

Onanistic Engenderings



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Man's only "passion," therefore, is being.
Yet if this is the garden man cultivates,
where is the soil?¹

In her 2021 video *Dead Fingers Talk*,² presented in an exhibition entitled "Onanism sorcery,"³ the artist Lau-

1 Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985 [1974]).

2 *Dead Fingers Talk* is borrowed from William S. Burroughs, at once the title of a chapter of the *Soft Machine* and of the eponymous book (published in 1963). This latter book exemplifies Burroughs's "cut-up" technique and its relation to chance. The book was composed by the assemblage and edition of previously existing passages, published alongside new texts, which points to an understanding of authoring and invention as a process of copy and re-articulation rather than the production of novelty.

3 *Dead Fingers Talk* was part of the "Onanism Sorcery" exhibition at 40mcube, Rennes (29.05.2021–28.08.2021). The series prolongs the explorations in the post and the transhuman, in enhanced bodies and necropolitics that have been at the heart of Gozlan's oeuvre for a decade. I would like to thank Laura Gozlan for the discussions around the themes raised in her work, which have nurtured this text.



ra Gozlan portrays MUM, a feminine character with a grave, ambiguous voice. MUM is old, unsound, and yet her lascivious poses denote great strength and overwhelming appetite. Smocking a sort of decoction from a water pipe—something between a zombie drug and an elixir of eternal youth—MUM is masturbating; she is masturbating hard, fast, and at length; she is high in all possible ways. She flaunts her vivid desire and parades her libidinal autonomy all over the place, a devastating force that illuminates her deformed face and saturates the air⁴ as if amalgamated with the smoke and the heavy breath of the movie heroine. MUM appears as an archaic mother, who watches over creatures to come, creatures that would be the fruit of a complex and obscure process of transubstantiation and would go on to live an autonomous, detached, almost fleeting life. *Once you get out of the mud, you have a name*, she whispers in her cavernous yet hegemonic voice in the course of her onanist ritual. The sentence takes the form of an assertion, that of the cutting or interruption of the paternalistic lineage of the father's name.

The sexual act performed by MUM does not involve any mating nor copulation, only mud and cyprine. Her creatures originate from a sudden, unmediated birth rather than from a gradual bringing into fullness of life or being. Such an engendering opens the possibilities of other genealogies, interrupting the masculine marking “of the product of copulation *in his own name*,”⁵ which Luce Irigaray describes as the trademarking mechanism at the heart of the process of anonymization and sub-

4 Laura Gozlan's other exhibited works appear as material iterations of this libidinal force, rendered sensible, almost palpable, as if frosted under the viscous and fleshy surfaces of the sculptures.

5 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 23.

sequent substitution of the origin that is the feminine productive labor. MUM's onanistic engendering does indeed break with the preservation of fathers' names, which operate by means of encodings of blood lineages in letters and sounds. The fact that a name is nevertheless acquired when getting out of MUM's mud does not so much point to the negation of the phallogocentric understanding of the subject as it introduces a possible re-orientation away from the masculine narcissistic process founded upon the affirmation of the primacy of self-identity (by means of specular duplication and repetition of man as the same, in Irigaray's words), towards a non-anthropocentric self-othering.

If we invoke MUM here, as well as other artistic, mythological, and literary figures, it is with the hope that they can help us approach inventively some non-human forms of engendering that we today regularly encounter in the realm of information technologies and, as they rapidly gain momentum, beyond: that of the hyper-fertile machine learning processes, generally grouped under the label of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). If this text borrows from domains that may seem distant from architecture, it is out of the conviction that it is by reconnecting to these shared repositories of images and tales that one can start attending to and reasoning with the omnipresent, abstract powers at play in technology today. It trusts that the feminine figures summoned, including that of MUM, can, individually and as a group, lend corporeality to these intellectual and informational processes of self-engendering, thus avoiding the technocratic and instrumental views, as well as the demonstrative or argumentative discourses that mostly surround such informational processes. The figures that populate this article share *strange* manners to procreate, which

we would like to consider under the guise of onanism. Expanding on Irigaray's untying of the *old dream of symmetry*, onanism is to be understood loosely as a process capable of interrupting interpretative projections that reduce generative processes to a specular production of sameness in order to recognize forms of alienation at play. By alienation, we do not mean that artificial intelligence is to be understood as anything other than human-made. Yet, said alienation may be encountered, discovered, or even remembered when restoring the severed "profound relationship to the imaginary,"⁶ what onanist exploration permits; that is, when one accepts to consider the symbolical and logical processes of rational formalization of thought beyond any morally based questions of efficiency and truthfulness. The strange form of fertility explored along the text's meanders is, however, not dependent on, or rooted in, any natural form of femininity—as the figures invoked are at once bodies, personages, patterns, and algebraic beings—not even on a bodily capacity to incubate, but stands for the profound intrication of rationalism, fantasy and an active material reality (in the case of MUM, in the combination of mud and feminine fluids).⁷

6 "We can assume that any theory of the subject has always been appropriated by the masculine. When she submits to (such a) theory, woman fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary." (Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 133). Irigaray writes against the Freudian idea of the masculinity of auto-eroticism and its necessary abandonment by the little girl, as a sign of the victory of the (so-called) masculine sexuality that is the appropriation of the specular, or speculative, process/trial. See Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 77–78.

7 Here, the conservation of the organicity of reproduction against the cyborgian autonomy of the replicative process (as proposed by Donna Haraway) does not imply the abandonment of the gender-abolitionist perspective and any subsequent affirmation of a binary sexual

Naming the Inert: On the Univocality of the Specular Disposition and of the Growth of the *Logos*

The sentence muttered by MUM, *Once you get out of the mud, you have a name*, refers to the hallucinated process described in the last chapter of William S. Burroughs's *The Soft Machine*, in which death, decay, sex, and (de) generation are intertwined in a muddy, filthy feast.⁸ The mud invoked by the poet is very different from the *primal mud* from which the known etymology and commonly accepted double symbolism derives; at once filthy and fertile, fertile because filthy, but still of a passive form of fertility. The dirtiness that characterizes it is inscribed in its Welsh roots, from the term *Bawa*, which will give

differentiation (including the naturalization of a feminine identity). Rather, it maintains such perspective (following Xenofeminism) and couples it to the possibility of a *diversity* and the many transitions that can be imagined amongst it. On how a trans-feminism and its invention of "a relation to what language has not already ordered" could fit within the spectrum of Irigaray's discussion of procreation, see Jules Gill-Peterson, "The Miseducation of a French Feminist," *e-flux Journal* 117, (April 2021), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/117/382426/the-miseducation-of-a-french-feminist/> (accessed December 21, 2021).

8 "We waded into the warm mud-water, hair and ape flesh off in screaming strips, stood naked human bodies covered with phosphorescent green jelly, soft tentative flesh cut with ape wounds, peeling other genitals, fingers and tongues rubbing off the jelly-cover, body melting pleasure-sounds in the warm mud. till the sun went and a blue wind of silence touched human faces and hair. When we came out of the mud we had names... We moved to keep out of our excrement where white worms twisted up feeling for us and the white worm-sickness in all our bodies... I pulled the skin over my head and I made another man put on the skin and horns and we fucked like the animals stuck together and we found the animals stuck together and killed both so I knew the thing inside me would always find animals to feed my mouth meat." William S. Burroughs, *The Soft Machine*, 1961, "Cross the Wounded Galaxies," para.2, <http://index-of.es/zoro-Repository-2/Cyber/04%20-%20Fiction/WSB/Burroughs%20William%20Seward-The%20Soft%20Machine.pdf> (accessed December 9, 2021).

the French *boue*; its dirtiness and moisture is more precisely captured in the German *Mudde*, the Dutch *modde*, and the Greek *mydos*. Hence in Burroughs's mud, pus foam, blood, hairs, worms, flesh, shit, and sperm mingle indiscriminately, almost joyfully, in an infamous mixture granted with a transformative capacity, by means of which the tale's characters are metaphorically engendered. Such process, in which infection⁹ merges with insemination, exemplifies the fertility associated with the impurity of the component, its generative capacity. Water and soil, including excrements that together compose mud, enhance and transform each other: As soil is fecundated by water, so is water fertilized by soil.

Burroughs's "warm mud-water,"¹⁰ however, is not a mere *substratum*, that which—etymologically—*spreads underneath*, constituting the basis upon which another substance is coated or fabricated, supporting the attributes of another material reality. Rather, it appears as an active matrix whose materiality is simultaneously communicational—as the contagious spreading to all bodies suggests. There is, indeed, no passivity in Burroughs's mud; the infectious, warm compound is by no means the characterless substance that has been symbolically and religiously connected to engendering. Traditionally, engendering has been considered as a giving birth that is a *giving form* and a *naming* that occurs without copulation, whether in the biblical episodes of the appearance of the Adamic man or the terrestrial fauna or in the Greek mythological origination of the first woman.

9 Burroughs evokes a "white worm-sickness." Burroughs, "Cross the Wounded Galaxies," para. 4.

10 Burroughs, "Cross the Wounded Galaxies," para. 2.

In the Coran,¹¹ as well as in Genesis, God creates Adam from mud: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.”¹² And as Adam could not be left alone, so God used a similar process to create animals and trees, again from mud:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof.¹³

The ontological promotion enacted by the process of naming performed by the first man delegated under God’s authority operates precisely, as noted by Irigaray, because of the failure of the first matter to be defined or predicated. The mythological episode of the forming of the first woman, as told by Hesiod in *Works and Days*, supposes a similar original lack of agency and potency; the All Endowed, namely Pandora, is fashioned on Zeus’s orders from earth mixed with water. Modeled in “the fair lovely form of a maiden” itself modeled upon “the immortal goddesses aspect,”¹⁴ she is endowed with enchanting appearances by each of the gods of Olympus, thus bringing the worst sufferings to men in the most charming light. Taking off the lid of the amphora she carries—a gesture she performs in the absence of men, as she is instructed to by Zeus—she releases evils and plagues across the earth, causing the appearance of

11 Amongst the different wordings of the Qur’an 37:11, Adam was created from “*Tīn lāzib*,” a sticky mud or clay composed of earth (or a quintessence of it) and water.

12 Robert P. Carroll and Stephen Prickett, *The Bible: Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Genesis 2:7.

13 Carroll and Prickett, *The Bible*, Genesis 2:9.

14 Hesiod, *Works and Days* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 39.

storms, sicknesses, and, most importantly, bringing the knowledge of man's own finitude—the “price for fire” stolen by Prometheus. In operating as a divine instrument, Pandora appears as a purely passive, artificially created belly—as passive as the mud or clay out of which she was made, which requires to be inseminated with *sperma* just like the ground also needs to be inseminated with *sperma* (the seed of plants, or wheat, in Ancient Greek).

Yet, as her second name Anésidora suggests, she is also the one who makes presents emerge from the deep, a goddess of ground presiding over fecundity. Symbolizing the profoundly ambiguous human nature,¹⁵ she stands simultaneously as a power of life and destruction. Her dual nature also stems, however, from the duality of her materiality: In her, woman and soil—both matrixes—are intertwined domains upon which gods (or man) erect their stature. It is precisely the predication of the weakness of the feminine material origin that establishes said material origin, in Irigaray's specular disposition, as an indefinite basis for the ontological promotion of living things. “She (the first matter) is both radically lacking in all power of logos and offers, unawares, an all-powerful soil in which the logos can grow.”¹⁶

Of the (Correlative) Solitude of Technical Matrixes

What if, however, one affirmed such (at once) materially active and rational power to autonomously support and nurture *logos* in a manner that requires no ontological validation, much less from any exterior authority? In

15 Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Pandora, la première femme* (Paris: Bayard Presse, 2006).

16 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 162.

other words, what would it imply to refuse the univocality of the link that ensures specularization, that is, to interrupt the subsuming of the *all-powerful soil* solely to an exterior fertilizing power? Burrough's and Goulan's material-communicational matrix may here offer a counter-model not only to the "old dream of symmetry" implied by the specular duplication of "the same"—and subsequent to the corresponding burial of feminine sexuality—, as described by Irigaray, but also to a correlated modern artistic and literary myth, that of the possible interruption of such symmetry by means of a refusal of procreation.¹⁷ In modern art, such myth manifested in the cyclicity of the *machine célibataire* (bachelor machine). The closed circuit of the Bachelor machine—the solitude of technique—may have indeed symbolized a refusal of procreation, yet it did so, as highlighted by Harald Szeemann, at a time when it was still possible for such renunciation to contain a concept of life by dint of a correspondingly sublimated geometry of eroticism, a time when it was possible to state something complex by means of a "simple" mechanical device; a time when a three-dimensional bachelor mechanism assumes an "adventurous, mostly female" fourth dimension as a relativization of viewpoints, in order to resist the temptation

17 Bazon Brock analyses the 19th-century naturalization of the disappearance of aristocracy in terms of the bourgeois myth that celebrated a "bloodless, direct, unconditional form of procreation," as exemplified in the extreme form of the Männerbund. Brock proposes that such mythology underlined (and still does) a bourgeois notion of emancipation as the individual exit from the collective (differing, as such, from the Greek hero, whose actions are valued only with regard to their dedication to the community). See Bazon Brock, "Parthenogenesis and Bachelor Machine," in *Le Macchine Celibi / The Bachelor Machines*, ed. Jean Clair, Harald Szeemann, (New York: Rizzoli, 1975), 75–82.

provided by once again surveyable circumstances with all the suffering they bring.¹⁸

The coexistence of a dimension superior to that of the geometrical in the technological realm may well be reappraised today in terms different from those proposed by Szeemann. Rather than a form of relativization, or escapism, of what would be considered a tangible reality, this superior domain—opened by artificial intelligence and fantasy¹⁹ (with the use of distributive, convolutional, and recurrent neural networks)²⁰—may well appear in a new light if one was to question the mechanism through which it establishes communication with the other domains. Specifically, we propose that the articulations between the different domains be understood as *hinges* through which non-direct access can be established. Such an approach may invite us to rethink emancipation, as brought about by technological ration-

18 Harald Szeemann, “The Bachelor Machines,” in *Le Macchine Celibi / The Bachelor Machines*, ed. Jean Clair, Harald Szeemann (New York: Rizzoli, 1975), 9.

19 The term “fantasy” is here preferred to that of “imagination,” in order not to reduce the discussion to the production of images. The reflexion however shares much with the work developed by artist and researcher Gregory Chatonsky on “artificial imagination,” notably “L’imagination (de l’)artificielle” in *Plastik, Créations, cerveaux, infinis*, 08, <https://plastik.univ-paris1.fr/limagination-de-l-artificielle/> (accessed March 8, 2019).

20 Burroughs’s and Gozlan’s predilection may invite us to think specifically about “recurrent” neural networks, which deal more effectively with text and language, but we may as well consider “convolutional” neural networks and their performances with images. To approach such artificial intelligences from a philosophical perspective, see Vera Bühlmann, “A Ventriloquist’s Vernaculars,” in *Chimeras: Inventory of Synthetic Cognition*, eds. Anna Engelhardt and Ilan Manouach (Athens: Onassis Foundation, 2023), 304-06.

alism,²¹ by articulating it to a non-anthropocentric take on technology,²² connecting a materialist perspective with a feminist one.

Although non-reproductive, the mechanical-erotic game designed, but never fully completed, by Duchamp for *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* does offer keys to reflect upon such emancipation with regard to the hyper-fertile forms of self-engendering that characterize the digital today. Established upon the “architectonic base”²³ of the geometric world of the bachelors, the Bride flaunts her visceral-mechanical non-Euclidian components: the *Wasp* or *Sex Cylinder*, the flesh-colored *Milky Way* and the draft pistons, the filament substance, etc., all live outside the realm of perspective, in the domain of “the approximation of the ‘always possible.’”²⁴ Fleeting in the fourth dimension, she is inscribed in a discontinuous closed circuit—operating alternatively—and fueled by two sources: her own “love essence”²⁵—the ‘secretion of (her) sex glands’²⁶—and the “illuminating gas” and corresponding electric sparks produced by the Bachelors’ eroticism. Her “splendid vibrations” are caused by her complete, double expo-

21 Laboria Cuboniks, “Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation,” 2015, <https://laboriacuboniks.net/manifesto/xenofeminism-a-politics-for-alienation/> (accessed November 2, 2019).

22 As Catherine Malabou indicates, the challenge that humanity is faced with regarding the rise of AI is its capacity to create a community of men and machines.

23 Marcel Duchamp, “La Mariée mise à nu par les célibataires. 2 éléments principaux : 1. Mariée 2. Célibataires,” in *Notes autographes pour “La boîte verte,”* ensemble, 1912–1915, Centre Pompidou MNAM-CCI, AM 1997–96, 32.

24 Duchamp, “Par la perspective...”, 27. Author’s translation.

25 Duchamp, “La Mariée. Squelette,” AM 1997–96, 32.

26 Duchamp, “La Mariée mise à nu par les célibataires,”

sure, under both external and internal forces: she is first stripped bare *electrically* under the effect of the transmission of the Bachelors' desire (sourced among other things from the "small wasted energies"²⁷ such as the masturbation by the *eros' matrix* of the *Mâlic molds*). The illuminating gas produced by the Bachelors' sexual activity, sublimated, spilled, and splashed by the *Oculist Witnesses*, reaches the Bride to fuel her. She subsequently proceeds to strip herself in a *voluntary-imaginative* gesture, stimulated, so to say, by the potency of the desire she generates. Both developments collide and concile into her blossoming "without causal distinction,"²⁸ Duchamp writes, causing her fluorescence.

Although excited by the Bachelors, the Bride remains, in Duchamp's words, a "white desire,"²⁹ the "apotheosis of virginity;" albeit affected and materially transformed, she stays physically untouched; only gaze *as* energy reaches her, inducing a phase transition that precisely breaks any symmetry between the states. The Bride is thus not the *Koré*, the *young virgin* whose desire must be veiled and preserved as value in a patriarchal exchange, conserved, in Irigaray's view, in her *powerless*

27 Duchamp, "Transformateur destiné à utiliser les petites énergies...", in *Notes autographes pour "Inframince," "Le Grand Verre," "Projets" et "Jeux de mots," ensemble, 1912–1968*, Centre Pompidou MNAM-CCI, AM 1997-98, 187.

28 Duchamp, "La Mariée mise à nu par les célibataires. 2 éléments principaux : 1. Mariée 2. Célibataires." Duchamp describes the Bride's blossoming as being "unanalyzable by logic."

29 We favor the French term *désir blanc*, literally *white desire*, over the English translation *blank desire* (Michel Sanouillet, Elmer Peterson, *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp: Salt seller, Marchand du sel* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 39. The "white" could point not only to the color traditionally associated with virginity but also to the promise of endless possibilities—such as white light, which potentially contains all possible colors.

capacity to offer an identical reflection to whom may mirror *himself* in her. Nor is she to be understood, as suggested by some,³⁰ as existing solely by means of the objectivation by the male gaze, stripped from her autonomy by libidinal and voyeuristic scrutiny of her most intimate mechanisms. She simply subtracts herself from the retinal. The only visual contemplation established between domains is neither direct nor specular—and replicative—in the first degree: Indeed, Duchamp's "mirrorical return" operates as the transmission towards a continuum of different dimensions, according to which a part of the light is absorbed and transmitted across the *hinge*³¹ that articulates the two domains—the projective geometric planarity of the Bachelor and the topological continuum of the Bride. What appears to us viewers as a series of lines, or separations, on the two-dimensional *Glass*—the *Bride's Garment*, the *Region of the Gilled Cooler (isolating plates)*, and the *Horizon*—are in fact, projections (or shadows, and shadows of shadows) in $n-1$ dimension of a *limen*, a *hinge*³² operating in the depth of the work,

30 Herman Parret, "Preface" in *Les transformateurs Duchamp*, eds. Jean-François Lyotard and Hermann Parret, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2010), 32–45.

31 "Perhaps make a *hinge picture* (folding yardstick, book...) develop the *principle of the hinge* in the displacements 1st in the plane 2nd in space. / Find an *automatic description* of the hinge. / Perhaps introduce in the *Pendu femelle*." Marcel Duchamp, "Peut-être faire un tableau de charnière," in *Notes autographes pour "La boîte verte,"* ensemble, 1912-1915, Centre Pompidou Mnam-Cci, AM 1997-96, 27. As translated in *The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp*, 27. The notion of "hinge" is at the heart of the essay that Lyotard dedicates to Duchamp's work.

32 For the parallelisms between Duchamp's hinges and Henri Poincaré's notion of cut-across continuums of one or several dimensions, see Frédéric Migayrou, "Henri Poincaré: Marcel Duchamp en phases," in *Marcel Duchamp: la Peinture, Même*, eds. Cécile Debray (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2014), 238–247.

that allows for a crossing between both worlds. As noted by Jean-François Lyotard, the “mirrorial” operation differs from the specular one, for it operates topologically rather than semantically.³³ Where the specular relation subsuming a term to another implies a (forced) commensurability amongst such terms,³⁴ Duchamp’s mirrorial relation opens concurrently to the possibility of transformation across the geometrical (metric, as the 2-dimensional plane of the glass, and projective, as the realm of the Bachelors) and topological domains (the purely qualitative domain of the Bride)—in other words, to algebraic invariances through variation—, and to the impossibility of homeomorphisms across n-dimensional spaces.³⁵ In the depth of Duchamp’s *glass*, the indissociable algebraic transformations and material transmutations undergone by the Bride happen within an uninterrupted energetic exchange—a continuous circulation that amounts to an infinite *peaking*—a mixture of exterior fueling and autonomous, controlled delaying of orgasm, or pleasure.³⁶

33 Lyotard, *Les transformateurs Duchamp*, 132.

34 Note that for Duchamp, the principal forms of the bachelor apparatus are *mensurated*, while in the Bride, there is no longer a mensurability of the forms *in relation to their destination*.

35 Migayrou, “Henri Poincaré, Marcel Duchamp en phases”, 246. Migayrou cites Duchamp: “Around AB as a hinge, let us turn the flat surface ABCD. This will generate a volume. A finite continuum with 3 dim... A finite continuum of 4 dim. is thus generated by a finite continuum of 3 dim. rotating around a finite hinge of 2 dim.”

36 As noted by Duchamp: “Pleasure = decline? The last state of this nude Bride prior to the pleasure which [*brings about her fall, scratched out*] would graphically bring about her fall, necessity to convey [...] this *blossoming*.” Lyotard reads such declination as that which would endow the Bride with an identity “that of ‘her’ sex; and thereby endows the man with ‘his.’” (Lyotard, *Les transformateurs Duchamp*, 135). In such a

We propose to view the *Large Glass*, with its transformational (mirrorical) *dispositif*, as an invitation to think of relations that diverge in two different manners from mimetic reproduction and self-engendering, by confronting us with two different forms of onanism—in the guise of the Bachelors and the Bride. Such forms may not be reduced to masculine and feminine models playing into gendered dialectics, an opposition that would imply simultaneously the impossibility of reconciliation and of correspondent diversification.³⁷ Taking into consideration the two condemnations that have historically fallen on onanism—the biblical critic of the interruption of inheritance and the Enlightenment moralist criticism of pleasure—might shed light on the idea that a specific form of onanist engendering is at work in our contemporary processes of transcription and translation of our sources of information into *stocks* of data—as exploited by generic technological matrixes

light, the delay, or peaking, preserves the Bride in a mythological state, ambiguous and potentially infinitely transformable.

37 In the Xenofeminist perspective, a gender abolitionist approach is “not code for the eradication of what are currently considered ‘gendered’ traits from the human population. Under patriarchy, such a project could only spell disaster—the notion of what is ‘gendered’ sticks disproportionately to the feminine. But even if this balance were redressed, we have no interest in seeing the sexuate diversity of the world reduced. Let a hundred sexes bloom!” Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism*, “Parity,” oxoE. This perspective rejoins Catherine Malabou’s proposition that, with regard to artificial intelligence, a strategy of control (and relative rhetoric of dispossession) should be replaced by the discovery of hybridity that interrupts the logic of identity predicated upon strict positions: “ours” and “theirs.” See Catherine Malabou, “Foreword,” *Métamorphoses de l’intelligence, Du QI à l’IA*, (Paris: PUF, 2021).

–, one that redefines *mimesis* in relation to a non-specular / other-than-human fantasy.³⁸

Coitus Interruptus: Of Inheritance and Fantasy

The Bachelors' onanism *vibrates* across their entire domain: in the *litanies* of the chariot, in the repetitive movement of the glider, in the autonomous grinding of chocolate, and in the splashes of illuminating gas. Duchamp's machine has at its very heart an (inhuman) determination to interrupt any principle of conservation, the entropic process of the *coitus interruptus*, of which it (the machinery) nevertheless manages to exploit the *wasted energies*. If onanism, named after Judah's son Onan whose story is told in Genesis, is presented as a sin, it is less because of a potential immorality of the act of self-gratification *per se* than because of the refusal of the law of the Levirate³⁹ and the conservation it ensured, a refusal to which the spillage by Onan of his fertile seed on the soil amounts. Taking its name from *levir*—*lege vir*, the *in-law*, the husband's brother—this custom law obliged the male next-of-kin of a dead man

38 The consideration of fantasy is to be understood in relation to the history of computation as pertaining to a universal form of intelligence, being equated to the abstract formalization of inference and proposes a move away from the subjection of simulation and cognition to a purely logical approach at the source of the development of artificial intelligence. For a chronology, see Frédéric Migayrou, "Corrélations, les intelligences simulées," in *Neurones, Les intelligences simulées*, eds. Frédéric Migayrou and Camille Lenglois, *Mutations Créations*, exhibition catalogue, Paris, Centre national d'art et de culture Georges Pompidou (Orléans: Editions Hyx, 2020), 55–69.

39 Still encountered very rarely in certain parts of the world, the Levirate is mostly known through the tale that the bible tells of it. For a thorough bibliography on the matter, see Steffan Mathias, *Paternity, Progeny, and Perpetuation, Creating Lives After Death in the Hebrew Bible* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

to marry his childless- widow. In its original form, such a law ensured the conservation of lineage and inheritance through time.⁴⁰ The perpetuation of a family's line could, therefore, not be broken by the death of an individual, as the family name prevailed over any personal name. The Levirate implied a particular and limited game of substitution: The newly-wed brother would operate as a proxy for the deceased, taking his place biologically but neither legally nor symbolically.⁴¹ So tells the Bible: "And Onan knew that the seed should not be his."⁴² The children who may be born from this new alliance would indeed still be legally regarded as those of the dead husband—the eldest son would inherit the goods and the name of the dead. The *levir*, the in-law, therefore, operates as a placeholder; the authoritarian *lieu* of the patriarch left fundamentally empty, the *levir* comes to occupy it without owning it in any manner, that is, outside of any property title or foundations.⁴³ According to the Bible,⁴⁴ the fact that the firstborn conserves the

40 In its weak form, the Levirate has been considered as a concern for the woman's rights—the widow being taken care of by her husband's family.

41 Only at the price of such substitution could the Levirate be considered an exception to the laws of incest (as stated in *Leviticus* 18:16): "You shall not uncover the nakedness of your brother's wife; it is your brother's nakedness." (Carroll and Prickett, *The Bible*). The widow's nudity is neither discovered nor consumed by the *levir* in person, but only transitively so.

42 Carroll and Prickett, *The Bible*, Genesis 38:9.

43 The Halitzah, the Jewish ritual whereby the Levirate is broken, had to be performed in a codified manner, which included, amongst other actions, the removal of the sandal from the *levir's* foot by the widow. This removal amounted to the refusal, on the part of the *levir*, to take possession of his property—as real property (immovable) was claimed by walking on it.

44 Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

name of the defunct patriarch ensures that such a name will not be erased from Israël. By breaking this pact, Onan simultaneously offends his God, his family, and, more largely, his people. Knowing *the seed should not be his*—in other words, refusing to renounce his individual posterity—Onan spills it on the ground, thus breaking the principle of conservation that is indispensable to the reproductive process and to inheritance, in a gesture analog of Duchamp's Bachelors' refusal of procreation.⁴⁵

The biblical episode would come to constitute the pedestal for the naturalistic, moral condemnation of masturbation. The best developed of these condemnations is found in Samuel Auguste Tissot's epistemology, specifically in his physical dissertation⁴⁶ on the many sicknesses produced by masturbation. The naturalistic approach of the famous Enlightenment physician indexed sexual activity to a form of biological necessity that, as the satisfaction of other physical needs, he considered to be the purest form of preservatives of health. He indeed regarded a healthy life as having to be ruled by need and occupation—that breed “natural pleasures” and “natural usages”—rather than by imagination.⁴⁷ In his view, healthy sexual activity, as observed

45 Following Jacques Monod's concept of reproduction, Onan can be said to interrupt the transmission of the content of invariance that is equal to a quantity of information passed on from a generation to the next—a quantity that ensures the conservation of a specific structural norm and the degree of order that characterizes the familial structure.

46 Samuel Auguste Tissot, *L'onanisme ou Dissertation physique sur les maladies produites par la masturbation* (Lausanne: Imprimerie d'Antoine Chappuis, 1760). See the article by Fernando Vidal, “Onanism, Enlightenment Medicine, and the Immanent Justice of Nature” in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, eds. L. Daston, F. Vidal, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

47 Citing Sanctorius, Tissot remarks that: “coition, in a moderate degree is useful, when it is solicited by nature, but when it is excit-

in peasants—the epitome of natural men—rather than in urban dwellers,⁴⁸ only flew from necessity and re-productive urge, depending on mechanical and quantitative factors,⁴⁹ rather than debauched and luxurious inventions, that is, on workings of the mind. Physical, as much as moral, degeneration was, for Tissot, largely engendered by sexuality: Onanism, more than any other type of sexuality, as the subversive fruit of fantasy, threatened not only physical health but also the moral normativity with which Nature was endowed by Tissot. Human physical nature was understood by him as having to be in a state of equilibrium, or moderation, in obedience to Nature. Such a state was to be ensured by the constant, mild production and circulation of fluids through the nervous irrigation of the body; excess, minima, and maxima, intensity, or scarcity were to be avoided

ed by the imagination it enfeebles all the faculties of the mind, and particularly the memory.” Samuel Auguste Tissot, *Treatise on the Diseases produced by Onanism* (New York: Collins & Hannay, 1832), 46. The English translation retains the French term imagination; however, we would like to propose that in Tissot, the term “imagination” does not solely refer to the capacity to represent or form images but more largely to “fantasy,” as a capacity to *make appear*.

48 Tissot develops a critique of intellectual work as responsible for the weakening of the body and, by means of a circular response, of the spirit itself. His “literary man” is not different from the onanist: “Nothing weakens so much as this continual excitement of a mind always intent on the same thing. A person addicted to this habit, experiences the same ill effects as does the literary man who fixes his attention wholly on one subject.” Tissot, *Treatise on the Diseases produced by Onanism*, 47.

49 In particular, the evacuation of bodily fluids depends, for Tissot, on the quantitative workings of the body; desire is excited by Nature only in order to balance the organism and works as an instigator of the discharging of said fluids. Imagination vexes these mechanisms; it debilitates the body by kindling desire regardless of any biological necessity and can introduce unhealthy habits that substitute to the natural workings.

at all costs. “Our bodies are constantly wasting,” Tissot writes, “and if this waste were not repaired we should soon become extremely weak.”⁵⁰ Of all possible losses, that of semen was regarded as the worst: for it implied a radical quantitative misbalance of the bodily fluids, an excessive squandering of valuable substances (that is, beyond necessity), fired by fantasy. Far from Burrough’s vitalist celebration of chemical upheavals of homeostasis as initiators of new sensoriums and life forms, Tissot thus regarded onanism as amounting to self-destruction by means of subjection to imaginary needs, a suicide not different from a self-inflicted gunshot or a voluntary drowning.⁵¹ Such equilibrium could, however, be restored, individually—through the coming into reason by means of recognition of one’s crimes, and collectively so if man, and in particular the *gens de lettres*, the literate, would “forget the existence of the sciences and books... and become what Nature made men, a peasant and a gardener,”⁵² that is, return to nature not in its wild spontaneity, but in its perfected state. Nature, in Tissot’s thought, derived its normative and legislative moral legitimacy—the sole source of human moral—from necessity; onanism’s unnecessary character explained its dangerousness and justified its condemnation. Distanced from the biblical disapproval, the moral connotation of Tissot’s “physiological” condemnation lies in the argument that masturbation abstracts from the physical necessity that rules over the moral normativity of nature

50 Tissot, *Treatise on the Diseases produced by Onanism*, VI.

51 Tissot, *L'onanisme ou Dissertation physique sur les maladies produites par la masturbation*, 21.

52 Tissot, *De la santé des gens de lettres*, (Lausanne: François Grasset, 1768), 221. Cited by Fernando Vidal, “Onanism, Enlightenment Medicine,” 260.

and—like excesses in literacy—refuses to comply with its injunctions.⁵³

The Quasi-bodies of Data

Conversely, an anti-naturalist perspective on onanism that reclaims simultaneously the religious idea of pollution, the moralist condemnation of imagination (*as fantasy*), invites us to consider AI and technological engendering under the light of a different rationalism, one that, in Xenofeminist words, is to be considered a feminism. We would like to propose the myth of *Eurōpē* as a last lever for thinking about this through the prism of a doubling of origin that the myth explores.

Greek mythology famously tells the story of the Phoenician princess who was abducted and raped by Zeus, having taken on the features of a bull. Following the forced mating with the master of the Olympus, *Eurōpē* gives birth to a lineage of princes and her name to a continent. It is in the specific version given by the poet Moschos that the myth is linked for the first time with the name of the continent, in a gesture that would be followed by Horace and Ovid. Yet Moschos's poem differs from the successive versions in that it describes the premonitory dream that *Eurōpē* has the night before her rapt, a dream that carries the justification of the geographical value of the name *Europe*. Prior to engendering her own biological lineage, the Phoenician princess dreams of another fantastic one, according to which she is no longer the daughter of a king but of two mothers, two lands, and two continents. To the East stands Asia,

53 Tissot believed in an essential link between God's will and natural laws: "As subjects of God's law, we must study in His works the principles of our conduct."

Asida, her biological mother, who is assimilated to her native land; to the West rises another woman, the *anti-peren* (the opposite), a land with no name. The princess makes an oneiric choice: she breaks with her original Phoenician descent and decides, *ouk aekousan*, *without resistance*, to follow the other woman. By choosing the unnamed continent, Eurōpē gives her name to it: The abducted princess names one of her own mothers as she is named herself, becoming twice a daughter as well as twice a mother as she crosses the Aegean Sea. This non-natural process is doubled by the biological engendering of the new lineage of princes, which also implies a non-naturality: At its heart lies the fundamental qualitative transformation of a godly power — Zeus's — into human form — the human descendance — that is, a non-identical process of reproduction through mutation. In Moschos's tale, however, this first *trans-material* engendering is hinged on the symbolic transmission of Eurōpē's name to her unnamed mother, through which the princess engenders herself and her land. Eurōpē's myth herein affirms a double gesture of displacement and translation, diffracting the very notions of origin and identity across different dimensions.⁵⁴

54 There is another aspect of the miniature epic that is Moschos's Eurōpē that points towards this possibility of a feminine lineage, as Françoise Létoublon points out. In his text, Moschos tells of Europa's golden basket: This basket not only has a premonitory dimension, as it is decorated with the scene of Io navigating the sea, transformed into a cow by Zeus to allow her to mate with him while escaping Hera's jealousy. Moschos draws inspiration from the description of Helen's basket in the *Odyssey*, literally inscribing Eurōpē in a fictitious lineage, but the author also tells of the transmission of this object and gives the list of the women who have possessed the basket before Eurōpē, starting from Telephassa. As indicated by Létoublon, Moschos's description breaks with the tradition of the genealogical exposes and catalogs of objects' possessors, which until then had been solely masculine. In

Through such reading, Eurôpē's myth offers an alternative to a comprehension of (godly/human) engendering as being merely a manifestation of power by means of a (human/feminine) material mediation. It can shed light on the contemporary narrative, which crystallizes in the critiques of the black box problem⁵⁵ and in the talks about machine intelligence; such narrative enforces a univocal understanding of AI as being subsumed to anthropocentric efficient and final causes, which leaves, circling back to Duchamp, the *Bride* simultaneously stripped bare and fully (specularly) covered up. But most importantly, beyond discourses, what an onanist key can offer if appraised in terms of intellectuality in a manner as to "interlace our daily lives with abstraction,"⁵⁶ is an original understanding of the process of engendering, whereby said process is diffracted, so to say, and opened to more than to the sole biological necessity of mating. A feminist take on synthetic and artificial generation conjugates intellectual existence with non-appropriative principles of conservation and transmission, making the

Eurôpē's case, the basket draws a purely feminine lineage, of which it is the genealogical exposes. Moschos, according to Létoublon, puts the epic tradition in a feminine key.

55 The concerns voiced by many scholars and activists against the inaccessibility of digital matrixes and the attempts to dissolve the opaqueness of machine intelligence have given rise to XAI, or *explainable artificial intelligence*. We do not mean here to negate the discrimination and liability issues that accompany such opacity. The conditions in which our (barely commensurable) stocks of data are treated (organized and classified) have to be scrutinized and democratically discussed. Yet, in the effort to devise methodologies to formalize models and manners to diversify and structure data, it would be salutary to widen the spectrum through which AI is considered in order for other possible worlds and effects to emerge.

56 Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism*, "Zero," 0x00.

“nameless potency”⁵⁷ of (material and informational) fertility appear.

This requires adjoining intelligence with fantasy in a manner that considers the latter as an artificial faculty, productive rather than reproductive, whose mimetic relation to its human counterpart should be complexified in favor of the recognition of mutual retroactions. The acknowledgment of a difference, currently covered by the specter of a resemblance,⁵⁸ would make usefulness rejoin uselessness, as invariance would variation, copulation disconnection, and looping projection. Alchemic engenderings such as that of Burroughs and Gozlan can provide materialist counterparts to the technical algebraic ones, which come in the guise of computational recursivity, with their capacity for continuous and contingent variability and transformations. By breaking with the “metric geometric”⁵⁹ dimension of the specular, a feminist perspective on digital fertility, or hyperproduction, requires considering how the “anonymous” nature of artificial fantasy—the fact that it stems from recursive processes of infinite translation and transcription of anonymous data into multiple synthetic *others*—introduces a profound shift in the manner in which the notion of *autoritas* has been conflated with that of authorship as the expression of individual expression and,

57 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 163.

58 On the incommensurability between human and artificial intelligence and on the exploitation of their apparent similarity (masking a dissimilarity) by strategies of conquest and domination, see Malabou’s preface to the 2021 edition of *Métamorphoses de l’intelligence*, 1–XV.

59 The term is derived from Henri Poincaré’s notion of “metric geometry,” complementary to “projective geometry” and “Analysis Situs” (topology), as exposed in H. Poincaré, “Why Space Has Three Dimensions,” in *Mathematics and Science, Last Essays*, trans. John W. Bolduc, (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1963 [1913]), 34.

in Irigaray's view, as the masculine determination for oneself of "what is constituted by "origin.""⁶⁰

More fundamentally, for the generative potentiality of digital transcription to be embraced *per se* requires a reevaluation of the criteria of conformity through which existence is approached. Such an understanding demands that the monopoly of the scholastic tradition of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei* be abandoned—that is, truth as conformity, or fidelity, between the (sensible) thing and what the intellect can express of it—in favor of the recognition and nurturing of other forms of knowledge. Today, we can still identify a logic of identity at play in the affirmation of two prominent positions, which, although opposite, paradoxically produce similar effects: the celebration of the (illusionary) transparency of AI, which would supposedly stem from the possibility of absolute automation of human knowledge as *truth*, on the one hand, and, on the other, its fierce critique as a source of delusion and subjection (due to subjective biases). The latter appears to prolong the situationist critique—according to which the *spectacle* was to be regarded as nothing more than the realm of *the false* and of the relative *turning upside down* of our existence—by other means; it revives the metaphysical trial of technically produced realms in the wider context of a "post-truth era," while ignoring Lyotard's lesson on the postmodern combined logic of legitimation and performance.⁶¹ Each in their own way, these positions lead to the undermin-

60 Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, 23.

61 Lyotard highlighted how, in the wake of the crisis of *legitimation* of knowledge in postmodern societies, power relies on operativity and performance of technological systems, two criteria that have "no relevance for judging what is true or just." Jean-François Lyotard, *The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

ing of (all or part of) what is considered as an *alternative reality*; they nurture a form of reduction, neglect, denigration, or complete rejection of the workings of AI and of *all* that such workings can produce, foreclosing the aesthetic, sensible and political forms of subjectivation that an artificial fantasy and technologically induced alienation could bring.

Here, we would like to borrow Jacques Rancière's articulation of the "suspensive existence" of literature and literary beings⁶² to extend it to our tentative articulation of the generative domain constituted by artificial intelligence and fantasy. Big data and machine learning today indeed evade classical, analytical setups in favor of purely probabilistic workings: all possible patterns can be identified and proposed, regardless of whether they produce "meaning" in human terms. We would like to suggest that the denigratory position that treats artificial

62 We expand on Rancière's reflection on the continuous circulation of literature and books and on the disorder it creates in the understanding of the social as being predicated on unity, as exposed in his text "La chair des mots," in *Poésie* 77, (1996): 80–92. Rancière rejects "a certain philosophical wisdom with regard to literature: the Searlian wisdom of the convention of suspension of conventions that finds the sharing of fiction as the emission and reception of 'non-serious' statements," proposing rather that "the world is not only made up of experienced sensible qualities, it is also made up of books, not of conventionally shared 'imaginary,' but of a continuum of books and attestations of the existence of what they speak of." The notion of *lie* or falsity is rejected as is rejected its intellectual (Platonic) counterpart: The theological idea that the word should be incarnated, should acquire a body, and unite in truth—the primary unity of a body and of senses. Instead, the continuous circulation undoes the neat and legitimate social divisions that rest on the unity of a name, a body and a time, or, as we understand it, on a logic of identity. Rather, it evades the possibility of incarnation in favor of a form of diffraction: The disordered materialization of quasi-bodies, that is, of *any-body's* capacity to "seize any written word to replay it." Rancière, "La chair des mots," 87–89.

fantasy in terms of “non seriousness,” or of mendaciousness, is postulated on the belief that what such fantasy lacks is a capacity to be unitarily incarnated. The refusal to regard artificial modes of existence for what they are, that is, fundamentally probabilistic, hence deprived of meaning *per se*, leads to regarding the domain as being afflicted by incapacity and, consequently, disregarding the riches that it may bear. This, we would like to propose, can be countered by the granting of a quasi-corporeality to artificial beings, corporeality that gets transformed throughout the continuous circulations that constitute it. In Rancière’s terms, the quasi-bodies measure the distance, the interval that separates the contingent, material manifestation of books (a plurality of copies) from that of the Verb (a unique origin). Far from celebrating a self-referential, autonomous “almighty fantasy,”⁶³ the conceptualization of a continuous crossing from inside to outside of both realms, that is, of a circulation of positions, inducing reciprocal influences amongst the parts involved, diffracts current epistemic approaches to AI to multiply the manners in which to communicate and coexist with it. Recognizing its fundamental variability invites us to engage in the multiple worlds populated by potentially infinite numbers of onanistically engendered quasi-bodies, as well as to affirm the coinciding artificiality of the articulative position (enunciation).

Through the evocation of Eurōpē’s myth, the appraisal of artificial fantasy as being hinged to, yet not predicated upon or valued according to, an external

63 Rancière rejects what he characterizes as the “theology of the literary divinity” that works through the romantic concept of “almighty (literary) fantasy” as the fruit of the *autoritas* of the writer. The quasi-corporeality of literature relies, henceforth, on the inversion of positions that allow a specific access to such fantasy by the random reader. Rancière, “La chair des mots,” 91.

reference not only allows to reclaim an expanded notion of knowledge (*savoir*), including all that produces *semantikos* rather than circumscribing it to a notion of truth;⁶⁴ it also opens to another play of emancipation, that avoids mirroring the paternalistic asymmetric distribution of capacities, in favor of the recognition of an equivalence in the capacities to embrace the mutual incommensurability of different forms of knowledge and *sensoriums*. In such a perspective, the rationality that characterizes forms of narrative knowledge, specifically (occidental forms of) myth, can shed light on how we could allow the recursive nature of artificial fantasy to affect us in order to establish forms of more-than-human collective action. Myth intermingles dimensions of multiplicity, ambiguity, and polarity, diverging from a logic of identity in favor of mechanisms of metamorphosis and substitution to engender hybrid characters, as are the probabilistic quasi-bodies of data. Manifesting in its themes as in its linguistic variety and enunciator positions,⁶⁵ the fundamental uncertainty of the mythological narration sustains an equally fundamentally uncertain type of knowledge that evades any totalizing or limiting view.⁶⁶ In such an economy of continuous translation lies

64 As Lyotard points out, Aristotle, in the *Organon*, considers knowledge to reside in, and be expressed only by, the *apophantikos*, or *propositions*, the only sentences that have “truth or falsity in them.” See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 91.

65 Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 21.

66 In his oeuvre, Jean-Pierre Vernant has captured the correlation that exists between the polysemic dimension of the symbol and the fundamental uncertainty that resides at the heart of the story carried by myth in relation to its transformative capacity to operate across different levels of the “real,” producing non-exclusive versions that escape any totalizing or limiting view. “A true symbol is worth by itself, by its internal dynamics, its power of indefinite development, its capacity to put an aspect of human experience in resonance with

a profound counter model to the paternalism with which the discourse of emancipation that is underpinned by the reversed logic of the spectacle (as liberation from a fallacious reality) is embedded.⁶⁷ For Rancière, “an emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators,”⁶⁸ a community of “lonely people,” those who “only form a community through the circulation of these quasi-bodies, through the play of these experimental devices that are called literature and democracy.”⁶⁹ The apparent dismissal of words *as only words* to which such a claim is articulated is to be confronted with the theological-social fantasies of the word made flesh, fully incarnated and revealed (by a patriarchal figure). Instead, it is a double process of poetic translation and singular counting⁷⁰ that sustains the possibility of a political existence *at the risk of disorder*. Rancière proposes

the whole of the universe. It is this power of expansion of the symbol that gives it a vocation to translate, in a form that is always necessarily limited, that which escapes limitation, the totality and the infinite,” author’s translation of Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Œuvres. Religions, rationalités, politique* (Paris: Seuil, 2007), 792–793.

67 In his discussion on the asymmetry of theatre and of the relative position of the audience, in *The Emancipated Spectator*, Rancière proposes that the framing of emancipation *as* revelation and reversal of the separation of reality induced by the spectacle and of the subsequent recovery of a relation to the self that would have been lost or obscured by said separation implies an external—paternalistic—position: that of the director, capable of revealing the separation to the audience. Such a point can be expanded to the wider discussion on the constitution of a political community.

68 Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009 [2008]), 48.

69 Rancière, “La chair des mots,” 92.

70 For Rancière, this singular accounting differs from, and superimposes itself to, the “count of social bodies and social functions” that substantially establishes an order of bodies *in their place*. If this *one-more (un-en-plus)* institutes a community, it is suspensively so

that such existence is established as a “mode of subjectivation” that works through *any-body’s* capacity to seize the circulating words (or aggregations of data) in order to gift them with quasi-bodies—bodies that require to acknowledge more than the competence of the sole emitter, that is, that of the interpreter, too.⁷¹ Circling back to our feminist take on artificial intelligence and fantasy, we would like to propose that a feminist form of emancipation requires the development of a rationalism that makes room for (an other-than-human) fantasy and establishes an egalitarian distribution of the capacity to *engender*, onanistically so, virally so, symbolically and materially so, through a universal right to exchange positions and so to “speak as no one in particular.”⁷²

only through the circulation of the quasi-bodies (of literature and, we would add, of data).

71 Such a view rejoins Lyotard’s account of scientific knowledge as requiring the sole competence of the enunciator; scientific knowledge is, as such, founded solely on the denotative dimension of knowledge as truth, differently from narrative knowledge that supposes the vicariousness of positions.

72 Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism*, “Zero,” 0x04.

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is not known, nothing is known, he understands nothing it says, just a little, almost nothing, it's inexplicable, but it's necessary, it's preferable, that he should understand just a little, almost nothing, like a dog that always gets the same filth flung to it, the same orders, the same threats, the same cajoleries.

— Samuel Beckett, *The Unnameable* (1953)

In the 1720s, one of the things that most scandalized the British public when conditions at debtors' prisons were exposed in the popular press was the fact that these prisons were regularly divided into two sections. Aristocratic inmates, who often thought of a brief stay in Fleet or Marshalsea as something of a fashion statement, were wined and dined by liveried servants and allowed to receive regular visits from prostitutes. On the 'common side' impoverished debtors were shackled together in tiny

cells, 'covered with filth and vermin,' as one report put it, 'and suffered to die, without pity, of hunger and jail fever'.
— David Graeber, *Debt* (2011)

The mundus: a sacred or accursed place in the middle of the Italiot township. A pit, originally — a dust hole, a public rubbish dump. Into it were cast trash and filth of every kind, along with those condemned to death, and any newborn baby whose father declined to 'raise' it (that is, an infant which he did not lift from the ground and hold up above his head so that it might be born a second time, born in a social as well as a biological sense).
— Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (1974)

A living species, ours, is succeeding in excluding all the others from its niche, which is now global: how could other species eat or live in that which we cover with filth? If the soiled world is in danger, it's the result of our exclusive appropri