* is that the majority of the readings included by the President's Council were from late 19th and early 20th century British and American literature. The council hoped to find writings that responded to the complexities of the ethical and political debates of today, in literature from fifty to one hundred fifty years ago. Copies of the anthology quickly sold out. Containing a selection of work by western writers of the 19th and 20th century from Hawthorne to Dickinson and Cather, in ten chapters the anthology explores what it is that makes "us" uniquely human. The interest in the publication suggests that as traditional ethical and political notions about what it means to be human are being challenged by developments across information, biological, digital and nano-technologies, that these issues are not simply theoretical or academic. Furthermore, while the arts, in this case literature, are an excellent site for exploring ethical and political questions about new technologies, focusing on art or literature that is not contemporaneous with the social relations of concern is simply part of an attempt to retain the thoughts descendant of the liberal humanist ethos that inflected thought up through the mid-20th century. Whether one considers the developments of the late 1960s – early 1970s as a radical break with modernity, or a more gradual transition to postmodernity (Jameson 1991) that still contains the economy, thought and aesthetics of the modern, one must acknowledge that these developments

instigated transformations. Moreover, the further abstracted version of and speed of capital that has developed since then, in conjunction with the growth in number and variation of new technologies has created additional challenges to an understanding of the human. The attachment on the part of the President's Council to Enlightenment ideals is not a surprising one. In a society in which the rights of one individual are privileged, and that individual is conceptualized as a human body with a rational mind that is born out of the state of nature into a family and culture, then socialized into the nation-state, the technologies existing today potentially create a moral, ethical and political crisis. (Thacker 2001, 190) The former conception of the individual human, as member of the family, as citizen of the nation-state, no longer fully suffices to explain social relations.

Therefore, I will approach these questions through the development of what I will call an ethico-political framework with an elaboration of a new formation of subjectivities as I find them exemplified and illustrated in new media and contemporary artwork by Tana Hargest, Daniela Rossell, and Natalie Jeremijenko. I will return to the ethico-political framework and subjectivities, but first, I introduce the three contemporary artists whose work I explore as it exemplifies and illustrates new tendencies for race, gender, and the nature-culture relationship.

New Media and Contemporary Art: Selected Works

In this project I discuss artwork by three women artists from diverse national and ethnic backgrounds that illustrates new tendencies in the social that I have previously indicated. I focus on specific projects by photographer Daniela

Rossell, new media artist Tana Hargest, and techno-artist and art-experimenter Natalie Jeremijenko. Specifically, this dissertation seeks to describe how the work of the Rossell, Hargest and Jeremijenko illustrates the increasing importance of affect and affectivity, the tendency toward the "mattering" of information, the new role of complicity in societies of control, and the attention being given to non-organic life and how these tendencies in the social affect and are affected by race, gender and the nature-culture relationship wrought by information, biological, digital, and nano- technologies.

When I was first introduced to the notion that we might be seeing large-scale and connected new tendencies in the social, I was, coincidentally, interested in experimental forms of performance, writing, and visual art. Yet perhaps this interest was not a coincidence, for as Norman Denzin shows in *Performance Ethnography* (Denzin 2003), and as I discuss further in the section on methods, the broader social tendencies linked to late capitalism and information, biological, digital and nano-technologies are also reflected within the academy and are shaping notions of disciplinarity. Clough argues that the "affective turn" also invites such an approach. (Clough 2007,3) A recent publication dedicated to assessing contributions by contemporary women artists, including the art, writings, and publications of Rossell as well as Adrian Piper, Mona Hatoum, Cady Noland, Jenny Holzer, and Kara Walker, notes the willingness of the artists to challenge the art world's current emphasis on "commercial and institutional expansion" by virtue of experimentation with medium and in "radical[izing] the ways in which artists address their publics."

(Anastas 2007, 14) Hargest and Jeremijenko's work also offers this contribution to artworlds and to those interested in experiencing art.

The artists whose work I discuss were also selected for their works' resonance with the theoretical concerns I take up, and for the affects they deploy and provoke. They are not the only artists one might use to discuss these concerns. Other scholars employ digital and installation arts to address technologies and the human (Hansen 2006), the affective components of experimental film (Marks 2002), and the complicitous politics of contemporary art (Drucker 2005). The art selected may seem less than radical in the media it makes use of compared to the continued innovations of new media artists. This selection, however, is also not unrelated to my argument. If the social tendencies upon which I am focusing are broad and all-encompassing, then they should be apparent in a range of arts, literature, and forms of expression, and it would also be expected that new media art would at some point become commonplace, as previous innovations have. Thus, I argue that each of these artists' work illustrates certain aspects of the new tendencies that theorists across disciplines are marking as effects of the increasing importance and dominance of information, biological, digital and nano-technologies.

Tana Hargest: Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Inc.

The artwork of Tana Hargest was selected for its engagement with current versions of race, and the "politics" of racism. (Gilroy 2000, Gilroy 2001) Hargest received her Master's of Fine Arts at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD).

Her training there was in web design and the visual arts. She has exhibited her work at galleries in Providence, Rhode Island, at The Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, the International Center for Photography in New York, and La Escuela Nacional de Artes Plasticas in Mexico City. Her work was included in the groundbreaking show "Freestyle" at the Studio Museum in Harlem, curated by Thelma Golden, and she has also shown her work in other group exhibitions in New York. The projects of hers that I discuss here were part of the *Race in Digital Space* show that appeared at MIT and at Spelman College. Hargest has also spoken at academic conferences on "whiteness" and race. In Chapter Three I focus on her mock corporation, the Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Inc., and its "products," digital images, and a letter from the "president" (Hargest) to shareholders. The print layouts for these all appeared in the interdisciplinary journal *Social Text* in Spring 2003. This particular project of hers, however, was quite well received for its biting commentary on racism, corporatization and the media. Her work is represented in New York by the Ronald Feldman Gallery of Fine Arts and she currently serves as the Director of Public Education at Art21.org, a nonprofit arts organization dedicated to contemporary art.

Daniela Rossell: Ricas y Famosas

Daniela Rossell is a photographer from Mexico City, Mexico. Her artwork was selected for this project because it illustrates the more complex analyses required of gender, in advanced capitalist post-industrial societies. Furthermore, the aesthetic she pursues reflects the impact of televisual technologies, as well

as the singularities of pleasure and desire that cultural studies scholars have theorized in the late 20th and early 21st century. Daniela Rossell's art, I claim, shows us how information and biotechnologies in the context of advanced abstracted capital, push to the forefront notions of "complicity", particularly in the context of gendered/sexed subjectivities. Her series of photographs *Ricas y Famosas: Mexico 1994-2001* set off a firestorm in Mexico upon publication in 2002. The Mexican leftist intelligentsia was infuriated by her photos of the families of Mexican elite and politicians, particularly their wives and daughters, ensconced in their own elaborate bedrooms, boudoirs, patios, and playrooms. Rossell attended the American School Foundation in Mexico City, and enrolled in acting classes at the Nueclo de Estudes Teatrales during her high school years. She began undergraduate studies in painting at the National School of Visual Arts in Mexico City, but left to pursue photography. Portions of *Ricas y Famosas* have been shown internationally in solo and group shows, and her photos have been purchased by the Dallas Museum of Contemporary Art, She is represented in the United States by the Green-Naftali Gallery located in Chelsea, New York.

Natalie Jeremijenko: Tree Projects

Natalie Jeremijenko's art was selected for its illustration of the complicated relationships of "nature" and "culture", and technology's role in this relationship, as well as its playful, surprising, and sometimes pointed political response to current human interaction with the natural environment. Jeremijenko's work straddles several worlds. She is currently a Visiting Professor at the Royal

College of Art in London. Originally from Australia, her bachelor's thesis there focused on virtual reality environments, while her graduate work was done in the fields of mechanical, electrical, and computer engineering. Her art-experiments, as she aptly names them, have been shown across the United States and internationally at many smaller shows, as well as the prestigious Whitney Museum's Biennial, Dokumenta Kassel, and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art. She has participated in the MIT Conference on Research and Design Thinking, and spoken at numerous academic and art conferences. Although I focus specifically on four projects of hers that all incorporate "trees": Tree Logic, Prosthetic for a Tree, Atrees, and One Tree, she is well known for other experiments. Working with a group of students from Bronx High School of Science in New York City, she and they re-engineered toy robotic dogs with sensory devices so that they become "Feral Dogs" capable of sensing toxic waste. On the San Francisco Bay Bridge, she erected a controversial project, a device to track the number of actual suicides from the bridge. She specifically locates her work among political activism as well, and is one of the founders of "The Bureau of Inverse Technology", an activist network of techno-artists and scientists who problematize the dominant and conventional notions of technoscience propogated by corporatization. Her current projects, under the rubric "OOZ" (zoo spelled backwards), address the ways animal and human species intersect and interact.

New Tendencies, New Socialities

I argue that these artists' works illustrate and exemplify tendencies informing sociality that are effects of new technologies in the arenas of ethics, politics and theories of subjectivity. I identify the increasing importance of affect and affectivity, the tendency toward the "mattering" of information, the new role of complicity in societies of control, and the role of non-organic life. The artists' work illustrates and exemplifies the move toward an ethics and politics that encompasses more complex understandings of power relations in control societies and the tendency toward complicity in politics and subjectivities. These new subjectivities are affectively informed at the preconscious, preindividual, molecular level. The increasing awareness of non-organic life, and the materialization of information coincide to produce affective materiality. Each of these concerns plays out differently in the work of the three artists. In the case of Tana Hargest, I will first argue that her artwork illustrates the notion of "control society" and its implications for politics and ethics around race. I go on to consider the new issues that are raised for racialized subjectivities in a social environment infused by affect and the molecular. Daniela Rossell's art shows how information and biotechnologies in the context of advanced capitalism, push to the forefront notions of "complicity" for gendered subjectivities. Her work also exemplifies the post-ethnographic moment and its connection to new subject-object relations. Finally, the artist Natalie Jeremijenko's work exemplifies the shifting nature-culture relationship, and its implications for ethics, politics and new subjectivities.

In the following section, I address the increasing importance of affect and affectivity, the tendency toward the "mattering" of information, and the attention being given to non-organic life in nanomedicine.

Affect and Preindividual Socialities

It is important to understand these new socialities because they are making possible and/or demanding a new ethics and politics as well as novel subjectivities. The concepts and theoretical frameworks that explained the social world during the first two-thirds of the 20th century were according to Deleuze, "molar." That is, human identities, relationships, and all that which could be described as collectively produced were described in relatively large-scale whol-ist terms: whole bodies, organizations, structures, institutions. Today, the predominance of technologies that rely on the "molecular", as well as the circulation of capital at higher speeds and levels of abstraction, are impacting the concepts and social-theoretical frameworks that were descriptively tied to a specific notion of the human.

To deploy the work of Deleuze and to move away from a "molar" conception of the social is not to suggest that the "old" formations are entirely inapplicable or disappeared. Rather, it is to suggest that social theorists now are engaging the opportunity to re-consider technology and its relations to human-ness within a novel layer of the strata of thought. Scholars are working to theorize more narrowly delimited versions of these tendencies and their impacts on subsets of the social such as race, gender and the nature-culture relationship.

(Olkowski 1999; Gilroy 2000a, 2000b; Hansen 2006; Clough 2007) As such there are also consequences for how one theorizes ethics, politics and human subjectivities as they relate to race, gender and the nature culture relationship. New formations, relations and affects, and the consequences of these technicities that tend toward the molecular, permeate across, through and between psyches, identifications, and politics.

I begin with the assumption that these forms of technology are making possible an additional framework for understanding the human and the social at a pre-individual, preconscious level. By more fully understanding the percepts of visuality and haptics (the sense of touch) and their relations to one another, we begin to see the ways in which older models of sociality are and were dependent on visual acumen. The long held opposition of molar - molecular configurations becomes more understandable when thought in terms of what it has actually been possible to see or not see. Rose points out that in the 1930s, biologists began to see below even the level of the microscopic, and that it had the effect of reorganizing “the gaze of the life sciences.” (Rose 2001, 13) Thus what was never seen was also never haptically apprehended. Today, with not only the ability to see the level of the micro but also having the capacity through bio and nanotechnologies to manipulate the molecular, we are able to comprehend more concretely the continuum amongst which the very micro and the macro (or the molecular and molar) exist, and to therefore reconfigure their relations.

Within this new molecular, haptic understanding, the concepts of “affect” and “affectivity”, as employed by Deleuze in his reading of Spinoza, become

important concepts for relating the actions, activities, movements, agencies and psychical processes of the human. Deleuze's elaboration of the *passions* or *affections* defines an amoral, nonteleological expressivity and receptivity of sensational experience at the preconcious perceptual level. He describes them as movements toward and away from particular states and ideals. Affects are not "feelings," for feelings are static, consciously experienced emotions. Sedgwick and Frank elaborate on the work of Sylvan Tompkins to define a psyche-based, non-Oedipal psychoanalytic theory of "affective expression" that is non-emotional, and incorporates the notion of "force", drawing from cybernetic theories of communication and transmission. (Sedgwick and Frank 1995) Hardt and Negri deploy "affect economy" to discuss the role of specific forms of labor that have developed under late capitalism in service and information fields that demand laborers engage affect in their work. (Negri 1999; Clough 2004) Affect does not require a human body—its forces may be communicated between non-organic objects as well. Affectivity, on the other hand, refers to an "excess of embodiment" (Hansen 2006, 148) while also encapsulating the felt realm of passions, perceptions, emotions, sensations and ideas. (Olkowski 1999, 124-5)

In addition to the points of connection that I argue can be made between contemporary art and new tendencies in the social as expressed through ethics, politics and theories of subjectivity, the artwork I discuss produces affects and affectivity. It is useful to heed affective experience, in considering what artworks may be doing, and in assessing what an artist is attempting to create, produce, or draw out. Each of these artists' work manages to surprise, to shock, to produce

laughter, and to provoke questions. Isabelle Stengers has given a more recent treatment to the question of humor, laughter, and “interest” as ethical responses or sites of productivity for science (Stengers 2000), and feminist theorist Elizabeth A. Wilson has framed these as the “positive affective affiliation” of interest and enjoyment. (Wilson 2000, 38-40) Stengers notes the risk involved in this for scientists; by giving up the stance of objective judge of scientific truth, one risks being “interested” and thus engaged and involved. “Another Look: Relearning to Laugh” opens by lamenting the loss of laughter in science: “No longer do our speculations explore those limit points where theories lose the gravitas of their familiar power. Instead, they judge the world in the name of the power of theory.” (Stengers 2000, 41) She suggests that this loss is not surprising, and I would add that it is also not unreasonable, for as we have seen atrocities committed in science’s name, we have lost faith in reason. However, Stengers says that she chooses not to be involved solely in denouncing crimes, but rather she finds possibility in “endeavor[ing] to relearn how to laugh.” (42) This laughter is not from the sidelines, it is not distant or uninvolved, it wants also to intervene and to provoke. Along with rejecting denunciation, she avows that learning how to laugh requires avoiding systematic derision. (42) As it is, science is already involved in constant “reinvention.” She questions, “What if interest in the world were to be our prime motivator? What if the sciences were spoken of as singular histories? What if science was a matter of “speculating about what could possibly be?” In the midst of the burgeoning of science studies and critiques of science, she argues that we need to be wary of the current trend to

conclude that all science is fiction, as if fiction and truth were opposed. She argues that we must "understand the singularity of scientific fictions" (47) and puts forward the notion that interest, truth and history are interimplicated. Along with this, we might recognize the question "Which connections, questions, devices does it make possible?" as a valid point of departure for defining a project as "scientific." (48) Thus, she validates the affective as a site for further understanding. She also, however, recognizes that the risk in this kind of humor is that it coincides with an attempt to understand and appreciate without the security of an objective position.

While the artworks create an "affective response" defined as experiences situated in the human body, I do not consider these to be located only, or entirely, in the body. The affects that are produced circulate between the object, the body, and the environment and/or context in which the art is viewed. The affective responses the art calls forth are to be understood in the context of Deleuze's notion of the "Body without Organs." The Body w/o Organs, a schema for understanding the body's affects in a post-Oedipal, post-identity framework, is a body composed of parts whose agencies and intents are not always consistent with a unified subject identity, nor even a unified "functional" organism. Deleuze, and others who use his concepts, point to examples such as the anorexic or the schizophrenic, cases in which the body's actions may be entropic and not consistent with a well-functioning organism. In these cases, the question arises, "What can a body do?" This question is interesting because what a body *can* do, is not necessarily what it ought to do, or what we expect it to do, defined in terms

of a functioning molar organism. Deleuze's use of the anorexic and the schizophrenic as models of this Body w/O Organs has been critiqued for treating significant human difficulty too lightly or abstractly; I would argue that we might understand these two examples he provides as existing at ends of a continuum of the body's physical and psychic capacities, pushing always the boundary between life and death. Meanwhile, humans continuously explore what their body can do beyond the functional organism, in their everyday practices. In the context of my analysis, what is understood as "the human" is expanded beyond the organism, simultaneously opening up space to understand the role of inorganic "objects", such as artworks, that produce affects. W.J.T. Mitchell has asked, "What do Pictures Want?" This question deserves to be asked both of the art objects, and in the case of Rossell's photographs, of the subjects within as well. It is within this framework that I consider the affective responses the artworks of Jeremijenko, Hargest, and Rossell produce, and the broader implications.

Affect and affectivity must partially be understood in the context of ongoing reworkings of the notion "information." Simondon submits that information is communicated between a pre-individual and a collective. A message transmitted to or from the pre-individual is sent from an open potential, leaving room for a range of tendencies. Thus, information is "not so much the content of communication, as one of its dimension, and…indicates the dimension of a dynamic transformation involving senders, receivers…and the overall

informational milieu." (Terranova 2004, 60) This suggests that information has affective capacities. However, Thacker might argue that bodies, on the other hand, have come to have informational capacities.

Reconsidering "Life": DNA and Nanomedicine

Thacker shows that as the fields of molecular biology and computer science have become more intertwined, resulting in bioinformatics, what was considered to be "information" has altered. By the mid-20th century, molecular biology had appropriated the concept of information as a metaphor for describing genetic material; DNA came to be seen as information. With the increased computerization in research around genetics, in which information could be stored and contained in databases, and with the development of software tools to analyze the information, DNA itself came to be known *as* information, rather than to be understood as a metaphor for it. The significance of this is profound for Thacker, in that information comes to be equated with life itself. As he says, the body is no longer a medium for transmitting information, the body itself as a source of information is "biomedia." What is also significant here is that Thacker is not describing a new technology that becomes fused with the flesh. This transformation of the body comes through the "technical recontextualization" of DNA as information (Thacker 2004, 40), and as a result, the body is digitized.

Thacker also draws attention to the way in which rhetorical studies of biology show its links to movements in the social sciences and humanities. As the social sciences and humanities have focused on debates about the "post" era (postmodernism, poststructuralism, postfeminism, post-art) studies of biology

have moved into the “postvital.” On the one hand, biology’s framing of DNA as “code” submits the organic to the level of information—the level of the non-organic. Simultaneously though, in the metaphorical conceptualization of DNA as “the book of Life”, organic life is re-introduced to the surface level of genetic sequencing. (134) He names this a double action, which he argues is occurring disciplinarily in the history of biology’s rhetorical strategies, in the form of the “postvital” body. The postvital body has “distinct, modern categories of surface and depth, being and living, [that] implode into a new density of coding.” (134) It is “post” in its move beyond romantic notions of vitalism that emphasized an unknowable mysterious essence of life, in the fact of being framed in terms of the cold non-living code of information, while still retaining its organicity. Thus nanotechnology pushes us to rethink the biological-technical divide (139) and demands that we negotiate the regulation of the boundary between organic-nonorganic.

Like Stiegler, Thacker is deploying the notion of technics. Technics, for Stiegler, suggests that technologies and technical processes, while originary, extend the human, or simply are extensions of the human. Thacker points out that in addition to DNA’s technical recontextualization we find technics also in nanomedicine. The result here is different. Rather than the digitization of flesh, or a prosthetic extension of the human, nanomedicine attempts to incorporate the non-organic into Life.

Thacker details approaches to nanotechnology in medicine, beginning with Richard Feynmann’s formative article on the possibilities for atomic and

molecular approaches to biology, in the form of for instance, “surgeons we can swallow.” (123) While Thacker shows that Eric Drexler’s approach to nanomedicine is more “industrial” or machinic, denoting “gears, shafts and bearings,” he also emphasizes the importance of the notion of “programmable matter” for nanotechnology. (123) It is in this sense that through the development of technics of nano-scale systems that the body again is shown to exist as biomedia.

Another example of nanomedicine offered by Thacker illustrates the potential ethical and political pitfalls, as well as the possibilities for positive engagement with nanotechnologies. He describes Robert Freitas’ work on nano-engineered red blood cells as put forth in Freitas’ paper “Respirocytes: A Mechanical Artificial Red Cell.” (123) The respirocyte is an artificial red blood cell designed to increase the amount of oxygen transported and pumped to tissues. Thacker explains in detail the relationship between engineering, biology and nanotechnology in this example, parsing out through the complex biomechanical processes how the respirocyte becomes an example of programmable matter as biological regulation, rather than simply treating a particular medical symptom. First, the respirocyte explicitly involves the “mixing” of organic and non-organic components and it is yet unknown how the body will respond to non-organic substances in this process. Second, the possible treatments involved include both medically necessary ones for diseases such as anemia, and “extramedical applications” such as enhancing athletic performance. (128) Thus, Thacker suggests that Freitas’ respirocyte design is an attempt by nanotechnology to

"make sense" of the division between organic and non-organic matter, asking, "What does a red blood cell do?" In this case, its purpose is to "integrate seamlessly into the bloodstream [and function] alongside biological red blood cells." (129)

Ethico-politics and New Formations of Subjectivity

The new tendencies described above have significant consequences for critique, ethics, politics and new formations of subjectivity. I have selected two broad theoretical schemas with which to discuss each artist's work and the more narrowly defined issues the work illustrates (race, gender and the nature-culture relationship). These two theoretical schemas are of course linked and my interest in them is as overarching theoretical categories that explain the social in a world defined by advanced global capital and the intensified presence of information, biological, digital and nanotechnologies, at a time in which the molecular and the affective pervade the social world. Both of these schemas that I refer to as, "ethico-politics" and "subjectivities", are contested and at times problematized and critiqued and each term bears some consideration.

Ethico-politics

One of the tendencies registering in advanced global capitalist information societies is the dispersal of power relations beyond institutions of civil society and the impossibility of being outside those power relations, thus, the need to consider "complicity." In the past two decades, Deleuze's notion of "control society" (Deleuze 1992) has been cited as one of the more apt descriptions and analyses of a post-Foucauldian understanding of power. He reads beyond

Foucault's theory of a disciplinary society and suggests that what Foucault named as institutions of enclosure are being smoothed out—not disintegrating, but being flattened and dispersed. The spaces of enclosure, the primary institutions such as the prison, family, school, and factory, whose project it was to distribute bodies in space, to order bodies in time, are now in crisis. While Foucault argued that systems of power normalize and discipline, Deleuze proposes that they code and reterritorialize. Deleuze's notion of the body is biological and collective, suggesting we think in terms of populations rather than organization. In societies of control, when the old institutions that once served as sites against which to resist are flattening, then something other than critique that resists those institutions that organize and regulate is required.

Critique, or criticism, was traditionally the tool used by scholars to address political concerns. Since the late 1990s, one can see an increased use of both the terms "ethico-aesthetics" and "ethico-politics." The term "ethico-political" is taken up here to emphasize the necessity for a schema that can address what would have once been named as "critique." The differences between ethics and politics become increasingly interesting under the conditions of micro-technicities and advanced capitalism. Lash (2002, 2005) and Terranova (2004) have argued separately but in a related fashion that in an information society the speed at which images and information are encountered bypasses the possibility for political critique. Amidst these changes, critics have questioned wherein lie the locus, impetus and framework for criticism. As Massumi writes:

> Critical thinking disavows its own inventiveness as much as possible. Because it sees itself as uncovering something it claims

> was hidden or as debunking something it desires to subtract from the world, it clings to a basically descriptive and justificatory modus operandi. However strenuously it might debunk concepts like "Representation," it carries on as if it mirrored something outside itself with which it had no complicity, no unmediated processual involvement, and thus could justifiably oppose. **(**Massumi 2002, 12)

He as well as a number of other scholars whose work I take up throughout this dissertation suggests that we must instead engage "affirmative" methods and techniques. I argue that it is with an ethico-political framework that one can best engage these methods. Ethico- as defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, occurs in compound with "-physical, -political, -religious, and –social." H. More is cited as using the term in the Divine Dialogues (565): "The Bereshith of Moses bears a triple meaning…viz. Ethico-political, physico-theosophical, and Liberal." Here it is defined as "partaking of the nature of or pertaining jointly to…politics…" The adjective "politic" from Middle French usage relates to the "state or public affairs; government," and in its Latin usage, "civil government." As a noun it refers to "the political state, life or condition of a country or government; the polity." It is further defined as "having an organized form of government or society" and "relating to or concerned with public life and affairs as involving questions of authority and government."

My usage goes beyond the two concepts "pertaining jointly" to one another. The two are joined here to reflect the movement of each term toward the other, yet meeting in a new assemblage. If ethics as it has been practiced throughout western philosophy has been understood to be the "science of morals", the department of study concerned with the principles of "human duty"

or the “moral principles by which a person is guided” then the notion of ethics I use here draws instead from Spinoza’s amoral ethics. What is to be considered as the matter of an amoral ethics? The transmission of affects, for one, and which in the case of these artists’ work we see as the deployment of surprise, humor, shock, surprise, and anger to affect and respond to the world.

An ethico-political framework recognizes that under advanced global capitalism, and with the expanded influence of information, biological, digital and nanotechnologies, possibilities for transformation will come from within. In her willingness to read and transform the writings of philosophers and scientists who have traditionally been eschewed by feminists, Grosz offers a model for an ethico-politics that is particularly useful under these terms. She has made a repeated effort to read Darwin, Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze and Freud, philosophers who have received extensive and often legitimate criticism from feminist theorists, in order to further feminist philosophy. (Clough 2005) Grosz argues:

> A more open feminist inquiry into the value and relevance of *any* discourse…involves not only feminist critique, not simply inspection for errors and points of contention, but more passively and thus dangerously, a preparedness to provisionally accept the framework and guiding principles of that discourse or position in order to access, understand, and possibly transform it, even knowing that it may remain problematic in many of its assumptions and claims. One must risk the seductive appeals of the key discourses…even those that may appear hostile or antithetical to feminist concerns, in order to be able to use them rather than simply criticize them or seek to avoid them. (Grosz 2005, 27-29)

Grosz speaks here in particular about feminist aversion to the discipline of biology. Butler, Clough and others make this argument as well, noting the social

sciences' decades long attempt to relegate discussions of the body to the biological sciences, maintaining strong disciplinary boundaries between the socio-cultural and the natural. Grosz's reading of Darwin, and what she asserts as his introduction of a notion of "life" that is always in excess of itself, also contributes to ethico-political thinking. She proposes that what he offers metaphysics is a framing of life with difference always immanent, open to the future, in excess of systematicity, and unpredictable. This of course, is found in the potential of evolution, and differs from the closed systematicity of Newtonian mechanics that posit a "law-like predictability." (41) As she says, Darwinian evolution "introduces surprise and unexpectedness into an ordered universe." (41) For Darwin, the universe is inclined to both life and matter, and their relation is one of emergence rather than opposition. Life requires matter, and introduces to it, transforms it, beyond itself. Grosz suggests that for the humanities then, in life's ability to "yield more complex life [it] generates inventions of matter and different rates of variation and transformation." (42)

It is this productivity of life immanent to matter that is responsible for new knowledges, technologies and techniques, but that also creates the gap between epistemology and ontology. Grosz identifies the "unease" of this space, and names it as "the condition of life's ongoing capacity to astonish, to invent, to transform." As she avows, a politics that is willing to address the realm of ontology, even willing to move beyond "rights and equalities" while still consonant with them, would be open to the transformative processes of indeterminacy and revision. "It opens up feminist and other political struggles to what is beyond

current comprehension and control, to becoming unrecognizable, becoming other, *becoming artistic*." (5) (Italics mine) Grosz wants to connect this to politics as well, to "speculate on the becoming-art of politics; that is, they share a common interest in advocating a politics of surprise, a politics that cannot be mapped out in advance, a politics linked to invention, directed more at experimentation in ways of living than in policy and step-by-step directed change…" (Grosz 2005, 2) Olkowski, also working from a Deleuzian perspective, takes a similar approach, arguing that in order to effect an ontology of change or becoming, one needs to draw on the resources of creativity, to engage "with the creative surface of thought." (Olkowski 1999)

Rose points to the potential problematics of an "ethico-politics" in *Powers of Freedom*: *Reframing political thought*. (1999) In Britain the language of ethics is growing – it is heard in a range of spheres from foreign policy to banking and investment to agriculture and shopping. (Rose 1999, 191) Ethics are of course a concern in the U.S. as well, as my earlier example of the President's Council on Bioethics suggests, and which shows that neither ethics nor politics guarantees the one's preferred outcome. Thacker distinguishes between a bioethics and Bio-ethics to raise a related concern and critique of the ethical principles developed around biotechnologies that also result in long policy-oriented lists of "shoulds." Rose, however, does not feel it is "sufficient to dismiss …talk of ethics as ideology, mystification, [or] a guise for new and more subtle modes of control, domination and economic exploitation." (192) Rather, he thinks a discourse of ethics might be welcomed into politics in order to counterpose it to attempts to

transpose ethical judgments into so-called objective, scientific or rational/uncontestable terms, those moralizing oppositions of the normal and the pathological, natural and unnatural, feminist and patriarchal, oppressive and liberatory. In fact my interest in posing an ethico-political argument is rooted in the recognition that such moralizing oppositions requires distinct and opposed arguments that actually bolster one another. Rose argues that these counterpositions appeal to the authority of some (or any) true discourse, closing off debate. Thus, an ethico-politics that can "escape the will to truth" offers a useful alternative that might open these concerns up to questions. (192) His concern is that the emphasis on ethics might simply and dangerously become new coding for moralizing, and disciplining modes of conduct.

I suggest that in the works of art discussed here, one finds an ethico-political response to the social implications of new technologies. The ethico-politics of Jeremijenko, Hargest, and Rossell deploy from the joint relation of ethics and politics. This is an ethico-politics that raises questions, is willing to experiment, and that provokes thought, laughter, surprise, shock and anger. It does not, like the policy Rose cites in Britain that requires parents to sign a contract that they will read to their children 20 minutes a day, desire to govern the conduct of individuals for particular political purposes. Rose declares that an ethico-politics closer to simply an "ethics" that is unwilling to govern, codify, silence debate, or reduce individual attempts to transform one's own life, would be far more productive. Ethico-politics should "validate diverse ethical criteria and encourage all to develop and refine their practical and experimental arts of

existence. It would be a politics which would value the conscious fabrication of particular styles or arts of living." (193) One might ask then, whether there is even a need for the second term "politics." Politics, more than ethics however, designates the social body beyond the relations between just one and an Other, but also extending to populations and collectivities. The artwork I discuss in the following chapters embodies and deploys just such an ethico-politics.

New Formations of Subjectivity

What then, characterizes these complicitous individuals who inhabit advanced global capitalist societies of control? What defines their actions, experiences, and expressions? We have historically conceptualized individual persons as human. Sociologists have theorized the relationship between the individual and society, considered the question of human agency amidst the constraints of structure, and explicated the role of the Self. More recently, the role of the emotions and the changing self have been incorporated into understandings of individuals. This discourse has been added to and critiqued by feminists, queer theorists and critical race theorists, who have brought the notion of identity and the body to sociology (Pitts-Taylor 2007). They have often done so by way of Butler and Foucault, who have looked closely at human subjectivity and the interworkings of power relations. The critiques brought via Butler and Foucault emphasized the contingency and complexity of identities, their fluidity, instability, constructed nature, and performativity. Furthermore, while sociology had certainly considered the influence of institutions and the state on human lives, the balance of its analysis owed a debt to a view of the individual-

society or agency-structure debate undergirded by the liberal human subject, that was in Deleuze's words, a "molar" organism inhabiting molar structures.

In 2000, the journal *New Literary History* published the proceedings of the symposium, "Is There Life After Identity Politics?" They noted scholars' push to refigure identities (noting the plural), as "anti-essentialist yet attuned to transformative politics", "intersectional", "relational" rather than innate, "differential" rather than inherently positive, and potentially ambivalent and oriented toward "disidentification" rather than identification. (622) Some papers responded by arguing that politics from a subjugated identity position were still possible and necessary, while others argued for a new politics. In asking if there is life after identity politics, these scholars pointed to the troubling of identity that was an outcome of the work of Foucault, and Butler in particular.

As many have noted, this questioning of subject-identity politics was encapsulated within debates over what was seen as the increasingly limited dominance of the social constructionist or constructivist paradigm by the 1990s. One argument situated among these looks at the relationship of Butler to Grosz, and points to the limits of social construction and epistemology (Cheah 1996). As Clough notes, Cheah finds in Butler a pointing to ontology that Butler herself was then unwilling to engage, a distancing of matter that is an effect of her ties to and working through Hegel. (Clough 2005) Butler then, in taking up the performativity of the sexed-gendered body, is ultimately forced to engage its ontological status, which cultural critics had for years avoided, partly out of necessity in order to avoid essentializing bodies and identities. Grosz puts forth

a new understanding of gender, sexuality and the psyche, that moves away from understanding them as constituted identities, and instead as relations of the singularities of desire. (Grosz 1994)

Changes in understanding identities and subjectivities have also occurred in contemporary art—as Drucker argues, “identity marked work” has made way for more “nuanced and complicated presentations of identity formation.” (Drucker 2005, 29) Hansen (2006) addresses new media artwork to develop a notion of subjectivity that we might say is inserted into arguments about the body and constructivism, at the same point of entry as Cheah. He draws on Stiegler and Merleau-Ponty to develop a theory of subjective experience, and to describe more carefully than has been done before human-technic relations, arguing that the development of virtual reality and digital technologies allow us to see our originary technicity. Hansen first analyzes the photomontage *Blindspot* by Tim Hawkinson to show how embodied technicity collapses the relationship of the transcendental and the empirical. Hawkinson’s photomontage is a collection of photographs of points on his body that only an observer could see, that he himself cannot see. For Hansen, the art is aligned with Raymond Ruyer’s notion that the “body” is a scientific entity (or perhaps a medical entity). That is, “bodies” only exist from an observed distance. From the perspective of experience, there is no body, there is only engagement and action, movement and perception. Thus Ruyer collapses the distinction of subject-object to suggest that as beings, we are “pure subjectivities.”(11) Hansen situates this new form of subjectivity at a level below Butler’s performativity, asserting that “an originarily technical

organismic perspective…repudiates all *externalist* accounts of the body, including constructivist theories that have recently held sway in critical discourse." (13)

Hansen's argument here, while not wholly drawing on Deleuzian or Spinozan notions of bodies and experience, still engages the collections of sense, affects, and percepts that stratify, intensify, amplify and extend within a human body, through and between it to other objects. This is a more impersonal sense of a life, one that does not assume such static coagulations of experience as identity or selves. John Rajchman reminds us that to speak of Deleuze's "multiplicities" is not to say as sociologists might, that we have "multiple selves," but rather that we "never wholly divide up into any "pure" species, races, even genders—that our lives in fact can never be reduced to the "individualization" of any such pure class or type." (Rajchman 2000, 81) Each of us is composed of "a life" that is a "potential or virtuality that exceeds our specification as particular individuals…" This "life" is made up of preindividual singularities coexisting on one plane. (83-4) That is, on the plane of immanence.

Hansen more directly situates technics immanent to pure subjectivities. He declares that virtual reality art and media has laid bare a "mixed reality" that is a "technical-transcendental structure…for exposing the technical element that lies at the heart of embodiment."(15) He begins by claiming that virtual reality projects never fully captured three-dimensional human physicality and that "mixed reality" is a more accurate description of the experience of VR art or games. In virtual reality games and art, it was the movement of the participant

that stimulated the experience of reality. Thus this “mixed reality” acknowledges the body as the site for our experience of the world in which movement bridges the gap between sight and touch. As pure subjectivity, the body is always already a transducer of the virtual. This is one version of the originary technicity of embodiment. In later chapters, this technicity will be linked to raced and gendered bodies, suggesting new methods for countering racism, and new subject-object relations.

Research Methods

This dissertation draws from the interdisciplinary fields of visual sociology, visual cultural studies, and new media studies for its methodological approach. It takes selected works of art from three new media and contemporary artists and uses each grouping as a case study with a particular focus that exemplifies and illustrates the new tendencies in sociality that I have previously noted. My research follows multiple objects—more conventionally, the visual art by women which speaks to ethico-political concerns and social theory. Analysis of the images is supplemented with criticism based on previously published interviews with the artists, essays by the artists, and news articles and art and cultural criticism journals.

Visual research methods in general are a growing field in the social sciences. They are useful and relevant as a method in part because so much participation in broader culture today is a visual experience. In anthropology, they have been practiced for some time, incorporating documentary film work and

photography, which will later be important in the discussion of photographer Rossell's work. For sociology, there has long been a vast divide in the way that sociologists discuss art, relative to the way the discipline of art history looked at and talked about art. Howard Becker studied the social world of artists (Becker 1984), the Frankfurt school and its followers focused on how art's value was produced and where it stood in relation to the capitalist production process (Adorno 2001); Simmel, in his study of Rembrandt, was one of the few sociologists to talk about the "content" of the art itself. (Simmel & Staubmann 2005) However, with the development of interdisciplinary fields of Visual Culture studies and cultural studies in general, there has been acknowledgment of the benefits to bridging content-context divide in the arts. Markus Banks points out that we might, as social scientists, consider more than the institutions and networks of the artworld, we might also look at the content of art, to see its relation to the social. In order to do this, he suggests that one "read" the image or the art within the boundaries of its frame or within the piece itself while not necessarily connecting to its context. (Banks 2001) However, one might also take it as a created object that has links to other narratives. This is how I have chosen to treat the art. I address both the content, and its context.

Massumi notes the risk of linking across disciplines, in his case the foregrounding of math and science models in *Parables of the Virtual* (2002), amidst claims that the Humanities are "poaching" concepts from the sciences and that these concepts are being put to questionable use. This, he suggests, is a problem of "application", and the kind of "shameless poaching" as he names it,

that he would advocate, is the use of concepts such that their affects transfer across disciplinary boundaries. As he argues, "When you uproot a concept from its network of systemic connections with other concepts, you still have its *connectibility*. You have a systemic connectibility without the system…the concept carries a certain residue of activity from its former role." (Massumi 2002, 20) He suggests, following Deleuze, that experimental practices can invent concepts and connections between concepts. I, on the other hand, invent connections between concepts and concepts, concepts and art, and art and art. Massumi's proposal is made so that one might avoid what he describes as "application." Applying concepts to some given material is an attempt to change the material, rather than to change the concepts. My proposal, however, is made to suggest that the relation here between concepts and art (or matter) is one of mutual transformation.

It is partially a Deleuzian sociality which allows one to "make sense" of the potential connections among the images. For as Rajchman reminds us, "Making connections involves a logic of a peculiar sort." (Rajchman 2000, 8) Analysis can remain stuck when one is forced to choose between a universalist reading of the relations of women and objects, or on the other hand a determined discussion of race and the body. The researcher must recognize that they exist in a "zone of indetermination" in which as Rajchman suggests, "'the being of sensation" that one extracts from common perceptions and personalized affects, or from the space of representation and the reidentification of objects, leads not to an intersubjective orientation in the world…" (9) but also to an indeterminate zone.

In fact it is in this arrangement that the possibilities begin to emerge. For even in attempts to determine ourselves, indeterminations are created, "indetermination[s] with respect to our individualizations as persons, sexes or genders, classes or strata, even as members of the human species." (12)

For Massumi, application is an attempt to master and to control, rather than to invent, and so he recommends using the "exemplary" model, noting Giorgio Agamben's thought that the example "…holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, is included in these. It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all." (Massumi 2002, 17-8) Therefore, the example is neither general nor particular, but *singular*—unique unto itself. The example, as singularity, is "a belonging to itself that is simultaneously an extendibility to everything else with which it might be connected." (Massumi 2002, 18) The "example" then, is well suited to Deleuze's notion of transcendental empiricism, for it must be related to other objects and ideas through the connector "AND," refusing the universalizing tendency yet having the capacity to extend beyond itself. Massumi notes that in the writing process, the use of the example as invention "activates detail." That is, in such a close reading, one is required to follow the minute details. While I agree with Massumi, I also expect that detailed analysis of the art will also affect the concepts, a risky yet potentially fruitful experiment.

For Agamben, the use of a paradigm or example is a valid methodological approach. Foucault's use of the "Panopticon" is his prime example. As is well known, Foucault takes Jeremy Bentham's architectural drawing for a prison, and

shows how it exemplifies the relations of power and knowledge through a deployment of the technology of vision. Agamben describes Kuhn's two definitions of paradigm: it designates what the members of a certain scientific community have in common, and it is a single element of a whole. Thus, the paradigm is an example, a single event unique unto itself, a singularity. In the case of the Panopticon he explains, the drawing itself is a concrete singular historical phenomenon. But Foucault named it as "panoptism," extending it beyond its concrete history as an architectural drawing. In this way, it functions as an example, or paradigm, that defines the "intelligibility of the set to which it belongs and at the same time, which it constitutes." Similarly, Agamben states that "the paradigm does not move from the particular to the universal, nor from the universal to the particular, but from the particular to the particular." He continues, asserting that one must "neutralize traditional philosophical oppositions such as universal and particular, general and individual, and even form and content. The paradigm analogy is depolar and not dichotomic, it is tensional and not oppositional." Singularities produce a new ontological context in which resides the tension of the continuum or field between what have historically been distinct and separate ends. More radically, and with even greater potential, "the specificity of the paradigm resides precisely in the suspension of its immediate factual reference and in the exhibition of its intelligibility as such in order to give life to a new problematic context." (Agamben 2002) While I do not always or only suspend "factual references" in the following

discussion, the works of art do serve as “examples” that are at times suspended from social context in order to elaborate other problems the art makes evident.

The following chapters delve more closely into how the particular works by Hargest, Rossell and Jeremijenko exemplify and illustrate some of the new tendencies in sociality that we are seeing in these times of intensified information, biological, digital and nanotechnologies. In Chapter 2, I discuss Hargest’s mock corporation the “Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Incorporated.” I argue that her artwork illustrates the notion of a “control society” and its implications for complicitous politics and ethics around race. I go on to consider the new issues that are raised for racialized subjectivities in a social environment infused by micro-technicities. Chapter 3 offers an analysis of selected works from the photograph series *Ricas y Famosas* by Rossell, which I suggest shows us how information and biotechnologies in the context of advanced abstracted capital, push to the forefront notions of “complicity”, in the context of gendered subjectivities and illustrate ways in theorists might reconsider the gendered subject-object dichotomy. In Chapter 4 I take up four art-experiments by Jeremijenko, all of which incorporate trees in live, represented, or digital forms. I discuss how her work exemplifies the workings of politics and ethics in information driven societies, as well as offers up new understandings of the nature-culture relationship.

Chapter 2. Race and Technics in Tana Hargest's *Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Inc.*

Introduction

In *Against Race* and *Between Camps*, Gilroy recognizes *the* eminent concern for scholars of race today to be the crisis of race's status in an age of molecular biology and nanoscience. (Gilroy 2000b, 48; Gilroy 2000a, 40) Race as a social construct has been predicated on visible physiological differences in skin color and facial features, and simultaneously the repudiation of any real biological or genetic difference. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century there were attempts to categorize and codify those perceived physiological differences. But today, "genetic determinism and the nano-political struggles of the biotech era" are transforming what is meant by racial difference. (Gilroy 2000b, 7-8) Biotechnologies and nanotechnologies undermine racial categorization by venturing beyond external physiologies to the cellular and molecular level, and rendering both differentiation and likenesses that were previously unseen, to be newly visible and more clearly apprehendable. Science and medicine today, as one example, are embroiled in debate over the ethics and efficacy of prescribing medication to racially or ethnically targeted populations. In 2007 it was widely reported and discussed that genetic genealogical testing had found Al Sharpton and Strom Thurmond, well-known African American and white American political figures on ideologically opposed ends of the political spectrum, to be distant cousins. Henry Louis Gates Jr., now the Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American

Research at Harvard, has devoted not a little amount of time and resources to a television show made for the American public television channel PBS, “African-American Lives,” in which he details the genealogical, ancestral and ethnic heritage of well-known African Americans through DNA studies and archival research. In the second of the two-part series that aired in February 2008, Gates reveals details about the ancestors and ancestry of actors, athletes, public figures and writers Don Cheadle, Tina Turner, Morgan Freeman, Chris Rock, Maya Angelou, Tom Joyner, Jackie Joyner-Kersee and others. Portions of the information he provides about their families’ pasts comes from genetic analysis, but much also comes from reading records of the sale of slaves, court records, death certificates, and newspapers. Using the technological mechanisms and processes of the present and future, Gates and a team of researchers delve into the ancestral and ethnic past of the participants, who are then told what percentage of their ancestry derives from various ethnic groups, in some cases contradicting what they had been told by their families for generations. Gates himself travels to Ireland, to speak with scientists there about his own Irish ancestry, joking that he couldn’t find his ancestors in Africa, and subsequently discovering that he shares ten of eleven genetic markers with the Irish warlord “Niall of the Nine Hostages” who lived in 450 A.D. Gates and the show’s participants re-examine and re-negotiate their ethnic and racial identifications, in light of the additional knowledge they learn about their ancestry. Gates’ team of researchers privilege DNA as a source of truth that might inform racial and ethnic identity, they simultaneously rely on archival research to supplement that source

of truth, and ultimately, the participants begin to confront their genetic backgrounds in its differentiated piecemeal patchwork fashion. The show exemplifies complex relations of old and new technologies, and the resulting interplay of biotechnologies, ethico-politcs and the intersubjective experiences of race that we face today. It illustrates the ways in which using biological and information technologies to determine one's race may also result in undermining current conceptualizations of it, just as Gilroy suggests.

Tana Hargest

In 2002, the journal *Social Text* published a special issue on Afrofuturism that drew attention to issues of race in cyberspace, the role of the posthuman in pop music by black artists (Weheliye 2002), the raced and gendered aspects of "nerd" and "geek" subjectivity (Eglash 2002), and the importance of science fiction and fantasy by Black authors (Tal 2002). The issue also incorporated experimental writing and art and features Tana Hargest's mock corporation, the "Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Inc." Using the different mediating forces of biotechnologies, the pharmaceutical and entertainment industries, and consumer culture (with the art world as a subculture within the latter), Hargest bitingly illustrates how racism operates within contemporary culture United States culture and institutions. Although inquiries into genetic histories were not popularized at the time she developed this project, Hargest's work touches on other biotechnologies. The project was included in the group exhibition *Mimic* at the multimedia performance Gale Gates et al. in Brooklyn, New York in 2002. There it functioned as an "interactive trade-show booth [mimicking] corporate structures

of the pharmaceutical and entertainment industries to illustrate racist constructs within consumer culture." (FranklinFurnace.org) The Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Inc. was also part of the Studio Museum in Harlem's well-received exhibit "Freestyle." Her art makes use of digital and information-based aesthetics, occasionally also relying on more direct representational images. She points out that in the global economy, corporate structures are not so different from art world structures and questions how African-Americans navigate daily, mundane racism as they work within these structures.

Crisis of raciology

The Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Inc. draws together questions concerned with race and racism in the context of the technological changes characteristic of postmodernity and postindustrial societies. As Gilroy's argument makes clear, and as the scholars who contributed to "Is There Life After Identity Politics?" show, the politics of racial identity have been problematized after postmodernism. As the limits of identification from a fixed and stable position became part of the discourse on racialization, it became clear for critical race theorists that they must consider something different after identity politics. Gilroy has named this the "crisis of race and raciology." For decades, scientists have argued that race is socially constructed and has no claims to biological foundations. Genomic research serves to undermine categories of race even further, as it looks below the surface of the skin where racial affiliation has long been determined, to find potentially infinite differentiation. As Gilroy says, under these conditions, "the body circulates uneasily through contemporary discussions

of how one knows the group to which one belongs and of what it takes to be recognized as belonging to such a collectivity." (Gilroy 2000b, 24) Furthermore, from his perspective, the politics of race has less and less currency, both in the form of pro-multicultural movements that uplifted communities through identitarian affiliation as well as movements that were entirely destructive through white supremacist and proto-nationalist perspectives. These politics of identification, he suggests, dangerously rest on nationalist and fascist ideologies.

Gilroy's response to the uncertainty technological changes produce, along with his antipathy toward racial politics, is to suggest that even beyond challenging white supremacy's racialization of politics and public life, there must be a complete and total end to all racialized thinking and seeing, (Gilroy 2000a, 40) hoping that "…the perceptual and observational habits that have been associated with the consolidation of today's nano-science might also facilitate the development of an emphatically postracial humanism." (Gilroy 2000, 37)

Gilroy draws from wide-ranging contemporary issues to discuss the impact of the bio- and nano-political on the crisis of race and raciology. He argues that this biopolitics is evident in black popular culture, professional sports, and contemporary music by black artists, in which one finds an end to the mind/body dualism through the elevation of the body. (196-198)

In the final analysis, Gilroy continues to situate his arguments distinctly within the context of modernity and its ethical and political effects, namely humanism, albeit his more cosmopolitan version "planetary humanism." For one, he notes the importance of a more adequate, non-Eurocentric analysis of global

modernity. However, I would ask whether his theories might be limited by his continued attachments to a modernist humanism. Can “planetary humanism” fully respond to the tendencies registering for race, that he himself notes are so closely linked to new technologies, and which are causing the crisis in raciology? Stanley Aronowitz argues that what is missing from his critique is a politics, and that although Gilroy draws from the critical writings of Adorno in his discussion of culture, he does not “offer a vision beyond that which characterizes modern liberalism.” (Aronowitz 2001, 561)

Hargest’s artwork does address the ambiguities of racial politics after postmodernism. Her art offers an illustrative example of new social tendencies linked to the expansion of information, biological, digital and nanotechnologies that are registering in terms of race. Her work suggests that Gilroy’s post-racial future is upon us, but that humanism alone will not be sufficient to address this future.

Risk and Control

The crisis of raciology as Gilroy describes it is intimately intertwined with the biopolitical field of power relations. Gilroy draws extensively on Foucault for his analysis and finds himself disappointed in the philosopher’s lack of attention to race. Foucault’s 1975-76 lectures at the College de France may not have been translated into English at the time Gilroy wrote *Against Race* and *Between Camps* for he appears not to have incorporated Foucault’s debate that war might be an exercise of power constitutive of race and bodies, one which he might have found more satisfying. (Foucault 2003) There Foucault employs an early

conception of race prior to its full biological identification, yet in detailing ongoing conflict between populations over the right to let live and let die, it is the closest he comes to addressing current racisms.

Agamben re-assesses the relations of power and sovereignty under similar terms, to argue that Foucault's biopolitics had exposed a particular version of power in the socio-political body, that is, "bare life." He claims the Nazi prison camp and the Roman "homo sacer" as the prime examples of the 'life' that is excluded from power. (Agamben 1998) Whether exclusion from life, or escape to death, both of these theorists understand both the human body and life itself, as the terrain of the political in relation to sovereignty and modernity. (Medovoi 2007, 54) The ongoing war on terror, the drawn-out war in Iraq, and continued mass incarceration of African Americans in the United States suggest that analyses explicating power's relationship to the institutions of the state, sovereignty and governmentality are still required. However, Deleuze's "Postcript to Societies of Control" may better enable analysis that addresses the role of race politics in advanced global capitalist societies of pharmaceutical corporations, mass media, and popular culture. Foucault showed how the state constructs docile bodies that can be subjected, used, transformed and improved. Human bodies in disciplinary societies are no longer treated en masse as under the reign of the sovereign, but individually. The body is regulated at the level of mechanisms, movements, gestures, attitudes, and speeds. Disciplinary society is no longer concerned with behavior or language but with efficiency or economy of movement. Rather than the results or outcomes being supervised it is the

actual human activity that comes under surveillance. (Foucault 1977) However Deleuze offers a conceptualization of how power might be understood differently in the context of advanced, abstracted global capital, and in light of the limitations of civil society's institutions that for so long were the site of the distribution of power. Deleuze's politics, like Hargest's art, address the biological in post-postmodernity. He reads beyond disciplinary society and suggests that what Foucault defines as the institutions of enclosure, the same enclosures which had been responsible for the regulation of bodies, are being flattened. These spaces of enclosure, prison, family, school, and factory, are now in crisis. While Foucault says systems of power normalize and discipline, Deleuze says they code and reterritorialize. Deleuze reads Foucault as having lines of resistance rather than lines of flight. Deleuze suggests that Foucault's institutions of enclosure are smoothing out—not disintegrating but being flattened.

The Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network Inc.'s (BNBN Inc.) products are distinctly in-keeping with the ethico-politics that straddle control: Psychiatric pharmaceuticals, topical lotions to deflect racism, and microchips intended to be implanted in those prone to violence. These "products" directly respond to racial "ills" of the 21st century in which we see an increased importance of affect and affectivity, tendencies toward the "mattering" of information, the role of complicity in societies of control, and attention given to the diminishment of the organic/non-organic boundary of life such that we are pressured to redefine life and the human, and in particular what "race" might mean, be, or do in this context.

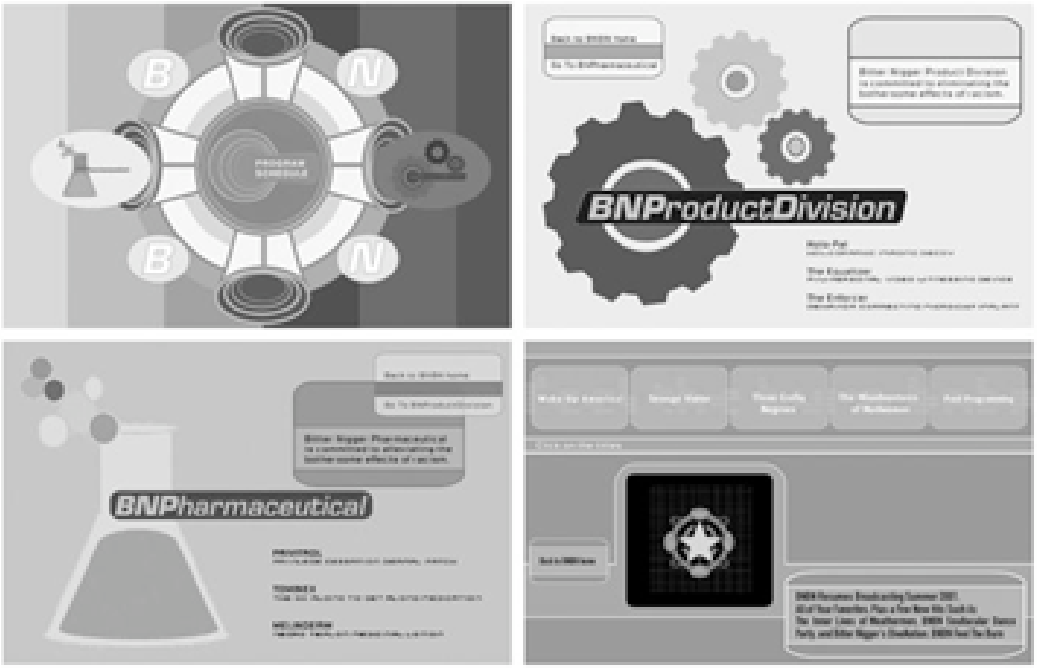

Figure 1.

BNBN Inc.'s selection of available products suggests that the old liberal standbys, of talk therapy, the notion that one might educate or regulate an acceptance of difference, raise awareness of racism, or even rehabilitate, have all been modulated. After identity politics, the question is raised—has the usefulness of addressing racism and other social concerns through the institutions of civil society come to its limit? The affective responses to the shift away from institutions and liberal humanist solutions might be read from several angles— with regret for the loss of hope in institutional change and the assumptions that it would work, with relief, at the demise of institutions, and their deathly grip on the human and the social order they enforce, or with ambivalence, knowing they remain, knowing they have moments of efficacy, and sensing that artists such as Hargest display the most appropriate response. That

is, Hargest suggests a knowing tone, displaying a humorous, mocking anger, and a response to racism and the association of race and crime. Beyond tone, her work addresses the molecular, affects and affectivity, and the skin as a surface area of tactility and technicity rather than a visible object for the deployment of racism.

BNBN Inc. offers “The Enforcer” a “behavior correcting microchip implant.’” The Enforcer is one of several products from The BNProduct Division, a broader division of the company that is “committed to eliminating the bothersome effects of racism” (the BNProduct Division also offers ‘Holo-Pal,’ a holographic imaging decoy that creates an imaginary white friend to help hail a cab) but The Enforcer is the product that is most extensively elaborated. There are four screens devoted to it: one text-based, a play on the words “corrective violence,” another mimicking a circuit board layout, a third describing the “chip implantation process,” and the final screen offering the “reason” for implantation—“a sound cure.” Assumedly, the purpose of the Enforcer microchip is to correct the violent behavior of criminals, or even future criminals, a la the film *Minority Report*.

Figure 2.

A chip inside the brain of a body from a population that has the potential for violence, a population that may be at risk of committing violent acts, mitigates the possibility of future violence. In societies of control, "risk politics" mitigate the uncertainties of chance, and this is partially what Hargest's "Enforcer" illustrates and exemplifies. As Rose puts it, "…each life has a value which may be calculated, and some lives have less value than others…politics has the obligation to exercise this judgment in the name of the race or the nation." (Rose 2001, 3) At the biopolitical level, this body is not an individual, and risk is not calculated for a given individual. In societies of control,

> [d]emands for collective measures of biopolitical risk management, far from reducing, are proliferating and globalizing. And strategies aimed at the reduction of the probability of untoward events across a population – targeting risky practices and locales rather than risky or at

> risk individuals – are spreading to the government of many other kinds of unwanted events – notably crime control. (7-8)

In this way, Hargest's project also exemplifies a straddling of biopolitics to control and beyond. For in the case of her art, it is not the government regulating the potentially violent body, it is the corporation. "The Enforcer" may also reflect academic and political debates over whether corporations and the government are yet equally implicated in mass incarceration (Davis 2000) but "The Enforcer" and the existence of these debates do exemplify the tendency toward control. Not only does the specific example of The Enforcer illustrate this tendency, but the aesthetics of her project do as well. For in post-postmodern societies of control, aesthetics and affects reflect the informational and digitizing influence.

Information Aesthetics and Affective Transmission

By arguing that information is not just the discursive signifier of some actual social-political meaning but rather has ontological properties that are realized through the transmission and production of affect, Tiziana Terranova's (2003) analysis of information in postindustrial societies follows closely with a model of control. Massumi argues similarly that "affect holds the key to rethinking postmodern power after ideology." (Massumi 2002, 43) An affective, ontological understanding of information fits well with an understanding of power in advanced capitalist societies of control, as molecular force whose affect may be felt by the human body. Hargest's work points to the possibility of developing an ethico-political response that draws on the affects of humor, anger, bitterness, shock and surprise. Her artwork deploys an aesthetics mimicking the fonts,

materials, and hardware of the information age. Thus the images convey the force “of emergence, as vehicles for…potentialization and transfer.” (43)

The top left screen of the BNProduct Division in the previous image (Figure 2) offers text as image—ORRECTIVE VIOLENCE is centered across the screen, the first letter, C, does not appear, it is off-screen. The text is displayed in this fashion unendingly and repeatedly, the first letters and ends of words dropped off as the word travels to the screen’s edge. Here, meaning is achieved without any direct signification by words-as-signifiers, yet the affects of shock associated with violence are communicated.

What is corrective violence? It is not necessary that one read the words “corrective violence,” or even necessarily understand what “corrective violence” means for this corporation. Other words, in a large calculator style print stream across the screen. Hargest’s choice of font harkens a solid, heavy image of early digitization.

> ECTIVE MEASURESEXTREME DEMA. BEHAVIOR DEMANDS EXTREME CORRECTIVE MEASURE EXTREME BEHAVIO. HAVIOR WARRANTS OFFENSIVE BE. FICATION OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR WARRANTS OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR MOD. ORRECTIVE VIOLENCE. USE THE SCANNER. TO REESTABLISH COMMUNICATION VIOLENCE MAY BE NECESSARY TO RE. AY BE NECESSARY TO REESTABLIS. IYING VIOLENCE WITH MEDIATED VIOLENCE MODIFIYING VIOLENCE W. MODIFIYING VIOLENCE WITH MEDIAT. (Hargest 2004, 119)

Hargest’s choice of words transport one to an interval between the intended meaning of the words and the affect of the text as image. In this interval of affectivity, the never completed phrases impact the viewer via the violence done

to the word's potential to signify. As Massumi might put it, the viewer's body here, serves as a "resonation chamber" for affects. (Massumi 2002, 106)

Screen 2 of The Enforcer is absent any text, excepting four numbers centered within circles linked to one another by pale lines: connecting 1, 2, 3, 5. The image appears to be the layout for a circuit board or motherboard, for electricity, an image of a material conduit for information transfer. In a space where circle four is meant to be located instead an oval is superimposed over the layout with a photographic image of a monkey inside a cage, a small object on his head and a flat grimace on his face. The image conveys an angry absurdity and interrupts the information aesthetic that Hargest's work has had up to this point in the series. The caged monkey returns the viewer to the realm of representation and interpretation, to old narratives that conflate African-Americans with primates, caged, no less. This may reflect anxiety that we will not quite 'get it' without some politicized image we recognize as being linked to a history of racism. Or is the image of the monkey an inserted joking deployment of humor? Either way, it serves as a disruption in the smooth aesthetic of letters, numbers, and grid. Hargest's ironic placement of the monkey takes the art's wry mocking anger past its edge, she takes us out of affect and information, returning to representation.

The third screen of The Enforcer offers a quarter-section view of a human brain, a general graphic design image, and unlike the previous screen it is not a photograph. The viewer has the option of selecting links to 'Pre-implantation,'

‘Implantation,’ and ‘Post-Implantation’ from a grid of honeycomb cells. ‘Pre-Implantation’ reads,

> The individualized correcting microchip is implanted in the subject’s brain. The surgical procedure is slightly invasive. During recovery the subject completes the counseling component of the implantation process. At this point in the implantation process the enforcer is not yet activated. The device requires a minimal amount of integration time. Activation occurs during the post-implantation process. The brain lies open, neural networks gapingly exposed to the air, the world. Here lies the site for change. The Enforcer rewires the human. (Hargest 2004, 119)

The final screen also re-incorporates the large digital text of screen 1: “CTIVE MEASURESEXTREME DEMAN, MODIFYING VIOLENCE WITH MEDIAT.” And then, “THE REASON: a sound cure. THE PROCESS: What to expect implantation day and beyond.” (119)

This is another example of the tendency away from discipline toward control. The BNBN Inc.’s plans for implantation address the potential that a control society or risk society will one day no longer rely on the enclosure of the prison, but instead control the body at the molecular level. For Deleuze, controls modulate rather than organize, and the body with an implanted chip is a body whose potential actions are modulated. Hargest’s images of the implants speak directly to a fearful version of the potential for the micro and nano to deploy racism and social control in control society. Under these conditions, the viability of a politics of resistance is questionable, there is nothing to resist, because the problem has been placed within the body. New political techniques are called for, molecular and nano politics such as hacking.

Deploying the "N-word"

The BNBN Inc. is a mock corporation that also participates in the "culture industry" as Hargest puts it. The development of this corporation is provocative, and the artist's intention to provoke appears immediately in the corporation's name, and in the repeated use of the word "nigger." This is a case in which affect is effectively deployed in Hargest's artwork. The first introduction readers have to her project in *Social Text* is through a letter to Potential Shareholders. Throughout the letter, the name of the corporation is repeated more than is necessary. As a white viewer, in reading the letter silently to oneself, it is disturbing at first, but the eyes also adjust over time, adapting to the use of the "N word." Hearing the letter read out loud, or speaking it out loud, produces more intense sensations in the body. As much as Hargest uses the N-word repeatedly, it begins to lose its attachment to the original meaning, to its fraught history of racism, while still retaining its shock value. Hargest does not pedagogically deliver a lecture tracing the use of the epithet, rather, she relies on the history of the word to work affectively for her.

> Chairwoman's Letter
>
> Tana R. Hargest
> Chairwoman of the Board
> and Chief Executive Officer
> 12 June 2002
>
> To Our Potential Shareholders:
>
> For Bitter Nigger, Inc. and our investors, 2000 proved to be an extraordinary year. We expanded our cultural intervention mission in three exciting areas; Bitter Nigger Pharmaceutical, Bitter Nigger Product Division and The Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network.
>
> Much of Bitter Nigger, Inc.'s success is attributable to our increased focus on doing what we do best: discovering, developing,

> and bringing to market innovative cultural interventions to save, protect, and enhance lives. Since I became CEO in 1997, we have divested all of our non-cultural intervention businesses, including in 1998 all of the businesses that had been part of our Art Career/Art Star Group. Despite these divestitures, in the last eight months, Bitter Nigger's ideas have doubled, viewer investment in Bitter Nigger, Inc. has more than tripled, and the value of our relevancy stock has grown eightfold.
>
> We created Bitter Nigger, Inc. to fill the void in the contemporary art market. Bitter Nigger, Inc. provides fresh ideas in the arena of political art and illustrates the changing perception of African-American cultural production. Through our packaging of concepts as consumable products we have increased the relevancy of art for viewers beyond the art world.
>
> The road we have mapped out for ourselves is exciting. With careful planning and a focus on creativity we endeavor to deliver the highest quality cultural interventions available.
>
> If you have any further questions or would like a copy of the bitter Nigger Inc. annual report, please feel free to contact or director of public relations at 212-245-2508.
>
> Tana Hargest
> Chairwoman and Chief Executive Officer (Hargest 2002, 115-6)

Of course, different audiences will receive the use of this word in a range of ways. For a white viewer who prides themselves on liberal views, the use of the word may elicit discomfort. Her intention is not that the participant in her art extract the particular meaning through a social history of the signifier, but in this case that they instead cringe, wince, gasp, and possibly finally laugh. For Black audiences, the use of the word in conjunction with the modifier "bitter," will evoke laughter because as Hargest writes, "bitter is better." In the case of either audience, the word affects through bodily memory.

Bitter Humor

Bitter Nigger Pharmaceuticals, the company's sector "committed to alleviating the bothersome effects of racism" offers two other products that affect

the body at the molecular level: Privitrol (Privilege cessation patch) and Tominex, The Go-Along to Get Along Medication. These products more than others, deploy the “bitter humor” that Hargest speaks of. Though laughter and humor as affects are less frequently explored, they were recognized as such by philosophers. (Moreall 1989, 249) Hargest’s is an “incongruous humor,” violating our expectations (248), belying political correctness, and ignoring unspoken expectations that one should proceed gently when discussing race in public, for fear of stepping on toes. Tominex is marketed as “the go along to get along pill,” pointing to the Uncle Tom moniker. This pill will help the patient go along with racism, in order to “get along.”

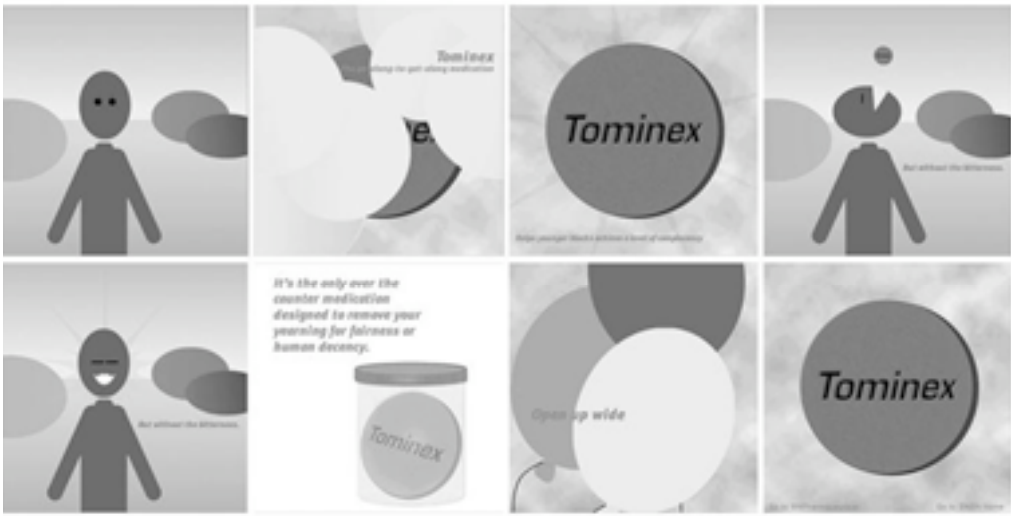

Figure 3.

The Tominex link leads to a progression of eight screens with images showing the effects of the medication. Tominex,

> The go-along-to-get-along medication. Helps younger blacks achieve a level of complacency. But without the bitterness. But without the bitterness. It’s the only over-the-counter medication designed to remove your yearning for fairness or human decency. Open up wide. Tominex. (Hargest 2004, 116-7)

Tominex, like the Enforcer micro-chip, is designed to act directly at the biological level. Hargest has also designed the packaging for Tominex; it mimics the layout for the box in which a bottle of Tylenol, Advil, or Aspirin might be encased. The front of the package advertises: "The Go-Along to Get-Along Pill. TOMINEX. numbproxen sodium tablet, 1500mg. OPEN UP WIDE AND SWALLOW HARD."

In one image advertising Tominex, the actual pill appears to be extremely large, overwhelming the figure of a smaller human. This pill, it is implied, would be difficult to swallow. The ingredients are also listed, invoking a similar play on words: the generic name for Tominex is "Numbproxen sodium," mocking the ingredients in Aleve, which is composed of *naproxen* sodium. Numbproxen sodium, will obviously help numb one to the effects of racism. Not only that, but this pill is 1500 mg, which suggests it requires quite a lot in order to be effective.

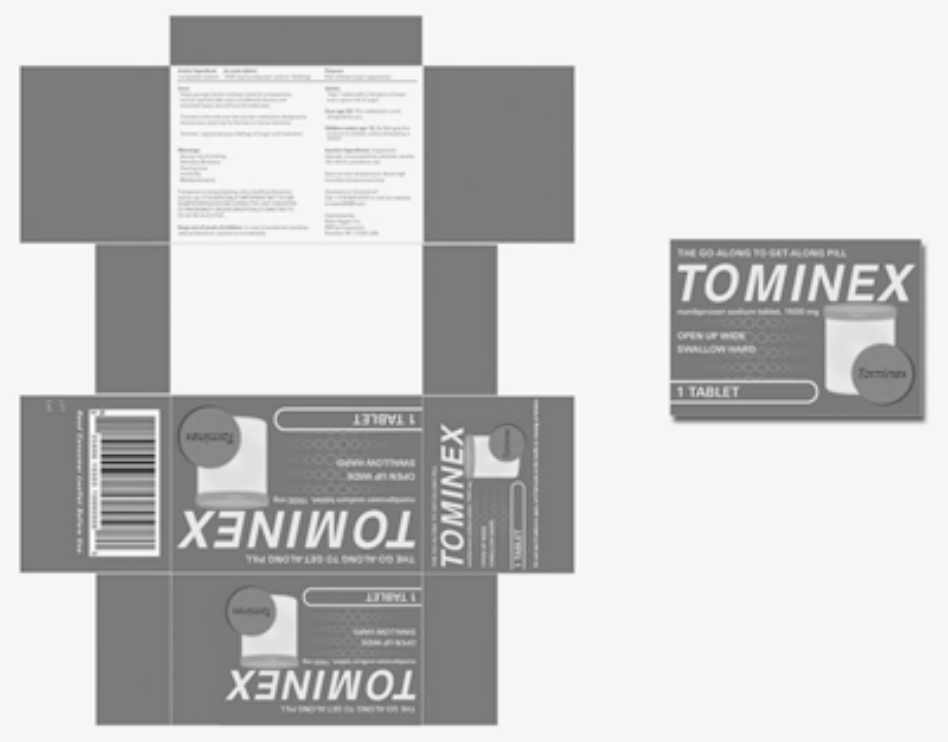

Figure 4.

The backside of the packaging layout offers typical pharmaceutical information: ingredients, directions, and warnings.

> ACTIVE INGREDIENTS: (in each tablet) Numbproxen Sodium. Purpose: Helps younger blacks achieve a level of complacency normally reached after years of deferred dreams and smashed hopes, but without the bitterness. Tominex is the only over the counter medication designed to remove your yearning for fairness or human decency. Adults: Take 3 tablets with a full glass of water and a spoon full of sugar. Over age 65: This medication is not designed for you.
>
> Children under 12: Do not give this drug to children unless directed by a doctor. Warnings: Strong risk of choking, Selective Blindness, Hearing loss, Invisibility, Weakened spine. If pregnant or breast-feeding ask a health professional before use. IT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT NOT TO USE NUMBPROXEN SODIUM DURING THE LAST 3 MONTHS OF PREGNANCY UNLESS DIRECTED

> TO DO SO BY A DOCTOR. KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN. In case of accidental overdose seek professional help immediately. (Hargest 2004, 120)

Hargest plays with both content and context, using the traditional medical/pharmaceutical packaging format, while pointing to historical racism and African American's experience of being subject to it. Hargest snidely notes that Tominex will bring about contentment despite "deferred dreams" yet without bitterness. However, she warns, beware of your weakened spine. The joke here is on whites or mainstream America, and the artist draws on actual anger and bitterness, on this bitter humor to make an ethical and political point about racism. Hargest draws on her audience's familiarity with pharmaceuticals, their familiarity with television airwaves saturated with pharmaceutical ads, medicine cabinets filled with products to ease physical and psychic ills in order to make this point.

New Formations for Racialized Subjectivities

Race may be one of the most difficult arenas in which to re-understand subjectivity in light of new technologies, for it has always been a controversial and contested terrain and much is at stake. Yet the tendencies characteristic of post-modernity and beyond must be particularly threatening to old racial identities, rendering them impotent personally and politically. After having addressed the ethico-political context of risk and control in which racialized subjectivities reside, I would like to go on to show how attention to race that incorporates technics adds to the body of critical and social theory. Hargest's "Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network, Inc." reaches toward formations of racial and

ethnic subjectivities that attend to surfaces that are not opposed to depth and interiority. Her artwork illustrates attention to the molecular, rather than the molar. It suggests a theory which differs from Gilroy's postracial future, yet does not return to identity.

As previously stated, Gilroy deconstructs the racial subject in order to advocate a "planetary humanism" that is beyond racialization. In *Between Camps* he makes brief reference to the work of science studies scholars. He cites the work of Donna Haraway and Sandra Harding as important to establishing a critique of epistemology and applauds their work for recognizing the significance of race. According to him it necessarily "supplement[s] a lengthy tradition that dissents from the objectivist conceits…of both the human sciences…[and] reflects upon the history of truth-seeking with a less innocent eye that is more mindful of contingency and more sharply attuned to language." (Gilroy 2004, 69) He recognizes that writing which reconceptualizes the binary of the nature-culture relationship as it applies to race is important, but he limits the discussion to a few paragraphs and that is the extent of his engagement with their work. We might speculate that he does not further incorporate the work of Haraway and science studies scholars because their thinking directly challenges humanist perspectives. His own emphasis on a cosmopolitan version of race resonates with Hollinger's "postethnic" America, which suggests a heightened modernity, and a progressive end to race and ethnicity that is a result of Enlightenment thought. As Rebecca Walkowitz points out, Butler and Moten have contested the underlying impetus of universal or 'planetary' cosmopolitanism, its

assumption "that all people in the world have the same relationship to international events; that all people living in a single nation should have the same views about these events; that any one view is unambivalent and unchanging; that decent feelings are more important than dissenting thought." (Walkowitz 1996, 120) Gilroy's call for a planetary humanism also suggests little interest in the response to the merger of the technological and the human by cultural critics that has come to be understood as posthumanism.

Hayles can be credited for bringing this concept into the social sciences and humanities, but as she points out, the notion of the posthuman had already been hinted at in science fiction literature for decades. *How We Became Posthuman* iterates the history of cybernetics in relation to questions of embodied-ness through the lens of science fiction literature. Looking back to early studies of human-computer relations such as Alan Turing's, Hayles explores the contested relations of the human-machine, and matter-spirit, ultimately arguing that the machine is a disembodying technology. (Hayles 1999) Haraway is well known for her myth of the cyborg that envisions a post-human world both dystopic and utopic: dominated by a 'grid of control' yet with the potential for a lived reality in which people are not afraid of 'joint kinship' with both animals and machines. (Haraway 1991, 154) This is a world that is both here, and yet perhaps not fully present, and that Gilroy's work in some ways attempts to describe in terms of race.

Hayles' main argument, which has been taken up across cultural studies, science and technology studies, and into numerous disciplines where an

understanding of the ‘human’ is required, is that mid-century studies of cybernetics privileged information over materiality. That is, the cultural icon of the cyborg, and continued development of computer technologies, caused information to lose its body. (Hayles 1999) Prior to the development of cybernetics, the liberal human subject was constructed as an individual with the capacity for ownership of it-self, and freedom from the will of others. Cybernetic theory, by advancing a notion of the human as a set of informational processes, extracted embodiment from human-ness. If, as Shannon suggested, information is simply a probability function with no dimensions, no materiality, and no necessary connection to meaning, and human neurons for instance, can be equated with information processors, we become further abstracted from what has been known as “human.” (18) For Hayles then, the “posthuman” appears when “computation rather than possessive individualism” is understood as the ground of being for human-ness. (34)

Hayles’ emphasis on this liberal humanism, which she posited the posthuman against, not only frustrated in its utter domination of how we understand what it means to be human, but also turns out to be an inadequate understanding of the relations of information and materiality. Clough, Terranova, Thacker and others have critiqued Hayles’ tendency to align the notion of information with disembodiment, and argued that in fact there are other versions of cybernetics that recognize that information has a material basis. In addition, it has been argued that Hayles’ version of the posthuman is without race or ethnicity. The posthuman is queer, it is alien, it is part animal, it is sexed, but it

has not been adequately “raced.” Gilroy does not directly critique this line of thinking, however he argues that in fact for Blacks, futurism has always been a requirement in seeking freedom. He addresses what he acknowledges might be considered marginalia, such as the Nation of Islam’s interest in conspiracy theories that link extraterrestrials to U.S. government programs, as one manifestation of futuristic science fiction’s role in Black communities. He also notes the importance of interracial relationships in the early *Star Trek* series. In this sense, while futurity is not absent from his analysis of popular culture, it does not extend to his politics.

In the Afro-Futurism issue of *Social Text*, Alexander G. Weheliye employs and critiques Hayles’ theory of the posthuman in “’Feenin’: Posthuman Voices in Contemporary Black Popular Music.” He commences by noting that Hayles’ version of the posthuman is on its way to becoming hegemonic. However, he directly acknowledges what Gilroy implies, that cyber theory is both literally and virtually white and that there is, at the very least, an aporetic relationship between New World Black cultures and the category of “human.” Clearly, when entire populations have been excluded from the category human, this impacts how the posthuman is understood. Weheliye shifts emphasis to the aural, to explore how productions of black culture interface with information technologies. He broadens the category of information technology beyond computer technologies, to bring in cell phones, email, and answering machines in order to showcase their prevalence in contemporary Rhythm and Blues music. He suggests that the use of the vocoder in R&B, a speech synthesizer that produces

a machinic or robotic sounding voice, amplifies the “vexed interstices of race, sound, and technology.” (Weheliye 2002, 22) In response to Hayles’ version of cyber theory he argues that the aural makes evident a posthumanism that is not entirely limited to the cultural realm of white liberal subjectivity.

“Post-Black” subjectivities

What other future-oriented subjectivities might be possible that are not limited to the realm of white liberal subjectivity? Gilroy writes “against race,” and Hollinger suggests America is “postethnic.” It has been argued that the politic Hargest draws from in her artwork is of a “post-Black” aesthetic. “Post-Black” was coined environs the “Freestyle” exhibit curated by Thelma Golden and Christine Y. Kim at the Studio Museum in Harlem in April 2001, in which Hargest’s Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network Inc. appeared. Golden and artist Glenn Ligon initially jokingly coined the term to describe the work of the young African-American painters, sculptors, and multi-media artists showing in “Freestyle.” The artists, all graduates of art school and mostly working out of New York and California, had little in common as artists other than their African-American heritage. In a show that as an aggregate showed art by individuals who were all African American, this difference from the broader art world was subsumed by the larger differences among their aesthetics and work. None were represented as “Black artists” in this show, and their work either did not directly focus on identity politics, or as in Hargest’s case, it spoke to a future oriented politics.

The term post-Black is not without controversy. In general, ambivalence surrounding the prefix “post” has been partially rooted in the fear that it portends

an end or break from that which succeeds the hyphen, in this case “Blackness.” Certainly, the proliferation of “posts” in the past few decades signifies ongoing transformations, but most scholars have come to agree that traces and effects of previous periods still remain. Thus, to deploy “post-Black” is not to argue that the modern configuration of Black or racialized subjectivities is entirely gone, but that significant changes have come about that need to be elaborated. Yet in light of the work of other scholars who suggest we might be post-race or post-ethnic, the usefulness of the term for new formations of racialized subjectivities bears reconsideration. Taking up the Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network’s “Melinderm” product as well as considering the implications of the previously discussed “Tominex,” for new subject formations shed more light on whether a post-racial subjectivity is relevant for advanced capitalist societies of control. Let us momentarily return again to sociology and then psychoanalysis, to think through conceptions of the body and race and how Hargest’s project might push us to new understandings.

The Body of Race

Howard Winant addressed the paradox of race prior to the rise of genomics as a conflict between two perspectives: race as ideology, and race as an objective condition. He argued that race as ideology failed to recognize the salience a social construct can develop over centuries of enforcement, despite its lack of biological legitimacy. Further, race as ideology does not recognize our lived experience of racial identity, and the complicatedness of identity. (Winant 2000, 184) On the other hand, those who view race as an objective condition fail

to recognize the constructed nature of racial categories and the absurdity of trying to fit each person into one of five discrete groups. This perspective does not address the processual and relational character of race, the historicity of the concept, or the way people have to manage incoherent and conflictual racial meaning.(185) While Winant's critical theory of the concept of race is useful in its acknowledgment of race as construct and lived reality both, his definition relies on ideology and largely identifies race with purely social categories. Gilroy points out how first biotechnologies, and now nano-technologies are throwing the old construct of race into crisis and demanding that it be rethought in terms of matter on wholly new terms, not simply as ideology. Winant's discussion of race, and the history of racialization exist entirely dependent on the sense of sight, and the racialized body as an object of vision. As Hansen and Gilroy both show in their reading of Fanon, racism and the lived experience of racial difference "operate fundamentally at the level of the bodily schema" that is visually constructed, impairing the embodiment or corporeal agency of Black bodies. (Hansen 2004, 152; Gilroy 2000, 46)

Cultural critics have often used psychoanalytic theories to bring the body into discussions about race while not losing sight of the social. Alan Hyde addresses the relationship between race, the law and the body, through Kristeva's notion of "abjection." (Hyde 1996) Abjection is dependent on the relationship between a society's sense of threat and its need for boundaries as a structure to mitigate, or rather keep at a distance, that which they fear. (Kristeva 1982) Douglas argues that "ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an

inherently untidy experience" and that it is by exaggerating the difference between "within and without, about and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created." (Douglas 2002) Hyde thus posits race as a construction of the body, arguing that a theory of race is not just a theory of differences among people; rather, through the legal creation of boundaries, race inscribes difference in the body. At the same time, race is not a natural fact inherent in an individual from birth, but requires social and historical construction. He wants to emphasize the constructed nature of race in legal discourse, because as he shows it often naturalizes racial divisions, rather than recognizing them as constructed. But his writing reflects difficulties with deployment of the notion of discourse as non-material. In the case of Hudgins v. Wrights (1806), in which the plaintiffs successfully argued they could not be held as slaves because they were of white and Native American ancestry and not African, not only does race need a body, it needs an eye to judge the status of that body, to determine in this case, that although the plaintiff had dark skin, because she did not have "woolly" hair she must not be of African descent and therefore could not be held as a slave. In this case, two bodies, one body being judged, the other judging with an eye—were both very corporeal and both subject to the discourse of the law. Hyde sides with Butler in his discussion of the body as a discursive construction, albeit a performative one. He does not want to focus on ontology because in its relation to the law, the body is a discursive representation. It may be real, physical, and material, but that is not present in the law. However, his own discussion of the racialized body, the abjecting and abjected body, illustrates the mistaken notion that "discourse" does not "matter."

Furthermore, Barad has shown that the discursive has chronically been misread as separate from the material. (Barad 2003)

Although Hyde configures the relationship between the law and the body as one of inscription, in which the law is a discourse that inscribes race on the body, he relies on Kristeva's account of abjection to understand the racism that is written into the law. The hopeless search for an unattainably pure body, purified continually by the expulsion of the polluting internal, is what produces racism. Abjection, Kristeva argues, is the root of the psychological process for drawing boundaries, it is the experience of excess or surplus. The threat of the abject is that it was once a part of ourselves and Kristeva says that we "draw bodies" between ourselves and the abjected. (Kristeva 1982) We might understand this drawing of bodies in other ways, if we incorporate originary technicity into the discussion. For while Kristeva's drawing is certainly not that of inscription, The Bitter Nigger Product Division's "Melinderm" exemplifies skin as a different type of boundary. Deleuze's statement that there is nothing deeper than skin similarly provokes a rethinking of it as a thin layer separating interior and exterior.

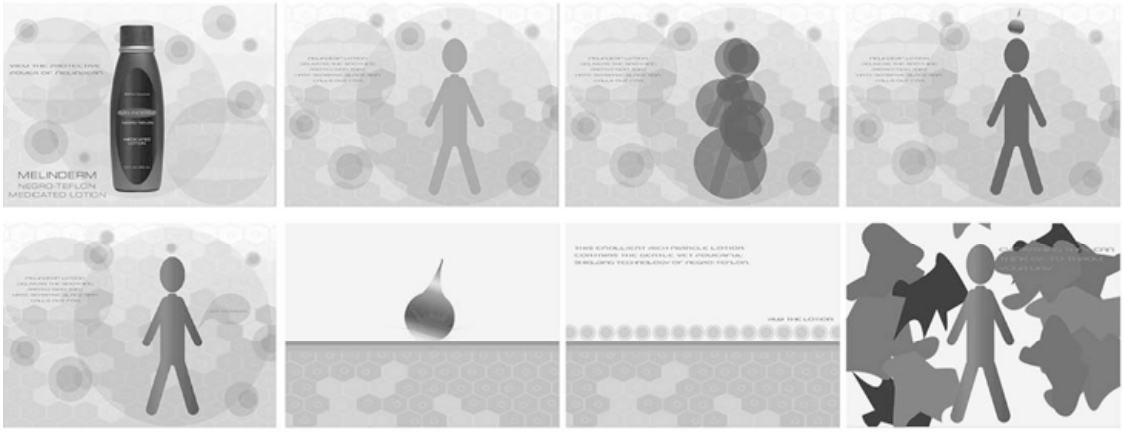

Figure 5

"Melinderm" is an "emollient rich miracle lotion [that] delivers the soothing protection that hate-sensitive black skin calls out for [and] contains "the gentle yet powerful technology of negro Teflon." The notion of a racism protectant in the form of Teflon exemplifies the possibilities of skin as an enfolded and enfolding surface area of affect and technicity. For Melinderm noticeably does not sooth the psyche, it soothes the skin, the "hate-sensitive skin." Thus Hargest draws attention to the derma itself, as holding affective potential. The product does not protect a hate-sensitive *identity*, it ironically turns the problem and experience of racism to the skin itself. Marked skin, or "branded" skin, as Clough and Wilkes suggest we might understand it (Clough & Wilkes 2008), then becomes both the transmitter of a message, and the recipient of the racism. This formulation has the effect of almost imperceptibly shifting the racial epidermal schema.

In *bodies in code*, Hansen devotes a chapter to "digitizing the racialized body," relying on Merleau-Ponty's corporeal body to define subjectivity in conjunction with technicity. He questions the possibilities for 'passing' in cyberspace, and the work of Mark Poster which would have us recognize that actors might be interpellated differently under the transformational possibilities of new media. (139) For Hansen and Poster, the question is whether new media, while maintaining embodiment (*not* a disembodied notion of new media and the digital) might demand that we re-understand the role of interpellation in racial identity. Hansen makes the important observation that in as much as race has been defined as a social construction it has remained disembodied, because race has been an image constructed from "visible racial traits" rather than any real genetic basis. (141) The way that Hyde carries out the discussion of the

Hudgins V. Wright case in *Bodies of Law* supports Hansen's argument. The placing of bodies into categories of race has largely been a visual decision. Hansen argues that in cyberspace, one finds the proof of this real-world emphasis on the visibly constructed body, simply because visual representation is no longer a requirement in cyber worlds. What he wants to explore is new media's potential for community beyond identity, particularly, what might be the "affective basis of racial signification." (141) This community must incorporate recognition of singularity, each person's singularity, and any given body's potential as "life [that] is always in excess of any particular fixed identity." (141) For Hansen, the digital offers the possibility of indetermination; in the interval between the fixed image and the lived experience of racialization exists a zone of indetermination. While the concept of Melinderm is still reliant on the visual, it never accepts an identitarian construction.

Furthermore, if we accept one working psychoanalytic definition and explanation of racism to be the expulsion of disorder onto the Other, it is precisely a Teflon skin that is needed to deflect that expulsion. Negro Teflon created by applying Melinderm responds to racism, to the excess of abjection, with a technically enhanced skin. The notion of a Teflon skin also produces a different assemblage of interior-exterior. The psychoanalytic interpretation would suggest that racism is expelled from one individual's interior, but a Teflon skin is not the same permeable boundary dividing the two. This skin becomes a new organ, with a new purpose. Teflon is a skin that can be worn without identity. It reflects a "racial epidermal schema" that is not a protection of the object against a non-material gaze, or psychic excess, for it is meant to reject a very material

racism. (152) Melinderm then, through its deployment of skin as a surface area of technicity and by moving away from the racial epidermal schema as previously configured, illustrates the alternatives of the biochemical.

While also drawing on the biochemical, rather than addressing the topical and skin, Tominex (see previous Figure 4) draws on the broader culture's attunement to ingested psychopharmacologics and pain medications. Recall that Tominex mimics the ingredients of Aleve, or naproxen sodium, in the form of Numbproxen sodium. As an ingestible, it also might be considered in parallel to ongoing controversies about medications targeted at specific ethnic groups such as BiDil, the heart medication prescribed only to Black American patients with congestive heart failure. Thought in this light, Tominex also turns one toward a notion of cellular bodily difference after identity. While the purpose of Tominex is limited to psychic easement, it is targeted to African-Americans. Similarly, BiDil has been approved only for "self-identified" blacks by the FDA. There is substantial debate on whether BiDil might also work for whites and the purported political and economic reasons that it has been developed as a drug specifically for blacks. (Kahn 2005, Haga & Ginsburg 2001) As a pharmacogenetic, the focus on BiDil when it was first announced in the early part of 2000 generated concerns about whether there might be a whole new emphasis on drugs targeted toward subsets of populations using genetic markers. The debate ranged from ethical and legal critiques such as Kahn's that targeting the drug toward African-Americans was a largely economic decision by the patent holder and drug manufacturer, to the FDA's claim that this was simply an extension of already recognizing that gender and age influence the effectiveness of medications, and

that race and ethnicity may also do so. This is a debate that is likely just beginning, and that as work on the human genome continues will be raised again. Central to the direction in which these studies continue is whether race is reified as the visually marked identitarian category it has been, or whether the extensive genetic variation between individuals of the same racial or ethnic group is recognized and more sophisticated testing develops as a result.

Melinderm and Tominex illustrate new tendencies linked to biotechnologies (and by extension nanotechnologies) that are suggesting new formations of subjectivity. Considering the implications of the two products together suggest that one way to understand these new formations in which skin is a surface area of technicity and in which diseases are targeted at the level of DNA is as zones of intensities. This zone of intensity registers possibilities for dynamism and chance through, across and between bodies that may at times coagulate into haptically or visibly recognizable patterns of similarity, and at other times offer no such recognition. There may be points in time and space in which patterns register and stratify, and then deterritorialize.

Hargest's work illustrates the impact of biological and nanotechnologies on current understandings of race after identity politics. It suggests that in societies of control, populations are conceived in terms of risk. Hargest's art deploys aesthetics characteristic of the information age, in which the potential to affect plays a significant role. The Bitter Nigger Broadcast Network Inc is an ethico-political response to these concerns, deploying affects of humor, shock and anger. In speaking to these questions, Hargest's work is nearly all surface. It is

neither solely happy nor angry, but offers a series of new medicated affects. If there is anger, it is not disguised by the humor. Nor is it made palatable. It is cheeky bitterness that one is forced to swallow, with a spoon full of sugar, just as Tominex is prescribed. Hargest turns these affects toward her audiences. By willingly deploying bio and nanotechnological products in the service of poking at racism, Hargest has also problematized the notion of inscription. Bodies are not simply organisms with a skin that is racially marked, nor bodies that are racially marked by certain phenotypes. Racialization is characterized instead, by zones of intensities at the preindividual and molecular level.

In the following chapter, I turn to the photograph series *Ricas y Famosas* by Daniela Rossell to consider ethico-politics and new formations of subjectivity as they relate to gender. Familiar threads of ideas and concepts that were useful in analyzing race will appear yet from different angles and with new textures in the following chapter. I continue to think through ethico-politics in control societies, and will go on to address the role of complicity in Rosell's photogaphs. Affect and affectivity are also important to the aesthetic impact of this artist's work. Chapter three can be particularly differentiated by its analysis of the effects of advanced capitalist information societies on gendered subjectivity and new subject-object relations.

Chapter 3. Complicity and New Subject-Object Relations in Daniela Rossell's *Ricas y Famosas*

Introduction

I first came across Daniela Rossell's art exhibited as part of the "Mexico City: Bodies of Exchange and Value" show at P.S. 1 in Long Island City, Queens (2002). Her poster-sized photographs were tacked to the gray wall with straight pins, and the women in the photographs were achieving a sort of pin-up status (albeit the museum version) and only partially by virtue of the images'. Mostly blonde women splayed their limbs across their bodies, across stuffed animals, dolls, and the lavish rooms of their homes. The photographs are saturated with color, sometimes to the point of near fluorescence. One young woman, who I later learned was the artist's step-sister, posed in a slick pink trench coat amidst the stuffed animals in her bedroom. Another sat in a hot tub on a balcony overlooking Mexico City. Whether viewed three feet by four feet on a wall, or in the coffee table-sized book held in one's hands, Rossell's images are captivating.

The publication of her book of photographs, *Ricas y Famosas: Mexico 1994-2001* created widespread controversy in Mexico that encompassed questions about Rossell's motives as an artist, her relationships to the (mostly) women she photographed, and the aesthetic "taste" of the wealthy owners of the rooms and homes of the women. The women and men in Rossell's photographs are in many cases, offspring of former elected officials of the PRI, Mexico's formerly long dominant, and oftentimes corrupt, political party.

Daniela Rossell, Ricas y Famosas: Mexico 1994-2001

The story of the artwork is, more than is typical with artists, also the story of Rossell. Born in 1973, she is the youngest of the three artists I address. Rossell attended the National School of Visual Arts in Mexico City where she studied figure drawing and painting, and afterwards began working with photography on her own. (Sheets 2001) She also studied theater in high school, and this training appears to have influenced her as well. Rossell began showing her photographs in 1998 and her work has appeared in group shows by contemporary artists in New York at the Greene Naftali Gallery (2000) where she is represented, at Witte de With, Center for contemporary art in Rotterdam (2002), the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, CA (2002), Prague Bienniale 2003 and The Armory Show. Her artwork is also shown in group, theme-oriented exhibitions that explore a range of issues—many tied to gender, young women, and bodies. Prior to her work on this photo series, Rossell made playful clay folk art objects, and associated with a group of emerging artists in the gallery scene in Mexico City. (Anastas 2007)

Reviews and critiques of Rossell's photographs shown in the U.S. have taken two tones. They consistently address the controversy that occurred in Mexico over the photos, as well as the ostentatious display of wealth relative to typical Mexican standards of living. Yet despite the politically charged criticism leveled at Rossell and the subjects of the photos, art critics and reviewers for magazines such as Art Nexus, ArtNews, Artext, Flash Art International, Art US, Art in America, and Art on Paper are overwhelmingly fascinated by the photographs.

Since *Ricas y Famosas* appeared in print, Rossell's photos have been reviewed by David Williams Foster in *Studies of Latin American Popular Culture (2003)* and by Anny Brooksbank Jones in *Romance Studies* (2004). Williams' focus is on the sensual, sexual, and homoerotic elements of Rossell's photographs (which in some photos is quite overt). He claims the photos are neither great photography, nor social criticism. Jones details the criticism that writers for *La Jornada, El Pais Semanal* and others in the Mexican press expressed. According to Jones, critics in Mexico find Rossell's photographs suggestive of the end of an era in politics for the PRI. As such, the wealth accumulated through corruption by the PRI's leaders and their families is finally on display to the public, and of such bad taste, no less. While Foster highlights the overtones of sexuality present in Rossell's photographs, Jones frames the images in terms of the identity of the subjects and their relationship to the objects. She argues that the overwhelming kitsch and exhausting number of objects on display result in rendering the women themselves "one more decorative object." (226)

A volume on women contemporary artists, published in 2007 by Bard College and edited by Rhea Anastas with Michael Bremson, has provided the most comprehensive attention to Rossell's work to date. *Witness to Her Art* includes the art and writings of Adrian Piper, Mona Hatoum, Cady Noland, Jenny Holzer, Kara Walker, Daniela Rossell and the magazine *Eau de Cologne* that is published by gallerist Monika Sprüth. According to Anastas, the artists who were selected for the volume "go against the grain" of the art world's current

emphasis on “commercial and institutional expansion” by virtue of their willingness to experiment with medium and for “radical[izing] the ways in which artists address their publics.” (Anastas 2007, 13) For Anastas, “re-imagining publics” or as she also puts it, “worldmaking,” is one of the most significant contributions an artist can make.

Rossell’s artwork was selected for this project because it illustrates the more complex analyses of gender and bodies that are required in advanced global capitalist societies. (Pitts-Taylor 2007) Her art shows how information, biological, digital and nanotechnologies, in the context of advanced global capital, push to the forefront notions of ‘complicity.’ The aesthetic she pursues reflects the impact of televisual technologies and performance. Her photographs exhibit a conspiratorial tone that suggests the photographer and photographed planned or “concocted” many of the scenes. I focus on how the aesthetics of the photographs themselves illustrate the possibility for an ethico-politics that challenges scholars to rethink and theorize the politics and gendered identifications of the human. In the selected 10 photographs, women pose with household objects and their possessions in ways that ask us to reconsider the status of subject-object relations. Thus, I argue that Rossell’s artwork illustrates new forms of feminine subjectivities that defy old subject-object relations, and that these relations exist in the context of complicity.

Rossell’s book opens with a brief epigraph:

> Las siguientes imagenes muestran escenarios reales. Los sujetos fotografiados estan representandose a si mismos. Cualquier semejanza con la realidad no es una coincidencia. *The following images depict actual settings. The photographic subjects are*

> *representing themselves. Any resemblance with real events is not coincidental.*

Upon turning the page one encounters the first of eighty stylized and brilliantly colored photographic scenes of Rossell's acquaintances and family amidst their luxury play rooms, collected Oriental objects and fur, dolls, toy stuffed animals and stuffed formerly live animals, political and religious iconography, family portraiture, custom design furnishings and expansive homes. *Ricas y Famosas* contains about eighty photographs. Sixteen of these photographs include men, seven photos include people who are paid workers in the depicted households such as maids, cooks, mechanics, accountants, and psychics. The remaining sixty images are of women. I address here just ten of these photographs, and have selected these in particular for three reasons: I incorporate the photos that open and close the series, as they serve as interior 'book-ends' that suggests Rossell is aware of the broader social context in which her photographs exist. Four photographs illustrate the most intensified and amplified version of the argument I make regarding Rossell's photos – that they illustrate a form of complicity characteristic of advanced capitalist societies, and four photographs that illustrate a feminine subjectivity that challenges subject-object opposition. This is not to say that only these photos in the series would adequately serve as illustrations for these points. However, they exemplify the most amplified version of these conditions.

Rich, Infamous, Complicit

Nearly every reviewer of Rossell's art comments on the juxtaposition of the photographic images with the daily lives of the average individual in Mexico,

and the politics implicated by this juxtaposition. Without a doubt the artwork lends itself to this question. Carol Kino points out that in several photographs it is possible to see the set-up of Rossell's lighting, which as she puts it, "makes one begin to wonder whether these scenes, with their undeniably political subtext, arose naturally or were staged." (Kino 2003) Kino goes on to wonder whether Rossell is allowing the photographed women to "be themselves" or instead encouraging them to "hang themselves with their own rope." Although, Kino claims that "the results are totally winning," she clearly feels the need to remind the reader of the political context. Sheets notes on the other hand, that while the political subtext is quite clear, Rossell's photographs refrain from judgment of the women in them. (Sheets 2001, 176) David Hunt writing in *Artext* of the photos shown with the exhibit "Third World Blondes Have More Money" emphasizes the lack of taste and over-the-top lavishness of the rooms and the women in them. He quotes Negri's claim that the only way to battle Empire is through the "blackmail of bourgeois realism" and argues that the women in Rossell's photos "indict by example [and] raise the ransom that much higher." (Hunt 2000) Foster notes that the general reaction to the book when it first appeared in print in the summer of 2002 was to "repudiat[e]… the social image it represents: idle women with enormous disposable incomes such that they may dress extravagantly and bejewel themselves in an almost ludicrous manner." (Foster 2003, 217)

Mexican historian Lorenzo Meyer more thoroughly addresses the history and politics of poverty in Mexico, as the context for *Ricas y Famosas*. (Meyer 2007, 329) At the time Rossell's book came out, Mexico was embroiled in

debate over the film “The Crime of Father Amaro,” and whether it should be shown because of its depiction of the sexual relationship between a priest and a young woman. For Meyer the true scandal was not a film based on a fictional novel maligning the Catholic Church, it was that 53.7 million Mexicans, of the total population of 100 million, live in poverty. Meanwhile, Rossell’s book of photos of the Mexican elite (who are, according to him rich, *not* famous) is published, and will “save sociologists the work” of describing the fantasyland in which they, the miniscule Mexican upper upper class, live. For they are “being surrounded and fed by the sea of Mexico’s historic poverty.” (329) He reminds his readers of Thorstein Veblen’s term “conspicuous consumption,” to support his argument that the Mexican elite is a leisure class:

> [t]he archaic theoretical distinction between the base and the honourable in the manner of a man’s life retains very much of its ancient force even today. So much so that there are few of the better class who are not possessed of an instinctive repugnance for the vulgar forms of labour. (329)

Meyer argues that the women pictured in *Ricas y Famosas* are in fact the flaunted conspicuous consumption of the men of the Mexican elite and the epitome of a true leisure class. He too points to their “bad taste” and comes near to his conclusion proclaiming:

> Today, excessive displays of wealth that border on bad taste and moral insensitivity—as is the case with these wealthy Mexicans and their ostensible disdain for work and for those who must live by working—will no longer win them the respect of the people who really give meaning to Mexico, that is, the majority. What they will reap instead is a rejection of their illegitimate position within the national agenda.

Lorenzo's article concludes with this flourish. His was a particularly erudite if harsh critique, but certainly not the only. As Anastas writes, images of Rossell's photographs circulated in television and print media for years after they first were exhibited. (Anastas 2007)

In the openings words to *Ricas y Famosas*, Rossell captured and defined what makes this work of photos particularly interesting for ethico-political questions. "The following images depict actual settings. The photographic subjects are representing themselves. Any resemblance with real events is not coincidental." Upon close examination, it becomes evident that both her photographs, and the response to them, have clear links to broader social trends, to shifts in art worlds away from the politics of the anti-aesthetic, to tendencies continuing to register new subject identities for women. If it is not clear whether her opening statement mocks the qualifier that opens most fiction— novels, film, and television—or if she genuinely intends it, it is because she prefers this ambiguity. The images do in fact depict the actual settings of the photographic subjects, their homes in Latin America, their bedrooms, living rooms, billiard rooms, and game rooms. Yet there is such lavishness, such wealth, displayed so openly and excessively, that the viewer cannot help but suspect she is dropping her public a hint that of course she knows how outrageous the photos appear. "Any resemblance with real events is not coincidental," holds the tone of a barely coded message to the public. However, upon seeing and hearing the Mexican public's response to the publication of the book and exhibition of the photos, some of the photographed subjects became angry with Rossell, to the

extent that she was sued and received death threats. The response that developed in the years after the beginning of her project must have burgeoned and expanded beyond Rossell's control.

Meyer's article has one more final point to hit home. He adds a brief note subtitled "Related Footnote."

> No one denies that it is an obligation to pay taxes, but we must lodge a vehement protest against the plan to pay them in first-world form—only on the Internet—when we have a third-world finance ministry infrastructure that makes it literally impossible to fulfill the obligation.

This final paragraph highlights one of the messy conflicts at the heart of Rossell's work. Meyer's acknowledgment of the further absurd juxtaposition between the "Internet" and a "third-world finance ministry infrastructure" suggests it is not simply the faceless poverty-stricken masses that exist as context for the photographs, but that one must also contend with the shift to globalized information economies whose uneven, disproportionate effects are seen across the globe. The photos challenge the prevailing Marxist political wisdom of Latin America, and of academic Marxist theories. They display an ethico-aesthetic that differs from the politics of resistance which dominated mid to late 20th century political thought.

The very first photograph introduces us to a housekeeper adorned in Pepto Bismol pink— pink high-heeled mule sandals and a pink dress uniform covered with a crisp white apron. With hands on hips, head tipped a bit to the side, she looks toward the viewer through half-shut eyes. The photo is taken in a slightly elongated manner, as it must be in order to incorporate the high arched

entryway into this side room of a mansion with twenty-foot ceilings. She stands amidst cement floors, inlaid stones in a minimal decorative pattern, casual pink and mauve striped sofa, ottoman, armchairs, a sidebar with mirrors and lush green plants in corners and growing from smaller arched cut-outs ten feet from the ground. The woman who stands in the entryway to the room, the entryway to the collection of photos in fact, is dark skinned. Her wavy black hair partially pulled back into a barrette contrasts with the highlighted blondes and pale-faced brunettes to come. In the photographs that follow, she will be one of few dark-skinned women “representing themselves.”

Figure 6.

Rossell's statement that "[t]he photographic subjects are representing themselves" is particularly interesting in the case of this photograph and others of the paid household staff. Of course one must ask, with how much agency does this woman who is dressed in a maid's uniform, represent herself. The volume is book-ended with photos of the staff, and the first photo is that shown here in Figure 6, and the last photograph depicts the entire staff of one household, more than twenty individuals. Foster's assertion that the general public's reaction was to repudiate what the photographs represent, highlights what has been the public's dominant concern and point of contention for this collection of photos. If ostentatious display of wealth and the subjects' supposed bad taste remains the only focus of discussion, then important commentary and reflections on new tendencies in the social world are neglected. Jones notes that critics in Mexico suggest the display of bad taste in the artwork exemplifies the end of an era of the PRI's corruption and dominance. She goes on to point out that this question of taste that continually recurs in criticisms of the women's "habitats" results in the regrounding of aesthetics in politics. The anti-aesthetic tendency in art of the 1960s and after though, was rooted in a politics of resistance.

An ethico-politics rooted in the inventive and experimental, that remains open to the unknown as Grosz suggests "becoming artistic" allows, is not a politics of resistance. Rossell's art while not apolitical, is also not one of resistance. It is one of complicities. Rossell's photographs illustrate the tendency toward complicity, and they perform it. They do this through their ethnographic and autoethnographic features.

The Post-Ethnographic

In 1994 Rossell became interested in doing a collaborative ethnographic photography project with her network of family friends and acquaintances, in line with the well-known tradition of Mexican ethnographic photography. (Sheets 2001, 176) This photographic tradition however, of portraiture of everyday life in Mexico, has been limited to depicting the lives of the poor. She was interested in documenting the lives of women in her own circles—who happened to be the daughters and wives of Mexican politicians. Jones notes that Rossell situates herself in line with traditional ethnographic photographers Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Nacho Lopez, and Graciela Iturbide. Nico Israel, in noting that many of the "rich and famous" in Rossell's photographs are her family and friends suggests there is an "apparent affection and even a tinge of pity" in the photos. "[B]y refusing to exoticize the weird pseudo-glamour of the Mexican aristocratic and *comprador* classes, instead relating it to "our own" 80s-style excess and bad taste, Rossell… reverses the presumptions of ethnography." (Israel 2000) Typically, the purpose of the ethnographic has been to represent a subject's reality authentically and truthfully. Clough (1998) forges a link between Laura Mulvey and feminist critique's of film and sociologist Herbert Blumer's methodology for writing and participant observation. Clough's point was to articulate both the end to of and the excesses of ethnography through a psychoanalytic critique of the realist narrative and its own ends. Gallo notes that Rossell plays with the conventions of ethnographic photography, although he argues "ethnographic" is not the best description because critics tend to feel that ethnographic art idealizes its subjects, and the opposite occurs here. "[T]hey not only debunk their subjects

from their pedestal of grandeur, but they also speak of a certain loss of authenticity." Gallo goes on to describe the imitation and repetition that is evident in the photographs: in some cases the subjects imitate one another, they mimic poses in art displayed on a wall behind them, or they repeat the stance of a household object that is also within the frame of the photo. For Gallo this produces a world "in which the notion of authenticity is being 'pumped out as from a sinking ship.'" (Gallo 1999)

Against the tradition of ethnographic photography or reportage from a distant, objective positionality, Rossell moves between the stances of photographer, participant, and observer, exemplifying the connections between the ethnographic, visual display and the now unstable relationship between subject and object. According to Jones, it is the ethnographic element that has raised the question of Rossell's complicity with her subjects and this very complicity might mitigate her subjects' concern with the objectifying lens of the camera. (Jones 2004) Rossell's photographs illustrate, perform and transform these ongoing theoretical and real world arrangements. Just as theorists and cultural critics now understand the pleasure in practices of looking and the power relations of media and subjects in more nuanced ways, the women in these photographs also have multiplicitous relationships to power: they enjoy the position of their upper upper class status, amidst the drastic inequality of Mexican society yet they are simultaneously women in a patriarchal society and married to or daughters of men who are powerful politicians.

This reading is made possible partly as a result of new theories of matter

and bodies. For centuries the dominant strain in Western philosophy understood bodies and matter and in particular human bodies, in terms of the whole, functional and unified organism. In her discussion of the realist narrative of cinema, Clough points to Blumer's example that specators take film in as whole. This visual "whole" has been deconstructed. Not only has the visual whole of the image been challenged, but the unified identity of organisms as well. As Clough has argued, we are seeing a shift from theories centered on the notion of the human body as "organism" to ways of thinking that are non-organism centered. (Clough 2007) These new understandings operate on multiple levels: at the level of the human body, its organs, limbs and appendages and so forth have all been seen to function toward the maintenance of the organism in its entirety and this notion has been challenged; the stark opposition of inorganic-organic life has been challenged at the cellular and molecular level; and, at the level of the human psyche, "lack" is no longer recognized as the single organizing psychologicaly principle. (Clough 1998, 2002, 2007)

Norman Denzin's discussion of the autoethnographic and performance trends in sociology, critical theory, literary studies and performance studies, claims that the move to performance is consistent with changes in the meanings of ethnography and ethnographic writing, specifically with regard to autoethnographic work. Denzin cites the work of Laurel Richardson who argues the increased addition of fiction, creative writing, and first person narrative, as well as performance into ethnographic writing has blurred the "boundaries separating text, representation, and criticism." (Denzin 2003) If photography has

a long history of connection with ethnography, colonialism and anthropological research, Rossell's photographs remain both embedded within that tradition, and also illustrate the stirring up and reconfigurations effected by post-colonialist, feminist, and critical race movements, and teletechnologies. In the final photograph of the series that includes the staff of an entire household each wielding the instrument or tool necessary to their position, Rossell (wearing a red shirt) sits among them holding her camera.

Figure 7.

When Objects Return the Gaze

In *Sweet Dreams: Contemporary Art and Complicity* (2005), Johanna Drucker discusses the interimplicated relationships of artists, mass media, and

material culture. Arguing that contemporary theory is still too attached to Modernism to address contemporary art,

> Artists and critics under sway of this legacy cultivate a self-styled radical chic supposedly pure of crass motives like careerism or material gain. They pretend to hold aloof from the supposedly polluting pleasures of the consumer culture in which they participate. Hypocrisy aside, the stance nets little insight into our current condition. (xv)

She describes them as "loyal to the notion of negative aesthetics and its rejection of mass culture and media" (xiv) She accuses theory of having "rigidified into predictable categories of thought" that can be identified by key negative concepts such as 'the abject,' subversive, transgressive, resistant and argues that we face a new political condition, in the world, and for art, wondering how we might address it. "Critical opposition and resistant aesthetics, so intimately bound to the principle of autonomy, have been replaced by a reflective, self-conscious artifice." For her, the notion of complicity relates the "mutual gain" that occurs between fine artists and mass culture. Further, she claims that similar to the shift from modern 'purity' to contemporary "complexity," Modernist privileging of autonomy has shifted to contingency, and on through to complicity. Instead of imagining that works of art either resist…or reflect contemporary culture, we can imagine instead that fine art embodies our perception to shift it out of phase." Contemporary art today, even beyond postmodernist, takes on an "expressive affectivity." (10)

Of the numerous international art critics, journalists, and Mexican intellectuals who have noted that Rossell's work highlights the kitsch

surroundings and glamorous lifestyle of women in elite Mexican society, few have gone beyond the focus on class and politics in Mexico, into a more thorough analysis of the gendered configurations in the photographs though. What can be found in looking at Rossell's photos is a further complexification of the display of the female body. In the photographed moment, the subjects openly enjoy the display. We have seen similarly conflicting and problematic displays in the performances and installations of Vanessa Beecroft. That is, the forces of the fashion industry, modeling, fashion photography and related media have been deployed in a merger within works of art in a way that both undermines yet makes use of these industries. There is a deployment in displaying the female body, of capital's excess, mass media images, and Hollywood's culture. As Joanna Drucker notes as part of her broader argument that art today can no longer be seen as separate from the broader culture, in a time in which Beecroft's work has gained so much attention, "concepts of agency and genuinely effective politics seem entirely mythic, even earnestly naïve." (Drucker 2005, 19)

Since the 1960s, feminist theorists have deployed Marxist, psychoanalytic, and critical race theories to critique the display of the female body in visual culture. Mulvey's seminal "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," argued that Hollywood movies from the 1930s to the 1950s deployed a formal scene that reflected the psychological obsessions of the dominant ideology. Those obsessions were, respectively, the scopophilic pleasure of looking and an identification with the objectified. (Mulvey 1975) It was assumed to be the male

who finds pleasure in scophophilia, and the female who would identify with the objectified woman on screen. Since Mulvey's argument there have been a number of revisions to her analysis. A parallel line of argument in Marxist cultural studies of television first described the relations of transmission and reception as one in which the viewer or audience was an entirely passive receiver of the information transmitted. Queer theories and lesbian and gay studies have shed light on this arrangement, by pointing out that the Oedipal narrative may be limiting our understanding of exactly what kinds of identifications and looking are taking place. (Sedgwick 1991) Just as Hall's critique of television was revised to recognize that the viewer might hold some agency in this configuration (Dienst 1994), subsequent queer critiques of Mulvey's logic have maintained that any number of other non-heterosexual, non-Oedipal modes of looking may be taking place during the filmic experience. How one views cinema, television, contemporary art, and other aspects of visual culture is often dependent on the epoch of criticism in which one came of age. Born in 1973, Daniela Rossell, and many of her young subjects, view visual culture through a particular historical frame, in which the potential of an outsider's point of view seem unrealistic and untenable.

Laura Marks makes this point well in a discussion of intergenerational responses to avant-garde cinema. In 1992 at the Robert Flaherty Seminar, an annual screening and discussion of film, filmmaker and artist Ken Jacobs showed his film XCXHXEXRXRXIXEXSX (1980), in which he takes a French pornographic film from the 1920s, projected from two machines, and manually

manipulates one projector to chop up the motion and create a three-dimensional effect. The slowed-down version of the clip lasts two hours, and as Marks describes it, some people left the room off and on during that time either because they found the use of pornography offensive, or because they found the stretching of a two-minute clip into two hours to be obnoxiously excessive in the name of art. (It is useful to note here the similarity to critiques of *Ricas y Famosas*, and the excess of objects, kitsch, and "bad taste.") However, in the question and answer period following the film, the exchange became quite heated, precisely, according to Marks, because of the different kinds of learned critique across generations. Marks later wrote a letter to Jacobs, asking to interview him:

> I am working on an article for the *Independent* on the issue of generational differences in watching experimental film, which will focus on the experience we had at your screening at the Flaherty. I want to explore why people responded so divergently to the film, took pleasure in it or took offense to it, for such a variety of reasons. I want to argue that people educated within my generation have learned certain attitudes toward popular culture, critical theory, feminism, etc. that allow us to look at experimental film differently. I will argue that this sort of background affords us an experience of films such as yours that is very rich, if different from the experience that the filmmakers may have anticipated. (Marks 2002, 57)

Jacobs refused the interview, saying he felt her offer was disingenuous. I would suggest that across feminist theories and cultural criticism, this phenomenon is common, and evident in reactions to Rossell's work. As Marks claims for her own experience, "I examined my reaction to XCXHXEXRXRXIXEXSX as a reaction to an erotic film. And, unlike the feminists of fifteen to twenty years

before, feminist viewers of my generation have the means to take pleasure in the film." **(**58**)** Marks highlights the distinction between her willingness to acknowledge her pleasure, and Jacobs' distancing of his film from pornography. As she quotes him, "I took something that was abusive of the body and transmuted it and made it glorious." (67) Not only does she suggest he is being disingenuous in distancing himself from the pleasure of the pornographic element of his film, but that he did a disservice to its creative and critical power. She quotes another film critic's discussion of an earlier film by Jacobs, that harks back to early hopes for avant-garde cinema's political possibilities: "'I would argue that this film, like many avant-garde films, is theory, informed by history—of technique, or style, of story.'" (67) She describes her experience of watching it as one of staring and eventual boredom over the duration of the film, yet finding its repetition allowed room for unpredictable fantasy, and eventually sensing that the film looked back at her the viewer. Marks suggests that Jacobs' machinic intervention into the pornographic film clip does have the effect of altering the male gaze that is ideologically dominant. For her it is the combined force of the avant-garde form with the pornographic content of the film that holds the affective power.

Such a relationship is evident in Figure 8 taken from *Ricas y Famosas*.

Figure 8.

A young woman in bleached and tousled blonde hair wears white pants, and a white fur coat open to the midpoint of her stomach, with nothing beneath the jacket. She clasps her right breast in one bejeweled hand, sitting at the foot of a stuffed mountain goat. They are joined by one other stuffed ram, as well as a stuffed lion and two bears. Altogether, they stand displayed in a marble tiled hallway outside a set of offices. The young woman looks directly into the camera, while the rams look at one another, askance at the viewer, and the bears and tiger stare into the distance. The affective impact of the woman's gaze arrests us, demanding that we return it, and by grabbing and nearly baring her breast, she intends to further ensure it.

Conspiratorial Humor

Daniela Rossell's photographs do precisely what Marks describes Jacobs' XCXHXEXRXRXIXEXSX doing, because of the differently agentic position of the women posing for the photographer, and the unconventional circumstances in which the photographs were taken. Art historian Cuahtemoc Medina writes in her analysis of Rossell's work that many of the women and men in the photos are family friends and acquaintances, as well as family members. Rossell's stepsister appears in the photos, as do her mother and stepfather. If we acknowledge the collaboration that ensued as Rossell photographed the subjects in the comfort of their own homes, surrounded by their possessions, the scenario takes on a conspiratorial tone. (Medina 2007) There are elements of play, risk, and button-pushing evident in the photographs.

In particular, this play is evident in Figure 9. The models lounge across pillows and throw rugs, nude beneath strategically draped sheets, sarongs, and silk fabrics. The wall immediately behind them hosts a mural of an Egyptian harem. One of the intriguing aspects of Rossell's photographs are the layers and layers of reference. The images point to Mexican politics, the participants mock themselves, they are a paradiso of intertextuality. This photograph particularly highlights Rossell's penchant for layering and the repetition that underlies her and the young models' scenes of play and conspiracy.

Figure 9.

But what happens among a group of women who pose for a woman photographer who is an acquaintance, a friend, or a family member? What happens when photographer and subject conspire together, when they are in on the joke together? (Medina 2007) When the settings, events, and poses of the photos are examined, it becomes evident that certainly humor had its part here, and that the sexuality that is evident is as much a part of the performance as anything else.

Much of the critical political response to Rossell's photographs focuses on the women. Understandably so—men appear in only 6 of the 80 some photographs. But reactions to these images of women are telling. On the whole, male critics and reviewers tend to see these photos as being "sexy," and Foster in fact notes a homoerotic element in some of them.

Although Marks notes the importance of a critic's place among generations

of theory, in her focus on cinema, she may have neglected the importance of televisual transmission for thought. Clough maintains that technologies need to be treated on their own terms. (Clough 2004) For Marxist cultural critics, Jameson's work on culture is key to understanding postmodernity's impact on aesthetics and the arts. But Clough's argument is that critics failed to recognize television as machine. Rather, they continued to read its content, to read it as text. For artists such as Rossell who have come of age in a televisual, and even post-televisual information era, these changed aesthetics must be taken into consideration. While television may still not rank at the level of avant-garde cinema in cultural criticism, its effects cannot be ignored, particularly its technical impact. As Clough persistently argues, scholars must "allow for the various historicities given with technological development." (83-84) Medina points out that Rossell's subjects, and undoubtedly Rossell herself, are clearly influenced by television and fashion, though she is referring to the content of telenovelas and fashion magazines. The aesthetics of Rossell's photographs suggest the affect, speed and timing of teletechnologies. The displays are intended for affect, rather than story. In fact, the lack of story is one of the compelling elements of the collection of photos. The speed at which they refer to what might be considered a narrative, breaks the potential for any story with beginning, middle and end. Whether the photographs are displayed poster-sized in an exhibition, or one after the other in the book collection, the references and repetitions take time to notice. This is because the photographer and her subjects are not attempting to tell a story with these photos. Rather they are performing and

affecting.

We might say that the highly politicized reactions to Rossell's photographs are birthed in this pretelevisual thought, a Marxist cultural criticism containing a "narrative logic of a political unconscious of a single great collective story." (85) That story would be one of oppressor-oppressed, in which the elite, politically connected women in Rossell's photographs flaunt their wealth in a display of bad taste, taste which ought to be better, considering their financial standing. Further, as women, their position in this collective narrative is that of sexy wives and daughters who remain in the home, at loose ends, serving largely as extensions of the men in their lives who hold real power. This is an old story. As Olkowski notes, "Traditionally, Irigaray argues, woman represents a sense of place for man. She becomes a thing and she is also used as a kind of envelope to help man set limits to things." And "[t]his is why women cannot be defined solely in terms of the class status of their "men" : fathers, husbands, sons, and lovers." (2)

There is clearly a sense of humor in the photographs that is evident partly through the layers of reference. The participants mock themselves, they are self-referential, and they dabble in intertextuality. Rossell and her sitters must have laughed hysterically in the midst of many of these photographs. Rossell cites Diego Velazquez as a influence. Velazquez's paintings, many of which were portraiture of the family of King Philippe of Spain, show dwarves with large books, dwarves with dogs, small girls done up in enormous brocade dresses, salons crowded with women and girls. Rossell laughingly tells one reporter

about her sympathy with Velazquez and their parallel interests: “I love his portraits of the royal family because they were inbred! I’m definitely working in the Velazquez tradition.” (Sheets 2001) While this is not an innocent statement, Rossell is too close to this same circle of women to only be laughing *at* them. The resemblance is striking--both for her canniness in creating her own royal family portraits, and the uncanniness of the finished products’ actual resemblance. If Velazquez captures some of the depressingly bored elements of royalty, Rossell's work has snared the frenzied excess that is capable of spilling out from the lives of these women.

Beyond Subject-Object Opposition

Rossell and her Velazquezian women know nation, they know class, and possibly even race. In their gender and sexuality though, one finds more evidence of complexity, confusion, and ambivalence. “Third World Blondes [may] have more money,” as one of Rossell’s exhibition title claims. But do third world blonde *women* have any fun, as the saying goes? Is there humor, in being an elite, wealthy, opulant, glamourous Third World Blonde *woman*?

The subject-object relationship is at the heart of Western philosophy, and has consequences for how social theorists understand methodological approaches, agency, and gendered subjectivity. In particular here, I consider questions of agency and gendered subjectivity, and the ways in which the women in many of Daniela Rossell’s photos perform a complex version of feminine subjectivity that is characteristic of advanced global capital, and the proliferation of information, digital, biological and nanotechnologies.

Scientists, philosophers and science studies scholars have shown that the Cartesian mind-body split and the observational model of Newtonian mechanics were limited models for explaining how “things,” or objects, or matter, work. Within the social and human sciences, studies of physics labs have shown that the equipment used in laboratories plays an agentic role in scientific research (Knorr-Cetina 1999) and matter previously considered to be inert has been acknowledged as dynamic (DeLanda 2000). Barad offers a theory of a “post-humanist performativity” that further elaborates the importance of matter, and that suggests a way to describe the subject-object relations of the women on display in Rossell’s photographs.

She draws on the insights of Niels Bohr into the physical relations of matter to establish her theory of posthumanist performativity. Barad sees a causal relationship between “the apparatuses of bodily production and the phenomena produced” by them, and she names this “agential intra-action.” In particular, she suggests that this intra-action is characterized by an inseparability of the “agencies of observation” and the “observed object.” (Barad 2003, 814) According to Bohr, the phenomena produced as a result of any given activity are not independent objects. Rather, they show the “ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components.” (815) In the same way that cultural critics such as Clough, Lash, and Terranova have begun to rely on Simondon’s notion of the pre-individual to discuss human (or non-human) agencies and subjectivities, Barad borrows from Bohr to claim that phenomena are “ontologically primitive relations, [or] relations without preexisting relata.” She

moves away from the term interaction, toward intra-action, to highlight the inseparability of objects, that is, an action or agency that occurs within and between, rather than separately and between. The separation that does exist between objects is the result of an "agential cut" which she contrasts with the Cartesian cut. The point she makes is that relata do not exist prior to relations, instead "relata-within-phenomena emerge through specific intra-actions." (815) For Barad, understanding this relationship is important because it sets up the conditions under which one might be "objective." Barad goes on to say that she does not want to limit these terms to discuss the relations of the apparatuses used in laboratory settings, in which it appears the notion of objectivity remains central. She carries this new notion of subject-object relations to the social sciences. The point she wants to carry across the disciplinary divide is that apparatuses themselves are not objects *in* the world, but *of* the world, in the same manner that she changes the terms of the relationship to intra-action. As such, this is also how she brings agency to apparatuses, for she goes on to argue that they themselves are phenomena that are constituted by an "open-ended practice," one that is not set and bounded but is always open to "rearrangements, re-articulations, and reworkings." (817) Again she carries this argument a step further, to declare then that not just the matter of science, or of social science, but the entire world—reality— is composed of phenomena in relata. As she puts it, "the world is a dynamic process of intra-activity" with an "ongoing flow of agency" and an "ongoing open process of mattering." (818) The on-going nature of this activity, its iteration, is performative.

In Figure 10, a young woman frowningly poses on a sofa in fur and tiara, with a row of dolls perched on either side of her. Here, she is willing to perform "doll," to rework her human self, into a play on the role women are often subjected to. However, her semi-slouch, and her casually spread legs, suggest a near masculine posture that defies any sense of subjection.

Figure 10.

Barad is concerned with the effects of ongoing process of mattering on humans. While she points out that this formulation is one for all bodies, not just human bodies, she emphasizes how the discursive has been misunderstood to be simply linguistic or significative. This then is true of objectivity as well, and she states, "what is important about causal intra-actions is the fact that marks are left on bodies. Objectivity means being accountable to marks on bodies." (824)

This is a profoundly ethical statement, drawing from the theories of Bohr himself, to turn back to science, to practices of objectivity, and to remind that these sorts of discourse are material practices. Not only this, but by figuring all matter as intra-active, Barad holds the non-human, and/or the cyborg, within this theory, and reminds that humans are just one of the matters of nature. Yet she still hopes for a version of scientific objectivity, if an ethical one, and she retains the distance of that objectivity in understanding bodies as "marked." Hansen, on the other hand, argues for a pure subjectivity of embodied flesh that is absent this distance.

As we saw in the introduction, Hansen draws on Bernard Stiegler to argue that technics are originary to humans. He also offers a rereading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to redefine human subjectivity in an exceedingly technical age. He posits Merleau-Ponty's notion of "indivision" as a useful way of describing the separation between flesh and world. I agree that keeping the "flesh" in embodiment is paramount, I would like to push beyond his phenomenological understanding of the relation of technics and human embodiment as well as Barad's marked body. While Hansen's argument pushes us to think through more thoroughly feminist discussions of bodies, vision, tactility, and technics, by remaining indebted to Benjamin and Merleau-Ponty, he does not re-imagine the relations of body-environment, or flesh-world in a way that allows us to fully acknowledge the extent of the new tendencies registering for gendered subjectivity. Although his critique of Grosz's way of framing the relation of the individual to environment and society, as body-image mediating

body and environment, rather than Merleau-Ponty's notion of *indivision* between body and world, where body is flesh and world is flesh, is useful, I want to draw on scholars of Luce Irigaray's work, to suggest that this relationship is not quite as fluid as needs be. I draw on the work of Dorothea Olkowski, to supplement Elizabeth Grosz's critique of Merleau-Ponty, that Hansen finds insufficient. I do this in order to discuss how Rossell's series of photographs also illustrates the way new tendencies in the social are impacting the traditional subject-object relationship, and the role of technics therein. I am claiming that in Daniela Rossell's *Ricas y Famosas,* the apparance of complicity rather than an oppositional politics and the upending of the traditional ethnographic perspective, are linked to the new subject-object relations that the women posing in the photos also perform.

Figure 11.

In one of the many kitschy images (Figure 11), a middle-aged woman sits seated at the edge of a sunken section of her living room. It is carpeted in a vibrantly fluorescent lime green and a small circular fountain sits at the center. She sits, displaying herself, in one corner wearing an oversized pale blue sweater, with her tightly curled hair in a bob cut. Across from her, in the opposite corner, a fuchsia plush dragon is propped up in the sunken pit. Both she and the dragon meet our eyes. Each sits, perched in their corner. She leaning back a bit in such a way that her body remains open to exposure/scrutiny, a more daring pose, in contrast to the absurdity of the plush dragon. The dragon appears about to tip over, waiting. As all the photographs are, this one is untitled, but one can imagine: "Woman and stuffed dragon." Or, "Woman and fuchsia dragon in sunken living room." This is the space in which the woman has chosen to be photographed. This is the object she has chosen to appear with, and we don't have any other information beyond this. What makes a wealthy late middle-aged woman with regal bearing willing to appear next to a large pink stuffed dragon in a poster-sized photograph of herself? What has she thrown to the wind besides caution? A staid, dignified or womanly identity? Rather, Olkowski suggests that "When images become monstrous, even sublime, then something is happening that cannot be reduced to organic representations." (Olkowski 1999, 70)

In another photograph (Figure 12), a young woman stands next to her coat tree. Behind and just above her head, a row of paintings is hung across the dark walls. The coat tree is overladen with hats. She is dressed in a spangly reptile-skinned blue body suit that shows her navel, wearing just one hat. She is

posed next to the coat tree, wearing her hat. They, meaning she and the coat tree, are of the same height. Is she just a hat rack too? The photo is shot from a direct perspective, we as viewers are at eye level with her and the hat rack. She is no taller, no shorter, no larger, no smaller than we the viewers and she looks directly at us with a flat stare. As if to say, “Yes, a body is also just a hat rack.”

Figure 12.

Olkowski draws from feminist theory and the visual arts in order to locate “concepts and transformational structures characterized by an abstract but fluid ontology that can make sense of difference,” (2) and her work along with Karen Barad’s “postfeminist performativity” offer a framework by which to understand

how Rossell's photographs perform these new subject-object relations. Olkowski claims that most sources of oppression are rooted in a particular authority structure, whose structure of representation's ruin is imminent. She makes the interesting choice to read the work of feminist Catherine MacKinnon, for its critique of liberal ideology and individualism and focuses particularly on her suggestion that the "scientific stance of objectivity" maintains the aforesaid system of representation that is a root of oppression.(8) The epistemological framework of objectivity relies on a "visual distance" between the viewer and that which is viewed, and a transcendent aperspectivity that allows the viewer to see from an infinite number of temporal-spatial locations. (Shapin & Shaffer 1989, Haraway 1997) Olkowski's analysis however, fits more closely with the rest of the argument I hope to make. In her analysis, she refers to the work of artist Mary Kelly, whose work she suggests offers a "critique of objectified representation and the creation of new points of view," specifically because one of its intentions is to ruin "perspectivity."

Olkowski offers up another approach to configuring subject-object relations rather than one based on distance. First, she argues that the notion of assemblage, in which neither the subject nor an object can be identified, is useful. In this arrangement, it is speeds, intensities, and the varying distribution of elements that are noteable. (27) We can see one such unusual assemblage in Figure 13. In this, one of Rossell's models appears assembled among a range of "zebra" artifacts, fabrics and statuary. The model herself wears a black and white striped body suit, and is propped on all floors, with her tongue hanging out.

Here, she willingly poses as part human, part animal, playfully and provocatively offering herself up as icon and sex object. She does not appear to mind, and just as all of Rossell's models appear to do, revels in her ambiguous status as woman, object, animal.

Figure 13.

Olkowski reads Grosz's critique of the way phenomenology privileges vision, as "tacitly ascrib[ing] feminine attributes to the idea of flesh or being even while ignoring all aspects of maternity." (60) Irigaray, Olkowski suggests, is able to take up phenomenology while incorporating sexual difference. Even more, she argues that Irigaray's philosophy may allow one to bypass phenomenology entirely, and for her, this is useful because she suggests that this critique lines up with Deleuze's "ruin of representation." (61) She quotes Irigaray—

> We must go back to a moment of prediscursive experience, recommence everything, all the categories by which we understand things, the world, subject-object divisions, recommence everything…" (249)

This reference to the prediscursive is a rethinking that is at the foundation of new-subject object relations. For Olkowski via Irigaray, the problem with a relationship between *one* and an *other*, or as they put it, an "I" and a "You" a la Merleau-Ponty– subjectivities which are situated in a fleshed human body and which in the case of phenomenology is simply about language arising from bodies— is one in which the chance of a meeting between the two is slim. Irigaray claims in order for this meeting to occur, there must be a space, or interval, for questioning. However, they critique phenomenology's rendering here for its reliance on a space that has never been defined by women. I am hesitant to go so far as they do in this critique of phenomenology, but I think that what comes out of it is useful, and that is the notion of the need for an interval within inter/intra subjective relations. (63)

According to Olkowski, Irigaray's emphasis on the interval is an attempt to interrupt Merleau-Ponty's assumptions about space and time for the location of any given being, and their unspoken reliance on masculinist origins. She says that Irigaray wants to "transform the relations of matter and form" and the interval that separates them, for in this interval are located "power, act, force, energy and desire." (81) She wants to do this by transforming the interval, that for her is subject-object's relation of nearness and distance. Olkowski speculates that by locating such power in the interval, Irigaray must recognize it as more than the relations between man and woman and that in fact must "exceed the body" (and indeed the human body). Now Olkowski and Irigaray name this interval as a third

term, and this space is also necessary as a resource for power and desire for women. I would argue that this configuration continues to uphold the duality of subject-object relations and does not entirely hold with Irigaray's morpho-logic for the female body, and its extension beyond those bounds. For in addition to the interval, Irigaray's logic for the female body relies on fluidity. As Olkowski notes,

> Bodies, beginning with affectivity, what is singularly here and now, are not genera. They do, however, provide fluid images of something real that we may begin to work with in life and in thought. Fluid structures are not lacking; they are part of an ontology of change. (68)

She goes on to say that "woman lives as folds of affectivity," borrowing from Irigaray's description of the ways in which women's bodies touch and fold in on themselves so that "top and bottom, inside and outside, in front and behind, above and below are not separated." (68) And for Olkowski, this suggests that this is an affectivity of bodily connections, that if without, "woman is exiled to the outside where she can only imitate in face, form and language each new power that comes to dominate her…"(68) So one might instead think of collectivities of affective bodies, both human and non-human.

In the following chapter, I explore a series of art-experiments that incorporate trees and technology, by the artist Natalie Jeremijenko, in order to continue to address the effects of the expansion of information, biological, digital and nano-technologies. There I will move from focusing on gender and racial differences to think in terms of the broader nature-culture relationship. If here I have considered how gender difference is implicated by new tendencies in sociality that are effects of these changes, there I focus on the ethico-politics and

new subject formations that are linked to non-organic life and the diminishing opposition between it and non-organic life.

Chapter 4. Considering Trees: The Nature-Culture Continuum in the Art-Experiments of Natalie Jeremijenko

Introduction

Though sociologists and social theorists have begun to consider the role of non-human agents in the world (Latour, Knorr-Cetina, Barad), the social and human sciences are still predominantly turned toward studying human interaction and products of the human. In this fourth chapter addressing the work of contemporary and new media art that illustrates and exemplifies the tendencies in the social that are linked to the expansion of biological, information, digital and nano technologies, I turn away from the human altogether, to consider trees. I do so in order to look and think from a different angle, about the nature-culture relationship, which in many ways runs through questions of ethics, politics, subjectivity and agency.

Critical perspectives on nature-culture relations have often framed nature as the passive victim of commodification, or as dominated by technological intervention. Technology and humans have persistently been aligned with "culture," contra romanticized visions of nature as alternately pastoral or savage, and sublimely beautiful or terrifying. Yet more recently the continuum between these ends has been emphasized by scholars in an attempt to develop a highly nuanced notion of the relations between the environment and the participants in it. (Deleuze 2004, Ansell-Pearson 1999). Not only that, but nature has been shown to be composed of matter that is dynamic. (DeLanda 2007) Within this recent context, cultural critics and social theorists have reconsidered the social

constructionist tendency that has pervaded social theory and which positioned the social and biological as fundamentally opposed, to the extent of relegating and limiting questions of the body to biological sciences and the social to the social and human sciences. While the social constructivist positions that developed in the late 1960s were an important counter to the biological essentialism of the first half of the 21st century, and attendant problems of racism and sexism, scholars have consistently begun to refigure relationships between the social and the natural in less dichotomous and oppositional terms. Feminist theorists, critical race theorists, science and information studies and literary scholars have put forth new configurations for the natural and cultural. Already, in discussing the work of Hansen, Thacker, Grosz, and Barad in the preceding chapters, I have worked around the edges of this highly nuanced, nature-culture relationship. Yet thus far I have attended primarily to new tendencies toward the increasing importance of affect and affectivity, toward the "mattering" of information, and the new role of complicity in societies of control.

I now turn to the art-experiments of Natalie Jeremijenko, to explore the nature-culture relationship and the way her work exemplifies and illustrates the attention scholars are now giving to non-organic life, such that the stark opposition between it and organic life are modulated and we are pressured to redefine life and the human.

Natalie Jeremijenko

Natalie Jeremijenko, an Australian born techno-artist, design engineer, activist and educator has prolifically produced a range of art experiments that engage with new technologies and with science and nature. Working with high school and college students, she has turned commercial toy robotic dogs into "Feral Dogs" that are capable of sniffing out environmental toxins and pollutants. Her experiment LiveWire makes materially present the internet traffic on a local office networks. A "live" wire displayed hanging from the ceiling registers the level of internet traffic by increased movement. Jeremijenko is also involved with the international artists collective, the Bureau of Inverse Technology, an "information agency servicing the Information Age." In 1999, she was named a Rockefeller fellow, and she has been named one of the top one hundred young innovators by the MIT Technology Review. Her work includes digital, electromechanical, and interactive systems in addition to biotechnological work. It has been shown at the Rotterdam Film Festival (2000), the Guggenheim Museum in New York City (1999), the Museum Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, the LUX Gallery, London (1999), the Whitney Biennial '97, Documenta '97, Ars Electronic prix '96, presented at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and at the MIT Media Lab.

Jeremijenko's projects hit directly at the intersection of science, technology, and politics, and bring to the forefront discussions about technology's role as a mediator between what has traditionally been termed the nature-culture relationship. Her work exists in differing relations to contested theories of information as material or immaterial, and science, technology, and the nature-

culture continuum. She has a vested interest in creating material manifestations that illustrate scientific information and data.

Jeremijenko places a strong emphasis on her ethical and political interest in transforming power dynamics around information, knowledge and science. She explicitly states her desire to transfer some of the knowledge/power held by science experts on issues such as global warming, climate change and environmental pollution, to the public sphere. At the same time, her art-experiments contain within them dynamism and the potential of chance, and perform an analysis of the relations of the nature and culture, of which she also explicitly claims an interest. Jeremijenko's work performs and embodies questions around information, and of the complex relationship between nature and culture together in a continuum. It attempts to challenge via its politicized content and it invests in the possibility to effect a flattening out of access to information. As an engineer and scientist, she approaches her art projects from that perspective. She has a stated interest in offering empirical examples, but her work also carries ethics and politics beyond some of her stated interests and in performing nature-culture relationships that exist on one plane or field, rather than in reflecting a stark opposition between non-organic and organic life.

Jeremijenko juxtaposes actual trees with various technical objects and processes: cloning, hanging saplings upside down from phone poles to grow from within steel barrels, adjacent to a building and with a prosthetic, digital representations, computer viruses, carbon dioxide monitors. As an abstract

philosophical category, and in their representational capacities, trees are of interest. They have been mythologized anthropomorphized by humans throughout history. Trees' connection to both "life" and knowledge as well as their juxtaposition to humans and the "human" in religious and mythical narratives is noteworthy. The fields of mathematics and computer science make use of tree as a conceptual device, to define a structure of linked nodes. These trees are hierarchical, with the originary node named as "parent" and the others titled "children." Trees as plants support this hierarchical and filiative notion. They grow upward from a root base, into a single trunk that supports multiple branches. Family trees are based on this morphological genealogy. Narratives in which trees figure symbolically consistently juxtapose the tree against the difference of human life, but also humanize the trees to downplay their difference. When a tree is physically transformed, these iconic representations come into question as well. Jeremijenko's art-experiments do not merely implicate representation, for her projects aim to disturb the public's and science's notions of information, technology, nature and culture in a very material way; Jeremijenko turns trees upside down and she clones them.

Politics of Information

Jeremijenko could be said to have a number of intentions in mind in presenting her art-experiments to the public. One of her main concerns is with putting into the public sphere information and data that typically only experts would be able to access. Yet artists' intentions do not necessarily match up with the public's experience, or even an exhibition's descriptions of the artwork. In the

complex relations of artists, funders, curators, museums and exhibitors, what gets communicated to the public is often up for grabs. Jeremijenko often works to negotiate the ways her work is portrayed and received by speaking and participating in the civil and "public" arenas of the artworld and academia. Her art does not sit comfortably in any one location in relation to politics and ethics. Her art deploys in some cases a politic of resistance, in others an ethico-politic suited to control society; in its affective deployments it also sits in ethical relation to the social world. Her work crosses through all of these positions.

In 1998 and 1999, Jeremijenko developed the beginnings of an experiment involving the clones of a single tree. She began by taking a small bunch of undifferentiated tissue from a Paradox walnut tree growing in the yard of a family (the Vlach family) in Modesto, California. From that initial bunch of tissue, she cloned 6,000 trees, cultivating then in a Modesto nursery. One hundred of them were shown together as plantlets at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco in November 1998, and then again as part of the Paradise Now show, through the gallery Exit Art in New York City. In 2003, the saplings were exhibited at Pond, an educational environmental center in San Francisco as "OneTree." Jeremijenko considers OneTree to be an "on-going spectacle." (Rhizome.org) Since the exhibition of the saplings – in the Paradise Now show and at Yerba Buena, about 30 of the trees have been planted in pairs across the Bay Area in publicly accessible sites such as the San Francisco Art Institute, Warm Water Cove, and various residences and educational institutions.

Figure 14.

Cloning was not quite as ubiquitous when Jeremijenko first began this experiment. But even today, the notion of planting tens of trees that are a genetic replication of one tree, that can be viewed and compared across a metropolitan area, is radical. Cloning is still certainly controversial, and as a biotechnology provokes ethical and political questions. Even for the most technophilic, the replication of material objects at the genetic level is startling. What Jeremijenko initially wanted to show with the OneTree project was that cloned trees would respond to their physical environment. She wanted to offer "[m]aterial evidence that demonstrates quite unequivocally that genes aren't comprehensively controlling." (Rhizome.org interview) Writing after the saplings were exhibited at the New York gallery Exit Art as part of the show "Paradise NOW!," Jeremijenko argued that she wanted to "contest the genetic determinism that pervades the public's imagination." (Talk available online, Doors of

Perception Museum) While in some cases the general public did notice that the trees had in fact grown to be different from one another, thus as she had hoped, challenging the notion that cloned cells or life forms would necessarily be identical, the overall ethos of the show from the curators and funders perspective was quite positive toward biotechnologies and the potential for cloning. She wanted to suggest by her work that "perhaps what genes control is actually more partial than the way the popular imagination has been informed." Yet the public, having this imagined version of cloning, was disappointed that when lined up, the trees did not look identical. Through the development of the project she emphasizes that trees planted near one another do show differentiation, such as branches growing in different directions, or other different formations. However, Jeremijenko does not want the project to be construed as a "celebration of the biotechnological revolution." She notes that art critics were led through the show by curators, "press packs in hand," and that the curators were invested in just such a celebration. OneTrees was understood differently by its various audiences and promoters, and by art critics as well. Thus, she is forced to negotiate between those various constituents' imagination, the corporatized version of the artworld, the public's understanding of cloning, and her own ethical and political investments.

Figure 15.

As part of the OneTree project, Jeremijenko also developed and designed “Atrees” and “Stump.” These trees she names “immaterial trees,” or electronic or virtual trees. Atrees is a self-replicating growth algorithm to be grown on the user’s computer desktop. The user inserts a CD into the driver on their computer, and a tree is planted on the desktop. A carbon dioxide monitor is then plugged into the users’ local serial port, and the virtual tree grows on the computer’s desktop, controlled by the meter. For Jeremijenko this project “punctures the wall between the virtual and the actual environment.” (Talk printed online, Doors of Perception Museum) The user is “building up data in the public sphere, creating an informational network of CO2 measurements…” (Doors of Perception Museum) Again, we see Jeremijenko’s concerns with information and data made material, science, nature and environmental concerns, and placing sets of information/data into the public sphere, within the public’s reach.

Jeremijenko’s interest in “spectacle” and placing information into the hands of the public are impacted by the conditions of advanced capitalist control societies. While the public is increasingly sophisticated in its participation in

markets, artworlds, and other arenas of civil society, she must also contend with imagined versions of science and the ways in which information transfer is on the one hand, entirely transparent to the point of ubiquity that is filtered out, and on the other hand, still obscured. Terranova has argued that

> The repetitiveness and incessant mobilization of recycled identities and statements in the process of meaning formation, the ideologies…overwhelm through their sheer persistence and pervasiveness all attempts at deconstruction and subversion. (Terranova 2000, 54)

Terranova's claim is grounded in critiques of information-based societies and I would argue as well, Deleuze's notion of control society. Deleuze's claim is that "ultra-rapid" forms of free-floating control" are replacing Foucauldian enclosures and disciplines. (Deleuze 1992) In this environment in particular, artists, publics and critics are complicit participants in responses to information.

Figure 16.

"Stump" is a printer queue virus that tells the printer to automatically print the image of a "slice" of a tree, once a tree's worth of pulp has been consumed by

the user. It makes the "matter" of information and data on natural and environmental political concerns present and tangible. As Jeremijenko puts it, "Accumulating these pieces of paper "grows" a stump of the forest that you and your printer have consumed, and a tangible representation [of] tree debt." Both Stump and Atrees address environmental concerns of global warming. Trees emit and take in carbon dioxide. The more their numbers are reduced, the fewer trees there are to combat global warming and the build up of greenhouse gases. For Jeremijenko, these projects, in being distributed among users, "[build] up an informal network of motley techno-artists and other interested people who actually have the data to re-interpret literally on the ground, what those general circulation models mean."(Doors of Perception)

Jeremijenko's ethico-politics are in some ways aligned with what Thacker calls "cultural bioethics." He first distinguishes the more philosophical approach to bioethics, from the applied approach, arguing that the applied bioethical perspective is currently the predominant one. "Cultural bioethics" though, stems from critique in the Foucauldian tradition, and in some ways works between philosophical and applied understandings of bioethics. As he says,

> Critique, as Michel Foucault has pointed out, works at the interstices of its object, revealing the points of fissure in the forces that come together to form a given practice, discipline, a given body. Critique is not merely the "negative" work that is necessarily done, so that a subsequently "positive" resolution may follow. Critique is a generative practice at precisely the moment of its negativiy; it therefore provides openings, pathways, and alternatives that were previously foreclosed by the structure of a discourse. (178)

Thus, critique is not entirely philosophical, nor is it strictly applied. Those concerned with cultural criticism however, are currently work in a space in which direct critique seems to have lost effectiveness, yet simply claiming the impossibility of a political position is not an option for most. Terranova's response to the difficulty of critique in control societies is to suggest that political responses in information societies require more than producing counter information, but also "opening up channels, selective targeting, making transversal connections, [or] using informational guerrilla tactics." (Terranova 2004)

For Jeremijenko though, a politics for addressing information is a stated interest, and in particular she still relies on a hope for the public sphere, expecting that making data more available to the public, rather than being concentrated in the hands of the experts, will result in a differential treatment and distribution of information. Michael Hardt has elaborated on the limits of civil society's public sphere, and its reliance on Enlightenment notions of reason and transcendance as well as separation of the private and public spheres. Clough has argued that teletechnologies Clough 2004) have effected similar transformations. Jeremijenko's investment in ethics and politics does not sit neatly within these complex relations that are currently in transition. Perhaps this is partially because as Massumi suggests, "when nature philosophy becomes politically useful…it ceases to be itself." (Massumi 2002, 244)

Ethics of Invention and Experiment

In addition to her concern with the politics of information, Jeremijenko's works offer elements of playfulness and surprise as well. It is the sort of play that

an engineer, inventor, or scientist engages. Cloning a tree, growing one upside down, or printing an image called “Stump,” have a feel of the scientist’s practical joke about them. Despite the fact that this play has a point, a political aim, it also encompasses the affect of humor. In the case of Tree Logic, the element of surprise is quite affecting, and potentially more effecting as well. Who would think to turn a tree upside down? Trees are rooted, and project a sense of immoveability and duration. Cloning, by contrast, is less surprising as an artistic experiment, considered in light of ongoing genetic modification to plants and food products. As Jeremijenko says, “… the slow gymnastics of these trees invites interpretation and speculation on what they will do....Trees are icons of the natural, however, uprooted, they display a logic that redefines our own.” (Jeremijenko Online Project Database)

Figure 17.

Tree Logic was commissioned by the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, and installed outdoors in the courtyard of the museum in North Adams Massachusetts from 2001 - 2007. Jeremijenko describes it as “an inverted avenue of 6 sugar maple trees growing upside down, suspended 30 ft in the air.” (Jeremijenko Project Database) The trees were planted in steel barrels, suspended from a system of wires stretched between telephone poles. Of the Tree Logic project at MassMOCA, the curators wrote, “Through her elaborate framing system (in this case a metal armature, stainless steel planters, and telephone poles), Jeremijenko revels in exposing the idiosyncratic manipulation intrinsic to combining facts to form data.” (Curator Statement, MASSMoCA) In this outdoor installation, Jeremijenko has placed a set of six trees together to

suggest the sets of data, or bodies of information, used in scientific communities. This particular “set,” in order to be displayed, is braced by massive telephone poles, cables, pulleys, and steel containers. On display for the viewer are all the trappings required to produce a data set unlike scientific productions, which present information and data cleaned, pristine, as an authoritative production of truth.

Yet Jeremijenko has chosen to work with trees, and more recently other aspects of the natural environment such as birds and wildlife and rivers in her “OOZ” project. By working with trees, Jeremijenko’s art has the effect of transforming how we understand nature. In juxtaposing decidedly technical apparatuses and means, the projects affective impact transmits beyond initial intentions, as much art has the tendency to do. Jeremijenko’s projects are developed with political intentions, but the dynamism within the assembled project, and the potential that is actualized by both its natural and technical elements, lays bare additional effects that might have been difficult to imagine at inception. Heidegger’s techne means precisely this – to make apparent. In that both the trees and the technical apparatuses of Tree Logic, and their assemblage together in art-experiments engage this unfolding of potential and the unknown, Jeremijenko’s work participates in an ethico-politics of becoming-artistic (Grosz 2005, 5). In addition, in doing art-experiments, Jeremijenko engages with a “praxis that arises[s] out of creating, and experimenting with, new possibilities of existence.” (Ansell Pearson, 14) Jeremijenko’s thinking takes a playful and inventive turn wondering what trees might do, and as she has suggested, what

birds might think of them, if they are upside down. As Massumi asks, “what is nature “in itself” if not the worlds dynamic reserve of surprise?” (Massumi 2002, 236) While her work has a political intention, in the inventiveness of the art-experiments, Jeremijenko employs the ethic suggested by Stengers (2000), that of interest, engagement, and questioning.

> In *Tree Logic*, the art of the piece is not found in its condition at any single point in time, but in the change of the trees over time. Trees are dynamic natural systems, and Tree Logic reveals this dynamism. The familiar, almost iconic shape of the tree in nature is the result of gravitropic and phototropic responses: the tree grows away from the earth and towards the sun. When inverted, the six trees in this experiment still grow away from earth and towards the sun—so the natural predisposition of trees might well produce the most unnatural shapes over time, raising questions about what the nature of the natural is. (MASSMoCA)

What is so captivating about the idea of a tree hung upside down? At first glance it shocks and surprises. It quickly becomes clear that the viewer is asked to think differently about the relation between technology and nature, as well as culture and nature. Nature has for so long been considered to be a source of purity that is lacking in the human and cultural. In this sense, simply in her willingness to clone, to defile the natural with technology, Jeremijenko breaks with the notion of a pure nature that must be both preserved and returned to. Hanging a tree upside down is a similar act, one that contains aggression. In this non-protective relation to nature then, suggests both their fragility and mutability, and asks us not to privilege nature’s romanticized status.

Nature-Culture Beyond Opposition

A number of theorists have made arguments for understanding the nature-culture relationship in non-oppositional terms. Privileging either nature, or culture, places them in strong distinction from one another and maintains the opposition. Social constructivism, and perhaps even certain theories of the posthuman in their concern for the loss of or end to the human, privilege the human at the expense of nature. (Massumi 2002, 39) For Grosz, the historical opposition of the natural and cultural, which have been especially prevalent in feminist and cultural theory, has had the result of locating "[e]ssence, fixity, nature, biology, the ahistorical, [and] predictability … together as resource or raw material, to be overcome or remade." While on the other hand the "cultural, social political, economic, historical, or subjective—in short, what is regarded as living, and especially what is human, creative, and innovative, ethical and political" have been seen to be located on the opposing side of the divide. (Grosz 2005, 45)

Philosophers are now characterizing this relationship differently. Here I follow the work of philosophers of science and nature such as Ansell Pearson and Massumi, but especially Grosz who in reading Henri Bergson together with Charles Darwin, asserts that in as much as nature is composed "of the biological and material, organic and inorganic systems that sustain life [it] incites and produces culture." Grosz is interested in "the ways in which the biological enables rather than limits and directs social and cultural life." (44) She and Massumi similarly claim nature as the ground or field in which culture emerges. (Grosz 45; Massumi 2002, 10) Grosz sees culture as a quality that derives from nature, rather than being held within it.

> "Nature and culture, the psychical and the social, the material and the ideal, are, in part, consequences of the unique dividing and differentiating force of temporality, which is the dual force of preservation…and of dissipation… Culture, history and subjectivity each exhibit this dual directionality they inherit from natural forces, from the forward push of temporality: this is culture's evolutionary inheritance from biological and chemical forces, which each different culture must harness, and deal with in its own way if it is to survive and expand." (Grosz 2005, 4)

Thacker provides an example of the breakdown of the nature-culture opposition by detailing how the field of bioinformatics places genetic codes and computer codes on the same plane. That is, what were once two separate realms, the flesh and blood origins of life (nature), and the ones and zeros of coded information for computers (culture), are beginning to merge. Scientists now routinely think of DNA in terms of information and data, and flesh is now considered programmable. Ansell Pearson explicates Deleuze's concept of machinic assemblage, which places the human as one component of a larger assemblage of relations: human-animal-nature-machine. It is one in which machines do more than simply adapt to symbolic processes, and are not relegated to the status of a "tool" for use by humanity. A rethinking of these relations is named in "machinic phylum," that is, the material world might be rethought as "a single phylogenetic lineage that can be said to be "ideally continuous containing both artificial life, as well as organic and inorganic matter. (Ansell-Pearson, 141) It recognizes the change that occurs even in non-organic life, conceptualizing matter and experience as "life," placing the living and non-living together on a continuum.

Jeremijenko's "Prosthetic for a Tree" is one such assemblage. Prosthetic for a tree is a 17 meter prosthetic trunk for a "street tree monument" in Melbourne, Australia. The prosthetic serves as a street pole to pedestrians, and as an extensor and support for a tree that is then visible out a fifth story feature window of a building on the University campus, designed by architect Peter Corrigan. To put a prosthesis on a tree is truly inventive. If a tree is one of the ultimate symbols of nature, Jeremijenko displaces the notion of prosthetic from its cultural and human connections. The experiment and invention produces the experience of a "double-take" in the viewer.

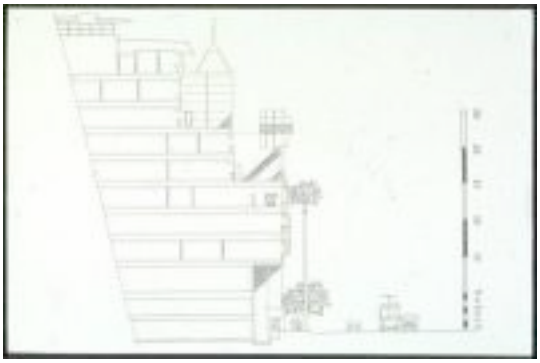

Figure 19. Prosthetic for a Tree

Grosz comments on the human prosthesis "at stake in these relations is a clearer understanding of the relations between nature and culture" she goes on to ask whether culture is additive or transformative. Grosz's goal in rethinking nature-culture, unlike Derridean deconstruction, "is not the undoing and redoing of binary pairs of terms but rather the greater complication of the subordinated term." (47) She clarifies that nature is not always posited as the subordinate

term, but in particular disciplines that have relied on the nature/culture opposition, it has been so. To counter that, she argues that

> "nature is *not* the inert, passive, unchanging element against which culture elaborates itself but the matter of the cultural, that which enables and actively facilitates cultural variation and change, indeed that which ensures that the cultural, including its subject-agents, are never self-identical, that they differ from themselves and necessarily change over time." (47)

She goes on to suggest that if instead of understanding nature and culture as opposed, we refigure their relation as one of emergence or complexity, then "we can no longer afford to ignore the inputs of the natural sciences…" As for this new relation, we might come to understand culture as "subtractive" – as diminishing, selecting and reducing nature rather than remaking it. (47-48)

Tree Time

One element that opens up within the nature-culture debate and that is helpful for understanding their relations in a more nuanced way is the question of temporality. Jeremijenko's art sits at the juncture of these temporal relations. The relationship of chance, chaos, and probability to temporality, and thus history are illustrated in her work. A tree, in its material change through the passage of time, is a helpful object for thinking through these questions. Trees are relatively slow. Their changes are often subtle, their movement less noticeable. By bringing trees and technology together in these encounters, Jeremijenko provides an intersection between two different temporal modes. Technologies have the potential to speed up tree-time. The viewer is given the opportunity to see a chance encounter, whose outcome is indeterminate. What will happen to

the cloned trees? Will they look alike? How will their environments change their physicality? What will happen to a tree grown upside down? How will its branches change in their growth toward sunlight? These questions can only be answered over time. How can we understand temporality, and thus history, in relation to the unknown, to chance and probability?

Amidst this dynamism, we find a more complicated cartography of the relation of the old and the new. In looking at trees, and the change they embody and record over time, they contain both the past and future. Grosz's discussion of Darwin's theories of natural, artificial and sexual selection suggests just such a more complex cartography. Grosz reads Darwin in order to recover and discover the potential ethical framework he offers for the relations of nature-culture. In his theory of evolution, we descend, "with modification," (18) from earlier species. Darwin, she suggests, "offers an account of the genesis of the new from the play of repetition and difference within the old." (19) He

> … outlined an ingenious temporal machine for the production of the new, which constrains the new only through the history that made it possible and the present which actively transforms, but which leaves its directions, parameters, and destinations unknowable, discernible only in retrospect or artificially through analysis and reconstruction. (25)

Trees are one embodiment of duration. Grosz argues that Darwin's artificial and natural selection operate partially by the force of a mindless, directionless dynamic of time. Darwin offers a

> dynamic and open-ended understanding of the intermingling of history and biology" for she sees his work as "actively affirming the irreversibility of time within the natural sciences, the centrality of

> chance, and the accumulation of temporally sensitive characteristics…and a complex account of the movements of difference, bifurcation, and becoming that characterize all forms of life. For her, Darwin provokes an understanding of the "productivity, the generative surprise, that the play of repetition and pure difference—the ongoing movement of biological differences and their heritable reproduction through slight variation..—effects the becoming of species. (17-8)

Grosz's explication of Darwinian theory and Jeremijenko's tree projects provide an image of the pace of tree-time, interrupted, speeded-up, diverted. Through a prosthetic and through cloning, the tree is extended by technology; this insertion of technics into the trees' morphology and growth juxtaposes multiple materials and temporalities. In contraposing virtual trees to real time trees, Jeremijenko's OneTree project also encourages us to reconsider questions of "old" and "new." Trees, with their slow growth, and their analog mode of being, might be considered "old" according to a certain logic. But on the plane of immanence, as recorders and transmitters of information, "trees" and "Atrees" dissemble traditional linear chronologies.

Tree Subjectivities

Of her project OneTree, Jeremijenko has said: "My fundamental question I think is quite simply ... why do trees look the way they do?" This is a fascinating question, because while it is a question of biology/morphology, it pertains to the questions sociologists ask about racial and sexual difference. This question helps us consider new way of thinking about the nature-culture relationship. For Grosz,

> Life is this very openness to the dynamism of time, an active response to time's provocation to endure. In short, life is now construed, perhaps for the first time, as fundamental becoming, becoming without the definitive features of (Aristotelian) being, without a given (Platonic) form, without human direction or divine purpose. Life becomes a complex concept which, through Darwin's intervention, becomes disconnected fro ma given essence, form, or function and newly related to, bringing into its orbit, touching upon and sharing borders with a number of other concepts: life informs and is informed by matter, time, becoming, difference, and repetition. (37)

Further, Grosz argues that Darwin emphasized the increasing complexity of "life" over a span of time. The two together produce divergence and variation, rather than convergence and resemblance. (37) She asserts that the notion of life bridges the natural and the cultural, for it is the dynamism of chance, time and change over time; it is neither inherently organic nor non-organic. Life opens matter up to indeterminancy, it is "a qualitative transformation of matter into the unexpected, the surprising, the never-seen-before and the never-able-to-be-repeated." (41) Jeremijenko has produced this effect in her art experiments. Her inventiveness has exposed the indeterminacy in nature, both in cloning trees, and by hanging them upside down.

Grosz is particularly interested in what Darwin's theories of artificial and natural selection have to offer the disciplines other than the traditional natural sciences. She claims one of Darwin's contribution to the humanities (and we might also assume the social sciences) would be to allow us to recognize that certain cultural products of the human such as institutions, language, and knowledge are productions that attempt to contain and slow down "life" and matter. They are not "adequate to the real" of materiality and the dynamism of

life, but “place them in a position of retrospective reconstruction in the service of life’s provisional interests.” (42) It is not fully clear how Grosz reads this slowing down and containment of life that she attributes to culture. While we must recognize her argument as a furthering of an anti-humanist perspective, it comes close to then privileging nature at the expense of culture. Yet what if the practices that Grosz describes as slowing down and containing nature, also occur in nature itself? Certainly Grosz would argue for a continuum of nature-tree-animal-human-technology-culture. Darwin’s contemporary Alfred Russel Wallace’s description of bird nesting and the question of instinct versus learning suggests that in many ways the home building process of birds and humans, for instance, are not so different. While a bird building a nest does not exactly approximate the human cultural practice of architecture, in *The Philosophy of Birds Nests,* in 1867, Wallace argued that

> the mental faculties exhibited by birds in the construction of their nests are the same in kind as those manifested by mankind in the formation of their dwellings. These are, essentially, imitation, and a slow and partial adaptation to new conditions. To compare the work of birds with the highest manifestations of human art and science is totally beside the question. I do not maintain that birds are gifted with reasoning faculties at all approaching in variety and extent to those of man. I simply hold that the phenomena presented by their mode of building their nests, when fairly compared with those exhibited by the great mass of mankind in building their houses, indicate no essential difference in the kind or nature of the mental faculties employed.

Grosz herself wonders why we are willing to consider human sociality “cultural,” yet the animal world we are not. What if, she wonders, what we consider to be uniquely human characteristics are simply a difference in degree from animals. What if “reason, language, emotions, cultural associations, the use of tools and

technologies, and so on" are possessed in different degrees by animals. "What if, instead of a rift, there is a continuity between the human and the animal?" (Grosz 2005, 50) Beyond this, how would we then understand the relation between nature and culture? Might we understand culture as "the most elaborate invention of a nature that is continually evolving?" (50) This nature though, presents problems for culture, such as "the forward drift of time, the generation of immense and uncontrolled variation of difference, exacerbated by the increasing complexity of large and growing populations, and the relations between self and other" in which "the other is always other to and different from the self in some bodily way." (51) These Grosz claims as forces that impinge on humans and cultures from the outside, and which must inevitably must be contended with. Thus she suggests these are "traces of our debt" to the natural and its ongoing force, which continually pressures the human to invent. (51)

Technology

Technology then, is a collection of inventions that respond to nature's pressure, that emerge in the human attempt to endure and survive. For Grosz technology is a "metaproduction." That is, it is a thing which allows humans to produce things. It is the "inevitable result of the living's capacity to utilize the nonliving (and the living) *prosthetically*." As she argues further, "*poesis* and *techne"* are human modes of evolutionary fitness and compensate for bodily vulnerability. She notes that Bergson also addresses instincts, for in animals he argues it is instinct that directs animals to engage with and make "things," while

in humans it is intelligence. It is differences in engagement with things that sets instinct apart from intelligence, yet links them along a continuum. (137)

> Animals invent. they have instruments, which include their own body parts, as well as external objects. Humans produce technologies, and especially instruments that are detached and different from their own bodies, instruments which the body must learn to accommodate, instruments which transform both the thingness of things, and the body itself. (138)

What is particularly important to take from Grosz's discussion of Bergson is the conclusion that the relationship of technology, the human, and the natural, is not one of mediation. Rather, it is a relationship of overlap, of extension, and a conversion of one into the other. Subjectivity is full of time, infused with time. Technology has inserted new and different speeds into bodies, troubling old formations of identity. Perhaps trees' subjectivities lead us to see the way we have overly humanized the human, the way we have solidified morphology into meaning, and the way we have continually opposed the natural and the inventions of culture.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

I have argued here that art by Tana Hargest, Daniela Rossell and Natalie Jeremijenko illustrates and exemplifies new tendencies in sociality linked to the expansion of information, biological, digital and nanotechnologies. I have suggested following Clough that these new tendencies in sociality are: the increasing importance of affect and affectivity, the tendency toward the "mattering" of information, the new role of complicity in societies of control, and the increasing attention to non-organic life such that the stark opposition between it and organic life are reduced and as a result we are pressured to redefine life and the human. These tendencies, I have posited, have clear consequences for how scholars understand race, gender and the nature-culture relationship. All of these I have framed under the two encompassing concerns of ethico-politics and new formations of subjectivity.

The concepts and theoretical frameworks that explained the social world during the first two-thirds of the 20th century were "molar." Human identities, relationships, and that which could be described as collectively produced were described in large-scale wholist terms. The predominance of technologies that rely on the molecular, as well as the circulation of capital at higher speeds and levels of abstraction, as well as science's ongoing exploration of the sub-microscopic, will continue to impact the concepts and social-theoretical frameworks that were descriptively tied to a specific liberal and modernist notion of the human. These molar frameworks cannot effectively address the impact of

the molecular. Continued development of frameworks for understanding the human and the social at a pre-individual, preconscious level are necessary.

That is, a new molecular, haptic understanding that incorporates “affect” and “affectivity” to relate the actions, activities, movements, agencies and psychical processes of the human is necessary to address developments in bio-informatics and genomics as they shift the relationship between information as matter and life such that information comes to be equated with life itself and life is in-formed. We must also continue to engage the dispersal of power relations beyond the institutions of civil society and the resultant impossibility of existence outside those power relations. All are complicit participants in varying degrees in this environment. While we still interact with the institutions of enclosure and while they still carry weight, their effects are dispersed in this new environment. Power increasingly operates at the affective preindividual level, and in the form of forces that code, stratify and deterritorialize. Scholars must continue to take up the cultural effects and political consequences of capital in these new formations. The collective formation in this case is the population. In this environment ethico-politics can effectively respond in ways that a critique and politics of resistance alone are unable to do so.

Ethico-politics

In the works of art I have discussed here, one finds an ethico-political response to the social implications of new technologies. In response to the limits of the social constructivism that so many scholars had noted, Grosz has suggested a future of ethics and politics, an ethico-politics rooted in the inventive

and experimental that remains open to the unknown. Grosz names this "becoming artistic." By "becoming-artistic," Grosz means that political struggles might be opened up to the future, to "becoming unrecognizable" and "becoming other." This politics is linked to surprise and invention, to the experimental; it is not a politics of resistance. Olkowski similarly calls for politics that draw on resources of creativity and the "creative surface of thought."

Becoming-artistic addresses ethico-politics. It works at the far edge of and just beyond critique as Thacker has described it. He suggests following Foucault that critique is not just the "negative" work that must be done so that a "positive" resolution may follow. Critique is a generative practice at precisely the moment of its negativity that "provides openings, pathways, and alternatives that were previously foreclosed by the structure of a discourse." (178) However, those concerned with cultural criticism are now working in a space in which direct critique seems to have lost effectiveness, yet simply claiming the impossibility of a political position is not an option. Terranova's response to the difficulty of critique in control societies is to suggest that political responses in information societies require more than producing counter information, but also "opening up channels, selective targeting, making transversal connections, [or] using informational guerrilla tactics."

The ethico-politics of Jeremijenko, Hargest, and Rossell deploy from this ethico-politics that is at the joint relation of ethics and politics beyond the edge of critique. The joint term of ethico-politics is necessary because it is politics that has historically designated the social body beyond the relations between just one

and an Other, but also extending to populations and collectivities. Ethico-politics raises questions, is willing to experiment, and provokes affective responses such as thought, laughter, surprise, shock and anger. Ethico-politics recognizes that the affective, the preconscious and the molecular cross these two frames of ethics and politics. It does not desire to govern the conduct of individuals for particular political purposes. Ethico-politics can and should "validate diverse ethical criteria and encourage all to develop and refine their practical and experimental arts of existence…and value the conscious fabrication of particular styles or arts of living." A discourse of ethics that does not attempt to frame issues in objective, scientific or rational/uncontestable terms, that does not moralize oppositions of the normal and the pathological, natural and unnatural, feminist and patriarchal, or oppressive and liberatory needs to be welcomed into politics, yet in emphasizing the ethical one must take care that it does not participate in new coding for moralizing, and disciplining modes of conduct.

Hargest, Rossell and Jeremijenko's works exemplify this ethico-political perspective. Art that produces psychiatric pharmaceuticals, topical lotions to deflect racism, and microchips intended to be implanted in those prone to violence illustrates the thought apropos to control societies. These "products" directly respond to racial "ills" of the 21st century. Hargest's project exemplifies a straddling of biopolitics to control and beyond. In the case of Hargest's art, it is not the government regulating the potentially violent body, it is the corporation. This is an example of the tendency away from discipline toward control. Controls modulate rather than organize, and the body with an implanted chip is a body

whose potential actions are modulated. Hargest's images of the implants speak directly to a fearful version of the potential for the micro and nano to deploy racism and social control in control society. Under these conditions, the viability of a politics of resistance is questionable, there is nothing to resist, because the problem has been placed within the body. New political techniques are called for, molecular and nano-politics such as hacking and the viral which also work from within. Hargest's artwork illustrates attention to the molecular, rather than the molar.

Rossell's photographs both capture and define ethico-political questions. Her photographs, and the public response to them are linked to broader social trends, to shifts in art worlds away from the politics of the anti-aesthetic, to tendencies continuing to register new subject identities for women. Rossell's art while not apolitical, is also not one of resistance. It is one of complicities. Rossell's photographs illustrate and perform the tendency toward complicity through their ethnographic and autoethnographic investments. Against the tradition of ethnographic photography or reportage from a distant, objective positionality, Rossell moves between the stances of photographer and subject, exemplifying the connections between the ethnographic, visual display and a more malleable subject and object relationship. The women in her photographs exhibit multiplicitous relationships to power: they enjoy the position of their upper upper class status amidst the drastic inequality of Mexican society yet they are women inhabiting a patriarchal society and married to or daughters of powerful

male politicians. Rossell's photographs illustrate, perform and transform these ongoing theoretical and real world arrangements.

Jeremijenko's projects address the intersection of science, technology, and politics, and raise questions about technology's role as a mediator between what has traditionally been termed the nature-culture relationship. She has a vested interest in creating material manifestations that illustrate scientific information and data and is actively engaged in attempting to transform power dynamics around information, knowledge and science. She desires to transfer some of the knowledge/power held by science experts on issues such as global warming, climate change and environmental pollution, to the public sphere. Her art attempts to challenge via its politicized content and it invests in the possibility to effect a flattening out of access to information. Her work performs and embodies the complex relationship between nature and culture as they exist together in continuum. Yet the public is increasingly sophisticated in its participation in markets, artworlds, and other arenas of civil society, so Jeremijenko must contend with imagined versions of science and the ways in which information transfer is on the one hand, entirely transparent to the point of ubiquity that is filtered out, and on the other hand, still obscured. Jeremijenko's ethico-politics are in some ways aligned with Thacker's "cultural bioethics," working at the interstices, revealing the points of fissure in the forces that come together to form a given practice or a given body.

For Jeremijenko though, a politics for addressing information is a stated interest, and in particular she still relies on a hope for the public sphere,

expecting that making data more available to the public, rather than being concentrated in the hands of the experts, will result in a differential treatment and distribution of information. Yet as Massumi suggests, “when nature philosophy becomes politically useful…it ceases to be itself.” (Massumi 2002, 244) If as Grosz reads Darwin, we understand life to be always in excess of itself, we must understand this in relationship to a framing of life with difference always immanent, open to the future, in excess of systematicity, and unpredictable.

Art in particular is suited to this philosophical approach. Both making art and experiencing it require taking part in an openness to the future. In working with materials that hold their own dynamism, as well as a process and method that can never be entirely controlled, one encounters dynamism and chance. Encountering art as a viewer is simply a different version of this potential and both of these relationships are ethico-political ones.

New Formations of Subjectivity

There is life after identity politics. Scholars’ push to refigure identities as “anti-essentialist yet attuned to transformative politics”, “intersectional”, “relational” rather than innate, “differential” rather than inherently positive, and potentially ambivalent and oriented toward “disidentification” rather than identification has been exceedingly important. We might now recognize though, that bodies with identity only exist from an observed distance. From the perspective of experience, there is no “body,” there is only engagement and action, movement, sensation and perception. This new form of subjectivity is

below performativity; it is “an originarily technical organismic perspective [and] repudiates all externalist accounts of the body” (Hansen); it engages the collections of sense, affects, and percepts that stratify, intensify, amplify and extend within a human body, through and between it to other objects. It is a more impersonal sense of a life, with no “pure” species, races, or genders. Each of us is composed of “a life” that is a “potential or virtuality that exceeds our specification as particular individuals…” This “life” is made up of preindividual singularities coexisting on one plane. (Grosz 2005, 83-4)

Melinderm and Tominex suggest new formations of subjectivity, such as skin that is a surface area of technicity and bodily molecular differentiation that exists through zones of intensities. Zones of intensity register possibilities for dynamism and chance through, across and between bodies that may at times coagulate into haptically or visibly recognizable patterns of similarity, and at other times offer no such recognition. There will be points in time and space in which patterns register and stratify, and then deterritorialize. Race ought not be reified as the visually marked identitarian category it has been; there is extensive genetic variation between individuals of the same racial or ethnic groups. As work on the human genome continues this debate will intensify.

Gendered subjectivities must also continue to be rethought. Olkowski offers up an approach to configuring subject-object relations rather than one based on distance and opposition. The notion of assemblage, in which neither the subject nor an object can be identified is useful. In this arrangement, it is speeds, intensities, and the varying distribution of elements that are notable. (27)

Rossell's subjects willingly poses as part human, part animal, playfully and provocatively offering themselves up as icon and sex object. They pose next to and among their objects and revel in their ambiguous status as woman, object, animal.

Barad suggests "what is important about causal intra-actions is the fact that marks are left on bodies." We need to be "accountable to marks on bodies." (Barad 824) Yet this statement understands bodies as writeable surfaces marred by inscription, and perhaps we might consider refiguring this notion as well. Rather, as Olkowski suggests, we might refer to Irigaray's fluid body of folds of affectivity. This is a structure that is not lacking, but is part of an "ontology of change." (Olkowski 1999, 68) These folds of affectivity mesh with intervals, with indivision, with originary technicity.

Rossell's art leads one to ask, what is so captivating about the idea of a tree hung upside down? The viewer is asked to think differently about the relation between technology and nature, and culture and nature. In her willingness to clone, to defile the natural with technology, Jeremijenko breaks with the notion of a pure nature that must be both preserved and returned to. Her work suggests both trees' fragility and mutability, and yet asks us not to privilege nature's romanticized status. She privileges neither nature nor culture. Social constructivism, and perhaps even certain theories of the posthuman in their concern for the loss of or end to the human, privilege the human at the expense of nature. The historical opposition of the natural and cultural has had the result of locating "[e]ssence, fixity, nature, biology, the ahistorical, [and]

predictability … together as resource or raw material, to be overcome or remade." While on the other hand the "cultural, social political, economic, historical, or subjective—in short, what is regarded as living, and especially what is human, creative, and innovative, ethical and political" have been seen to be located on the opposing side of the divide. (Grosz 2005, 45) So Grosz asks, "What if, instead of a rift, there is a continuity between the human and the animal?" Might we understand culture as "the most elaborate invention of a nature that is continually evolving," and recognize our "traces of our debt" to the natural and its ongoing force, which continually pressures humans to invent. (50-51) It is important to take from Grosz the conclusion that the relationship of technology, the human, and the natural, is not one of mediation. It is a relationship of overlap, extension, and a conversion of one into the other. Furthermore, technology has inserted new and different speeds into bodies, troubling old formations of identity. Subjectivity is full of time, infused with time. Tree subjectivities lead us to see the way we have overly humanized the human, the way we have solidified morphology into meaning, and the way we have continually opposed the natural and the inventions of culture.

Afterword: Experiments in Art and a Deleuzian Sociology

If this dissertation has been situated among events and theories after postmodernity, it has also been situated within my own education. It arose (as many do I am sure) out of a sprawling mess, in my case of interest, curiosity, desire for the potential residing in the unknown of the experimental, and an

attempt to avoid what I perhaps then thought of as the staid in sociology. It arose out of the affective capacities experimentalism produced, out of an interest in experimental forms of expression. For several years in graduate school I was engaged in studying and performing experimental and autoethnographic writing, which itself was seen to be experimental for several decades. In writing and reading on performance with a group of colleagues, I became interested in experimental art forms more generally: visual art, film, performance art, in addition to writing. However, as I began to narrow my focus, as one must do in a dissertation, I found that a few particular works of art fit quite well with some of the more sociological concerns I was also interested in, the "new tendencies in sociality" I have focused on following Clough and others. There came to be a mutuality between the three artists whose work captured me most and whose projects I felt illustrated my conceptual interests. I began to consider dropping my focus on "the experimental" to instead hone in on the conceptual and theoretical issues that the artwork seemed to be extending an articulation of. This is ultimately what I have done.

Yet in their transmedial engagement with new technologies, new methodologies and new understandings of the social, each of these artists still participates with an experimental ethic, politic, and aesthetic. As longstanding ethical and political notions about what it means to be human continue to be pressured by the expansion of bio and media technologies, ethico-political concerns regarding race, gender and underlying debates about the nature-culture relationship will continue to raise questions of their impact on lived

experience and for social theory. Arts and culture (both “high” and popular) are an excellent site for exploring ethical and political questions about new technologies and changing social relations, and I remain convinced that it is important to focus on arts that are contemporaneous with the time period of analysis in order to engage with these concerns on their own terms.

In the final paragraphs of the conclusion to the second edition of *End(s) of Ethnography*, after having explained that much of the purpose of *End(s)*’ work was to bring to light in the tradition of Foucault, the unconscious forces shaping sociology, Clough says this:

> The opposition of private and public that has allowed sociology to enhance its authority by making public what is first described as private is an opposition that can no longer ground social criticism. The vulnerabilities of observation become the vulnerabilities of a rereading that, rather than being displaced onto the observed, are returned to the reader and writer. And this is not a matter of urging a fixed identity between reader and writer—only women writing about women, for example—although this corrective is to be expected. *Rather, it is to urge a reconsideration of the privilege given observation and “factual” descriptions as the basis of criticism. It is to urge a social criticism that gives up on data collection and instead offers rereadings of representations in every form of information processing, empirical science, literature, film, television, and computer simulation.* (my italics)

Since writing that statement, Clough has come to rethink this notion of “rereading representation,” and instead challenged sociology and social criticism to take up the notion of “affect.” She would now I believe extend her earlier argument to suggest that we take up the affective experiences and affectivities of information processing, empirical science, literature, film, television and the digital. This is what I have attempted to do with contemporary and new media art.

While Clough would demand that sociology give up on data collection, I would suggest that if it wishes to continue with data collection, it ought to make more room for experimental versions of it, as I have done with the “illustration” and “example.” If Science Studies has brought to sociology a deconstruction of scientific method, Deleuze and scholars such as Clough, Grosz and Olkowski have brought the conception of “experiment” back from a living death. The experiment, as in the “science experiment,” is the basis for all of modern accumulated knowledge. It is the method of experimentation that physics, biology and chemistry, psychology, sociology and anthropology have relied on since Descartes on through the Enlightenment. Rhetoric and Humanities based disciplines are just as influenced by the experiment and scientific method. Scholarly research in general is dependent on notions of “rigor,” “systematizing” and methodology, each of which use the scientific method and experimentation as a referent from varying distances. This is as true for literature, history, and poetry as it is for the social, natural and physical sciences. Yet the role of dynamism, chance, and invention have been excluded from most discussions in especially in the social sciences, in the attempt to live up to scientific method’s perceived systematization. The social sciences might attend to Stengers’ openness to “interest” and questioning.

If sociology has been about the study of “society” and “human interaction,” Deleuze's writing has fortuitously, though not coincidentally, collided with the ends of liberal humanist thought in time to suggest how we might continue to understand and explicate the social after these ends. We might recognize for

instance, that the expansion and contraction between levels of social analysis is simply a movement between, from, or among the molecular and the population or collectivity, in which the molecular may consist of forces pre-individual, and the macro be constructed of the relations of any or all parts in between. For Deleuze this would not be to suggest that all thought is the same, but instead simply to contest the rigidity of the containment and measurement of levels of social analysis. As Rajchman articulates, while Deleuze's empiricism might be against schools and their methods, his empiricism "nevertheless calls for a rigor or logic of another kind, even if it is that of a method that orders in advance, and involves a kind of selection. It is not at all a matter of anything goes." (Rajchman 24) In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze imparts the distinctions between art, science and philosophy from one another. He argues that the three attend to different types of problems, though one might not always know from the beginning to which realm a problem belongs. As Rajchmann puts it,

> such problems and problematizations require that one think where one cannot know with scientific assurance, and yet they are not irrational, illogical, or unscientific; rather they have their own consistency, and are best connected with that element of the unknown which the growth of science always carries with it and the kinds of 'sensations' that the arts keep extracting from recognizable things and the mental habits associated with them." (47)

Thus we might acknowledge the rigor of the “experimental,” and the chance within “experiments.”

For Deleuze, philosophy, science and art “bring back from chaos” different varieties: reconnections through a zone of indistinction in a concept, the slowing down and elimination of variables to produce determinate relationships, and a

being of sensation that restores the infinite, respectively. (Deleuze 1994, 202-203) Each of these fields engages with chaos.

> We receive sudden jolts that beat like arteries. We constantly lose our ideas. That is why we want to hang on to fixed opinions so much… All that the association of ideas has ever meant is providing us with these protective rules—resemblance, contiguity, causality—which enable us to put some order into ideas, preventing our 'fantasy' (delirium, madness) from crossing the universe in an instant, producing winged horses and dragons breathing fire… [A]t the meeting point of things and thought, the sensation must recur…as proof or evidence of their agreement with our bodily organs that do not perceive the present without imposing on it a conformity with the past. This is all that we ask for in order to *make an opinion* for ourselves, like a sort of "umbrella" which protects us from chaos. (201-202)

As he goes on to put it, art makes a slit in the umbrella of opinion, and allows some of the chaos to seep through.

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