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BIOART SOCIETY

m/other becomings exhibition

Exhibition bibliography

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Collective annotated bibliography for m/other becomings.

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Ávila , Benjamín, director. "Infancia Clandestina" [Clandestine Childhood] (2011). Argentina: Historias Cinematograficas Cinemania & Habitacion 1520 Producciones.

Juan is a school-age boy living in Argentina in the late 1970s. He was born in a family of activists in the Montoneros movement: left-winged followers of Juan Perón. When Perón was exiled in 1955, many of his followers, including Juan's family, fled to Cuba. In 1973 Perón returned to Argentina and on June 20th, during the manifestation of his new presidency, right-winged Peronists opened fire on the mass targeting left-winged groups. Between 1976 to 1983, Argentina was governed by military power, and political opponents were persecuted. In 1979, Juan's parents return to Argentina to organise the Controffensiva. The film begins with Juan and his newborn sister Vicky illegally crossing the border with Brazil under a fake identity and with fake parents. Once reunited with his family, Juan has to start a new life under the name of Ernesto Estrada.

The kid begins to develop two identities. His birth name is a tribute to Juan Perón himself. His domestic life is ruled by his parent's activism: he lives on the guard and incognito, caring for himself and his sister, and developing an identification with his father – whose possible death grows incumbent minute after minute. As Ernesto, the kid goes to school and needs to comply with the military nationalist culture that his parents oppose. He learns to socialise with his peers and falls in love with Maria.

Despite being trusted to partake in the family's politics, Juan's parents often underestimate his needs. So the kid is also parented by uncle Beto. Beto is a dreamer and an entertainer – qualities that create friction with Juan's parents, but allow Beto to bridge the kid's double life. However, he imparts a heteronormative vision of love, which Juan will eventually discard, capable of listening to Maria and being self-critical. The film portrays relationships that tend to break the power dynamics of patriarchy: especially, Juan's mother, father, uncle and grandmother create equal communication through listening and self-expression.

Through the eyes and sensibility of Juan/Ernesto, we assist to militant action, family dynamics and socialization. When the scene grows too violent, the film turns into animation to express Juan's coping mechanism with danger and fear. The camera equally lingers on the adults as on Juan, often in extreme close-up. Vivid greens and reds tinge the whole film, reminding that the emotions we experience are those of a kid. The film succeeds in a reflection on childhood safety. It shows Juan as a whole-rounded person: his sexual drive is never censored but narrated with a delicate and personalised language; his emotions are intense and never whimsical; his actions purposeful. Being Ernesto becomes for Juan an opportunity of emancipation from the cumbersome and dangerous identity assigned by his family. Through this process, after the death of his father and uncle and the incarceration of his mother, Juan will be able to reconcile the two identities and reclaim his own.

Braidotti, Rosi (2011). "Becoming-Machines" in: Nomadic Theory: the portable Rosi Braidotti. New York: Columbia University Press. p. 55-58.

Written by the contemporary philosopher and feminist theoretician, Rosi Braidotti, the excerpt „Becoming-Machines" from the second Chapter of „META(L)MORPHOSES - Women, Aliens and Machines" points out „THE" philosophical problem (ref. p.58) of today within the figuration of Dolly, the sheep (she/it).

Braidottis research and discourse in Nomadic Theory connects her interest in Gender and Culture with different philosophical thinkers, like Deleuze or Foucault. A key moment in her argumentation of the hybrid transformation of machines and monsters is that:

„Technology is at the heart of the process that recombines all these categories into a powerfully posthuman mix transforming what we used to call "the living being"." (p.56)

In a way, she sees a different or structural „otherness" (ref. p. 55) which is always connected to political and social conservatism, nostalgia, and a social climate of anxiety and fear, what she calls an Excitement of changes is embodied in Dolly. The complexity of categories nowadays.

A very interesting point she brings up is that the metamorphic function of machines that simulate the human also extends to sexual organs and erotic energies. Therefore, she compares also the steam engine with the Libido, taking both as a metaphorical connection for the imagery of energy and source of motion. I guess this points to a rough connection to the theme of „mother/becoming" in a way we see the transformation of the female body and all the bodies which are underrated through categories and differentiated through their function.

Overall, the Libido as a figuration as well as Dolly as the sex shows clearly the connection to the thirst to the machine, or technology, in an internal as well as an external way (ref. 56). So, connecting this psychoanalytic discourse with the theme of mother/becoming, the question about „otherness" shows a great point to the embodiment of displaced boundaries and its effect on the so-called „living being".

Braidotti, Rosi (2013). "Post-Humanism: Life Beyond Self" in: The Posthuman. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 13-54

Rosi Braidotti is an acclaimed writer within the field of transhumanistic theoretical approaches to various topics. Her book 'The Posthuman' continues her practice of writing on a theory of becoming: In the first chapter, 'Post-Humanism: Life Beyond Self', she builds the groundwork for a theoretical praxis for handling matters in cross-species interaction, which is later elaborated in the different crossroads of human and nonhuman interactions. Much in the vein of writers such as Donna Haraway, Braidotti's theory shares notions and ideas of subverting the presumptions of human - nonhuman -interactions and builds new categorisations for said interactions.

What's noteworthy and exemplary here is the elaboration of established categories of "life". By assuming that humans and nonhumans are distinct and mutually exclusive fields of life, Braidotti takes a position where she's observing interactions from the presumption that human subjects have power positions where they can influence and change the existence of certain lifeforms and beings. On a surface level, this does make sense as humankind and different biospheres are in a co-dependent relationship. However, this kind of dialectical model places heavy emphasis on the conceptualisation of "action". The posthuman challenge lies in the reactive nature of different embodiments and becomings, and the ways we choose to view nature as "other".

Chollet, Mona (2018). "The desire of sterility" in "Witches, the undefeated power of women." France: Edition Zones.

Mona Chollet is a French author, journalist and essayist in Le monde diplomatique. She wrote the book "Witches, the undefeated power of women" which gather a large panel of the main author´s focus which are feminism, women´s conditions and media treatment. "No need to join W.I.T.C.H. If you are a female and you dare to embrace yourself, then you are already a witch." (W.I.T.C.H manifesto. USA 1968)

Mona Chollet uses the figure of the witch as an example statement to describe and depict women's condition. The myth of the witch has been shaping our societies from pop culture to the religious and sociological aspects. A condition is always seen as a dominant vs dominated matter or a way to shut women´s voices. In her chapter "the desire of sterility" Mona Chollet debunks the normative aspects of the patriarchal society and its imposition on feminine identity. From the shame of not being a mother to the shame of regretting motherhood. From the abortion right and the conceptual approach of contraception. This chapter refers to a lot of problematics that burden feminine conditions and emphasize the male gaze towards the mothering process. How (mostly) western societies have been shaping the mothering process from a masculine point of view. It establishes different examples of women that pledge freedom of choice mentioning the so-called biological clock and the anxiety that it creates and emphasizes the (illegitimate and unfair) implicit shame and the mental overload of not having kids' powers in our western societies.

Although the book is well furnished in references, sociological and philosophical aspects, the concept of motherhood is staying on the surface in terms of content in this chapter but provides you with good insight and allows you to dig more on your own with all the hints and notes that the author is giving us all along in the book.

Fitzgerald-Allsopp, Florence (2019). "Becoming-with-Animal: Cultivating a Feminist Understanding of HumanAnimal Transformation in Contemporary Performance Art". Utrecht: Utrecht University

Florence Fitzgerald-Allsopp is a master's student at Utrecht University. Her major is theatre dance and dramaturgy. This article is about cultivating a feminist understanding of the phenomenon of human-animal transformation in contemporary performance art.

At first, Allsopp quoted the notion of "becoming" by Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, to consider the relationship between humans and animals. Second, Allsopp introduced the relationship between animal studies and performance theory. Third, she is considering case studies of Ana Mendieta and Maja Smrekar. Finally, she quoted "becoming-with", to propose a hybrid concept which she calls becoming-with-animal.

This source's weakness is that she doesn't talk about ethnicity and race. (She pointed out herself in this article). Strength is that she tries to make a new relationship between women and animals in a situation where women and animals have been tied together and placed in a subordinate positions. The common thread with m/other becomings and this article is that it attempts to reconstruct the norms and language created by a Western-centric and male-centric society. Just as m/other becomings do not take motherhood to be the essence, she also pointed out that the relationship between women and animals was merely constructed through discourse. In my opinion, the important point of this article is to make a new bond between women and animals. In feminist theory, the connection between animals and women has long been avoided.

This is because it could be recovered in the theory of associating women with nature and placing them in a subordinate position. However, she reversed that by using "intersectional ecofeminism", which is to support an understanding of feminism that extends to all minorities who suffer oppression under Western patriarchal systems, including animals and the environment. This source is very helpful to consider how the discourses were made by history, and how to deconstruct and make new possibilities.

Haraway, Donna J. (2016). "Awash in Urine – DES, and Premarin in Multispecies Response-Ability Awash in Urine" in Staying with the trouble.North Carolina: Duke Universit. p. 301-316.

Press is an article by Donna Haraway, a prominent contemporary scholar operating broadly in the fields of science and technology studies as they intersect with ecofeminist, posthumanist, and new materialist movements. The article explores trans-species entanglements and exercises of power through an example of the production and consumption of DES (Diethylstilbestrol), a synthetic form of estrogen hormone. As Haraway herself puts it: "Made up of an ageing California dog, pregnant mares on the western Canadian prairies, human women who came to be known as DES daughters, lots of menopausal U.S. women, and assorted other players in the story of "synthetic" and "natural" estrogens, the litter for this chapter is decanted from bodies awash in a particular pungent fluid-urine" (p.105). Between 1940 and 1971 DES was prescribed to pregnant women to prevent miscarriage, premature labour, and related complications of pregnancy. Approximately 2 million people in the US alone took DES during pregnancy. Since a report in the New England Journal of Medicine tied Diethylstilbestrol to a rising risk of cancer, it has not been prescribed to humans. Nonetheless, DES is continued to treat nonhuman animals. The article begins with a story of how Haraway's elder dog, Cayenne, was prescribed DES to deal with a condition

causing urinary leakage. I think that the essay is very relevant for the M/otherly Becomings' topics. Via a concrete example of one hormonal drug, the article exposes the complex web of "humanimal" relationships that are entwined in every simple case. That is, starting from and ending with one single pill, we are already entangled with matters as broad as mothering, (gendered) biopolitics, agriculture, bioethics, industrial animal production and Big Pharma. Like other kindred readings, the article aims to make change through increasing understanding and "respons-ability". While the text sheds light on these complex matters, it is relevant to ask whether empathy and knowledge in themselves are sufficient enough to be understood as a form of responsibility. The saying "ignorance is bliss" translates to Finnish as "tieto lisää tuskaa", meaning "knowledge increases suffering". I think that there is a truth in that. Without further action, to be merely aware of one's privileges/ role in an oppressive structure does nothing to dismantle those privileges or roles. I wonder if Donna is still giving DES to her dog. This is a complicated question for sure, thus the health of a close individual, or oneself, is put against a system of abstracted yet structural and manufactured oppression. Would you stop taking your medication after hearing that it is produced from or tested with animals? After hearing that it is contaminating the natural environment and causing mutations in the wild animals? Probably, you would not. On the other hand, the saying "knowledge is power" is likewise true. To know creates the premises for ability in 'respons-ability': to know makes it possible to take the first step forward, at least in theory. Haraway, D. (2016). Awash in Urine – DES, and Premarin in Multispecies Response-Ability, p.104-116. In Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the chthulucene. Duke University Press.

Haraway, Donna J. (2016). " The Camille Stories: Children of Compost" in Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene, North Carolina: Duke University Press. p.134-168.

Camille is a fictional character. They were created in 2013 by posthumanist scholar Donna Haraway, filmmaker Fabrizio Terranova and philosopher Vinciane Despret; who were asked to formulate the story of a baby and their following five generations, as part of Isabelle Stengers's colloquium on speculative gestures.

The years 2000-2050 were times of profound environmental anxiety. People decide to quit unsustainable lifestyles and gather in small communities of mixed class, race, religion and heritage. The Community of Compost settles in West Virginia at the intersection of the New River and the Gauley River. Their mission is to formulate and enact ways of living that actively support the existence of the whole ecosystem – which they perceive as a layered body of multi-species life, cultures and ruins. The Earth is overpopulated. A communal decision is made that the human population should decrease. Until 2025 life centres around kin-making and friendship; in 2025, the community agrees upon birthing the first infant, Camille 1. Each newborn has three parents of no specific gender and is raised among their younger and older generations. They will be able to decide on their gender and will be biologically hybridised with the genes of an endangered animal species.

Camille 1 is brought to this world to ensure the survival of their animal symbiont: the Monarch Butterfly, a state insect of West Virginia. Camille 1 and their descendants will spend their lives learning and researching Monarch butterflies. Their body will metamorphize according to the insect's life cycle, changing colour, properties and form. Through the following generations, Camille 2, Camille 3 and Camille 4 will devote their lives to learning from indigenous culture and activism and will participate in sustainable cosmopolitics. Despite this global effort, 50% of species living in 2015 are extinct by 2425. Camille 4 and Camille 5 have to witness

the extinction of the Monarch Butterflies: with the help of indigenous communities, they will substitute colonialist notions of spirituality and religion, learning to collectively perceive and mourn the dead.

Haraway, Terranova and Despret used science-fiction as a speculative tool, combining storytelling and multidisciplinary knowledge to conceive the charming figure of Camille: a role model with whom to empathise, dream and learn. In Staying with the Trouble, Haraway urges us to imagine ways of being across species, standing creatively and faithfully by our troubled world. Camille's purposeful life educates us on current issues while sparking transformative speculation: Camille's own inspirations function for us as a bibliography of multicultural references, examples and suggestions for present actions. 'The Camille Stories' closes the book with a fable full of hope, set in the stark realism of today's environmental destruction, but imbued with magic utopia and grounded in community activism and indigenous culture.

Johanna Hedva (2020). "Sick Woman Theory', Documents of Contemporary Art: Health". London: Whitechapel Gallery

Johanna Hedva (born 1984) is a genderqueer Korean American contemporary artist, writer, and musician. Their essay "Sick Woman Theory," published in 2016 in Mask, has been translated into 10 languages, and their activism toward accessibility, as outlined in their Disability Access Rider, has been influential across a wide range of fields. Their next book, a novel called Your Love Is Not Good, will be published by And Other Stories Press in 2023. 'Sick Woman Theory' is about the activism of disabled people. For example, they quoted Hannah Arendt's definition of the political, how to join activism who can't attend public spaces. Arendt said, just get your body into the street, and bam: political. However, Hedva is against these thoughts. And they questioned how to join public democracy who has sick. Or who has the right to access public places. At end of this essay, they wrote innovative definitions of Sick Woman. The strength of this essay is that it describes the voices of people who have been deprived of a voice because they cannot go out in public. The weakness is that not many concrete methods of activism were presented. The relevance of m/other becomings is that they try to broaden the definition of what it means to be a Sick Woman. It is very important to try to expand the meaning of the prescribed words like mother and woman. And particularly, I think their attitude towards their illness is connected to Lindsay Walsh's work. It's an attitude of thinking about how we can coexist with our disease instead of trying to cure it. In my view, this essay is a very powerful critique of capitalist society. Through this essay, I can rethink defines of 'disability' and 'wellness' in this society. I can also reconsider again who has the right to go to a public place and raise objections.

Lalvani, P. (2011). "Constructing the (m)other Dominant and contested narratives on mothering a child with Down syndrome" in Narrative inquiry. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company. 21(2), 276–293.

Riya Lalvani is a Doctor of Philosophy and professor in the Department of Early Childhood, Elementary and Literacy Education of Montclair State University. In this article, the author analyses how mothers of children with Down syndrome understand their experiences of motherhood through a qualitative study based on the theoretical stance of narratives

as interactions (279). Lalvani conducted semi-structured interviews with 19 mothers of children with down syndrome: each interview lasting between two and four hours, and all recorded and transcribed. These interviews showed how the 19 mothers resisted otherness by reframing the meaning of disability and motherhood. The limitation of the source, as the author herself states, is that the group is relatively homogeneous.

Being a mother of a child with a disability is embedded in the dominant discourse of valued life. As the creators of imperfect children these mothers are either blamed for it or elevated to the role of "special mothers." In institutional and interpersonal discourses, both children and mothers are placed in separate categories of childhood and motherhood. Lalvani's work exposes how mothers' resistance broadens the dominant discourse and, at the same time, challenges the constructed categories of normative motherhood and valued children. Overall, there is a collective wish to reframe the negative assumptions about these families. For Lalvani, the experiences show that "fighting" for their children's rights (285) contribute to maintaining different and essential value for society: human genetical diversity.

The article also highlights how prenatal genetic technologies reinforce an understanding of disability as a negative socio-cultural phenomenon. These technologies are redefining the very meaning of life and consequently redefining motherhood as a practice that is surveilled and meant to create value.

Lalvani's work opens up the category of other in relation to m/other becomings as it defies the paradigm of perfection through personal narratives. These narratives are built upon social interactions that reframe the meaning of child to reinstate their children as children and themselves as mothers. The transformative potential of personal narratives is central to societal and collective change because psychological realities emerge through mutual participation in socio-cultural activities, challenging power structures and societal meaning-making.

Laine, Samuli (2021), "Nurture" [perfomance]. Helsinki: Baltic Circle 2021

Nurture is a one-on-one performance on "politics of care, gender and coexistence" by Samuli Laine. Nurture ends with a very intimate act of the performer breastfeeding the viewer/participant. Samuli Laine is a scenographer, performer and performance maker, as well as a member of the W A U H A U S collective and the Reality Research Center. The Nurture working group includes Laura Jantunen, Jussi Matikainen and mentoring from Jarkko Partanen. On the theatre festival, Baltic Circle's program page Nurture is described to make "space for tenderness and vulnerability" and to offer an intimate gesture of care that "nourishes and allows the participant to feel cared for and supported for a moment." On Laine's own website the work is framed to deconstruct the social and gender norms that are associated with breastfeeding and care. Moreover, Nurture is said to provoke us to examine our relations with life-sustaining human communities, as well as with other forms of life-enabling bodies and systems on the planet. In addition to Baltic Circle (Helsinki, 2021), Nurture has been on the Homo Novus festival (Riga, 2021) and Anti-Festival (Kuopio, 2020). Nurture is a take on many of the same topics that the m/other becomings project investigates. I went to see/experience the performance on the 22nd of November 2021 at the Baltic Circle festival. The act started with me and the performer facing each other, sitting on a rug. Samuli poured warm water into a bowl and started washing my right hand with soap, all of this very attentively. Their* gaze was very intense, so I closed my eyes.

While washing, they noted that water is a life-giving and border-crossing entity that flows from species to species and across ecologies. Then they continued with my left hand in silence. They paid special attention to my fingers and I felt that the situation had an ambiguously sensual vibe, which is interesting and complex in terms of care and mothering especially. I felt pretty nervous, awkward and slightly intimidated because the intimacy was so excessive. Moreover, only an hour before the performance I realised that it involves an actual act of breastfeeding - I had not read the description well. So I knew it was only going to get more intense. After drying my hands carefully, Samuli got up and walked behind me, and asked if they could lift me up. I agreed, eyes still closed, and they put me to lay down on the rug, my head on their lap. They had a small bottle of clear liquid, which they explained to be birch sap, collected in the early spring when it starts to rise from the roots. It is the elixir of the birch, like its blood, that also feeds its companion mycelium. Samuli took the bottle and placed it on my stomach, took my hands and then held it there with me for a while. Then they placed a plastic-made, second nipple on top of their own. This “nipple enhancement” had a long plastic tube attached to it, running to the birch sap bottle. Okayyy so here we go, I thought to myself, as they told me that I could just start suckling when I feel like it. So I did, but my feelings were somewhat dissonant and conflicted. In addition to the many complex feelings, Nurture left me with many questions. One of the key aspects of the piece was to take a stand on and queer the politics of nurturing as a gendered practice. Interestingly, the artist’s own gender, or the gender play they were implemented as a performer, remained unstated. I assume this was a fully intentional choice, a very interesting one because we are so conditioned to read people based on their assumed gender. How important is the topic of gender in this piece? And if so, how, and whose gender? How do the practices or gestures of care and nurture change when applied as themes, methods or performative acts in the context of art? In Nurture, the act of nursing is literally performative. Does performativity make the situation less “authentic”, and what does “authenticity” even mean? Care work is work and here the artist was literally doing their job, in exchange for the money that I paid for the ticket, the grant they got to do this project, and/or the fee they got from Baltic Circle. But what does it mean when the performer is in a role and executing a prescribed choreography/score that I, in turn, am just to follow? How much does the performative role shield the performer but leave the participant vulnerable? If I, as a participant, have bought a ticket for this performance, which is led solely by the performer in a predesigned manner, can I say no? Was coming there a ‘yes’ to everything that was to follow? Would saying ‘no’, or refusing to play along in the middle of the act mean ruining the performance, resisting its choreography? Although the artist did ask permission when they wanted to lift me and put me in another position, there were no tools offered for negotiation. What is at stake here are questions of consent and power dynamics in the acts of care. While sucking the nipple of the artist I was thinking to myself that it did not feel like they were merely offering and I was merely receiving. Me playing along meant I fulfilled a given role in their piece and made it work the way they had planned. Moreover, the act of suckling did not only provoke platonic, motherly or parenting connotations but it was also associated with sexual situations in my head. As an adult, I don’t suck people’s tits but only in erotic contexts. I don’t know any adults who drink breast milk (except from another species, which is another hot topic and very strange when you start to think of it), so the position I was put in felt both infantilizing, and submissive. The ambivalent, both sensual, sexual and nurturing vibe of the performance brings forth many potentially triggering questions that touch on taboos, roles and power dynamics, ethics, responsibility and authority in both private and industrial care practices. What if the intended care is harmful to the receiver? Despite the intention of a more-than-human perspective on nurture, I found that the wider thematics of

codependency and trans-species relationalities were left on a shallow level in the piece. All in all, Nurture brought up both vulnerability, curiosity and criticism in me. Even though the performance did evoke important questions, would not recommend it. The lack of active negotiation, on-time consent and deeper handling of the topics it aimed to explore made it too careless for a piece on these thematics. * I use the pronouns they/them for the artist because I could not find what pronoun they use. https://www.balticcircle.fi/programme/en-samuli-laine-nurture http://www.samulilaine.com/nurture.html

Lewis, Sophie (2020). "With-Women: Grieving in Capitalist Time". New York: e-flux. Issue 111, September 2020: https://www.e-flux.com/journal/111/343916/with-women-grieving-in-capitalist-time/

Sophie Lewis is a communist feminist scholar, researching reproductive labour and family politics. Her book Full Surrogacy Now (2019) advocates for the abolition of the nuclear family and proposes alternative forms of social configuration offered by surrogacy. In this article, published on e-flux in September 2020, starting from the recent death of her estranged biological mother, Lewis exposes how care and reproduction are professionalised and exacerbate loneliness. On the one hand, midwives, nurses and death doulas are categorised as professional niches. On the other hand, biological parents are assigned with the unsustainable lifelong duty to support their children, based on "natural" (i.e. biological) kinship. These narratives are used to maintain societal control and economical order. They reinforce individualism and the false belief that care is an isolated professionalised practice and that kinship is the natural result of biological reproduction. The truth is that biology does not make us similar, and parenting alone cannot provide for the lot of care we need to live, grow and die decently.

"Mother" as a verb describes the non-gendered act of being a "woman with", which is an act of companionship, mutual learning and friendship. Lewis proposes to extend mothering into an everyday practice performed between friends, biological and nonbiological next-of-kins. "Mothering the other" means to stand by our loved ones through the process of becoming themselves, in a relationship of mutual support. Narrating her mother's insufficiency, Lewis's uncompromised judgement often feels unnecessary and unjustified. She leaves us awkward and dismayed, yet she does not shy away from sharing a rejection that many of us intimately formulate towards our parental figures, but which is often censored by taboos and conventions. However, we must remember that care can only be performed on the foundations of respect, empathy, verbal/emotional/physical non-violence, and the allowance of difference. Lewis's societal mothering feels more relevant than ever because it creates a network of care and support around each one of us: an expanded chosen family. It is a new social structure: a fairer and sustainable one, in which we are cared for by many and – strengthened by their support – are capable of caring for them back.

Marshall, Lorna & Oida, Yoshi (2001)." The Body Speaks. Performance and expression". Great Britain: Methuen Publishing Limited.

The author Lorna Marshall is a professional teacher and an expert in bodily expression. She has worked in almost every area of physical art-making, and both western and eastern cultural traditions at world-renowned art institutions such as The Royal Shakespeare

Company and The Royal National Theatre.

In her work, Marshall normalizes the use of the body as a means of expression and underscores its naturalness as part of communication. The work deals with corporeality fundamentally, bringing it into an artistic context.

The work boldly delves into a powerful organ with taboos, sensitivities and controversy. The significance of the body is inevitable, but still its use, for example in art itself, still raises many questions. The body expresses the movements of our mind and is the one that produces all the messages from us to the outside world, both visual and sound. The work consists of two parts; theory and participatory contribution. A less essential part of the work of the exhibition is its pedagogical layer. Instead, I would have liked the work to have further emphasized a person's ownership of their own body, and thus also of its use. Physical expression in different art forms and also in everyday life consists of very similar starting points. From this perspective, it makes the work relevant to exploring it through acting, performance or the use of the body as material in a work of art.

The work brings out a very personal perspective, where the material of the work is the artist's own physical body. I see that m/other becomings will also include performance features, bringing so strongly to the artist's physical nature, as well as the arc of drama associated with it. The experiencer of a work of art cannot have closed expectations of the work when the progress of the project and the result itself are also unclear to the artist herself. I also see commonalities with the exhibition in terms of its disclosure and honesty.

Neimanis, Astrida (2007) "Becoming-grizzly: Bodily molecularity and the animal that becomes". Ontario: PhaenEx Jorunal. 2.2. 2007: pp 279-308.

"The becoming-animal of the human is real, even if the animal the human becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not." (Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus 238)

To begin with, this quote of both french critical theorists Deleuze and Guattari, taken out of their book „A Thousand Plateaus", the excerpt „What is Becoming-Animal?" by Neimanis, Astrida from her paper «Becoming-grizzly: Bodily molecularity and the animal that becomes» has a closer look to the meaning of Becoming.

Astrid Neimanis interweaves Werner Herzog's documentary film Grizzly Man with the above-mentioned definition of „Becoming-Animal" by both french theorists while analysing the question about how we might understand becoming-animal as a modality of our lived, embodied experience (ref p.279).

As Deleuze and Guattari define becoming as „unnatural participation", „mixing of molecules" and „multiplicity", Herzog goes with the argument of „Becoming-Animal happens to us." (p.279). Those two different ways of approaching this definition or understanding of becoming make it very interesting to have a look at mother/becoming. No matter if we take the Grizzly, the Sheep or a Goat as a figuration of Becoming-Animal, we do achieve a way of becoming and being by producing nothing but ourselves (ref p.281).

„Whatever the animal or human "becomes," this is not the accomplishment of the becoming as a final destination, but rather one of these doors or thresholds that can open to further

becoming." (p.282).

In addition, to those thoughts, the question which comes up is also about the „realness" or in other words the invisibility of this process of becoming or being. Regarding the exhibition and research about mother/becoming, I do question now the impact of this transformation when it says particularly in this paper, that it's nothing less than producing itself. Closing off, is it possible to show or make it experienced how we are becoming an „other" or „otherness"?

Sadedin, Suzanne (2014). "War in the Womb". Aeon. Available at: https://aeon. co/essays/why-pregnancy-is-a-biological-war-between-mother-and-baby. Accessed August 4th, 2014.

Sasha Isaac (2019), "Is artificial-womb technology a tool for women's liberation?". Aeon. Available at: https://aeon.co/ideas/is-artificial-womb-technology-a-tool-for-womens-liberation Accessed December 18th, 2019.

As these two articles talk about similar theme – the relationship between baby/foetus and mother, as well as the tension to maternity brought by Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), I'd like to combine them together here to give my personal review and reflection.

The two authors have a similar background – biology. Suzanne Sadedin is an evolutionary biologist who has worked at Monash University, University of Tennessee, Harvard University, and KU Leuven. The study in her article reveals a dangerous and imbalanced reality: while the foetus freely injects its products into the mother's blood, the mother is granted no such access to foetal circulation. She is walled out by placental membranes, and so her responses are limited to defensively regulating hormones within her own body. Furthermore, Suzanne concludes that our huge brains and our traumatic gestation seem intimately connected; at the very least, they are both extraordinary features of humanity. If we want to reduce the danger and suffering of pregnancy, the only way out is through more advanced knowledge. Suzanne's words convey the physical and mental changes and pain that women encounter in the process of becoming a mother, which is more contagious and realistic.

Sasha Isaac graduated from New York University where she studied bioethics. She is interested in reproductive ethics and the phenomenological experience of women living in low-income communities, having written her master's thesis on transnational surrogacy in India with a specific focus on surrogate responses to the stigmatisation of the practice. In this articl, Sasha agrees that the development of artificial-womb technology (known as ectogenesis) would radically makes differences. First, there are the therapeutic benefits it promises: women prone to risky pregnancies could transfer the foetus to an artificial womb, thereby allowing foetal development to continue at little cost to mothers' physical health; likewise, foetuses at risk of premature birth could be transferred to artificial wombs to complete their development as required. However, based on the potential benefit of ART, Sasha also points out the problem: it is worth questioning its particular usefulness as a feminist tool for liberation. Without addressing the patriarchal rules on which it might itself be built, the technology's liberatory overall remains limited.

These two studies inspire me to give a particular perspective – from Assisted Reproductive Technologies to think about "m/other becoming". As the new reproductive technologies have changed the meaning and practice of reproduction, the freedom and right of reproduction are more concerned. On the one hand, it is the freedom of contraception and abortion, as well as the ability to control whether and when to give birth. On the other hand, it is the right

to actively use ART to give birth to a healthy baby. The sudden drop in the birth rate and the demand for reproductive rights (individuals can determine the time and method of childbirth and parenting) are two aspects of the same desire. Nowadays, "m/other becoming" has become a personal life practice that transcends simple biological meaning, and ART is expected to realize everyone's desire to become a mother while overcoming limitations such as age, health status, and female life cycle. People can plan for the future by extracting oocytes and freezing them, choosing sperm from the market to combine the oocyte, or implanting embryos into another woman's body. The expansion of this possibility makes it possible for ART to be formulated as a means to support women's "empowerment", that is, "m/other becoming" can be arbitrarily controlled. Therefore, the relationship between ART and "m/other becoming" is tight and worth further understanding.

For thousands of years, the expression of maternity has undergone social, technological and cultural changes, from the Virgin to the mortal mother, from praising to exploring the pain of fertility, and the complexity of maternity in modern life. We should realize that mothers are not a necessary status for women, and mothers are not saints, and they are not perfect. The mother is a woman, but more than a human. But after reading "war in the womb", I was shocked. If it can be summed up in one sentence, it is: for implantation, foetuses can be at all costs.

As mammals, we humans are not mother-eating spiders. Although the latter feels a bit scary in our mind, humans can be said to be more cruel and bloody in terms of the evolutionary mechanism of uterine pregnancy. The foetus cell is just like the alien shape in the movie. In order to implant it, it plays a control and anti-control game with the mother (in the article, this also explains from one side why women have menstruation). Is it not a trial? The mother's nutritional supply to the foetuses is limited, and the uterus is full of deadly immune cells, which is also a prenatal exercise for a newborn. On the other hand, the destruction caused by pregnancy to the mother's body is cruel. However, even though the truth is inevitable, the need for racial reproduction still exists.

However, the rapid development of biotechnology has not stopped challenging motherhood. We must think about a question: What is the motivation for artificial-womb technology? The essential reason is the aim to help those premature babies, who are born very early. In order to maintain those lives, it is necessary to create something similar to a placenta. Also, it can be explained into two purposes: one is to think that the mother is just an intelligent incubator, which is easily replaced by a machine. It is only a technical problem. In the meantime, the other one seems to be a feminist perspective, which is to completely liberate women from motherhood or fertility obligations. However, the current achievements seem to aim to liberate women from reproductive labour, but it actually realizes the imagination of male self-reproduction. As stated in Sasha's article, the application of this technology naturally has its positive significance. But only from the childbirth-parenting path, women still cannot get rid of the fact that they raise/educate their children from the perspective of patriarchy.

Does advanced reproductive technology promote human reproduction or go against nature? Today, couples or individuals who wish to have children begin to use ART to fulfil their wishes. The first motivation for them to enter infertility treatment is to have a baby with a common gene. However, if we follow the path of "making baby" step by step in the process of infertility treatment, we will find that it is the emergence of technology that stimulates and generates the wishes of parents, instead parents want to use technology to realize their wishes. The starting point for entering ART is the offer of the client's reproductive cells.

But in the process of repeated failures and attempts, the direct genetic connection has gradually become less important, leaving only the willingness to become a mother. In this process, expectant mothers are required a long time of preparation and arduous tasks.

In the future, the reproduction of life may no longer require the combination of male sperm and female oocyte or even the female uterus. The entire process of life production and pregnancy can be carried out with special equipment through technological means. At that time, how will "motherhood", the greatest and most important emotion in the history of humans, survive? The male's constant fear of the mother's body and the desire for self-proliferation coexist, which exacerbates the negative perception of ART – the mother's body is just a container, and the father is the source of life's power. Under the surface of technological advancement, the people's imagination might be still centred on patriarchal blood kinship reproduction. Although the biological difference between the sexes is indisputable, unfairness has penetrated the concept of most families, such as the unfair division of reproductive labour, which is still challenging and causes great oppression of "m/other becoming".

Special Books by Special Kids. (s. f.). https://sbsk.org/. Accessed January 12th, 2022.

Chris Ulmer is a disability rights advocate, a former special education teacher, and the founder of the non-profit Special Books by Special Kids. He graduated from the University of the Cumberlands in Kentucky. He taught students with autism, agenesis of the corpus callosum, and traumatic brain injury. Chris Ulmer began to film videos with his students about the activities they did in class such as singing, playing, and complimenting each other. Special Books by Special Kids (SBSK) was originally thought to be a classroom project that would empower the student through self-advocacy and storytelling. However, the virality of the videos obtained changed the course of the project and SBSK became an online platform for disabled and neurodiverse people to tell their own stories.

Founded in 2016 SBKS is an organization that seeks to normalize the diversity of the human condition under the pillars of honesty, respect, mindfulness, positivity, and collaboration. SBSK serves as an educational resource for all humans- from the disability community to parents, teachers, and care workers, to those unfamiliar with neurodiversity. It also provides individuals and families from the neurodiverse community with an audience to share their thoughts and experiences. Through its online presence, SBSK connects cultures around the world, starting a global dialogue around neurodiversity and our response to it. The source's strengths are the over 400 personal interviews that SBSK archives on their YouTube channel. These interviews work as testimonies for the people living with different disabilities/conditions and their families, they are filmed on their own terms and from the comfort of their homes.

I believe SBSK is relevant to m/other becomings because it is a vast source of real human experiences living through otherness with care. Disability affects not only the individual but also their whole family system and community. SBSK exemplifies how these individuals create diverse family structures and care systems by merely existing. The care work of a disabled individual does not only belong to the parents, but also to the siblings, the educators, the care workers, and the community. Dependence and interdependence play a significant role in their life and in many ways, this is how they become othered.

Sputore, Grant, director. "*I Am Mother*" (2019). Australia: Penguin Empire.

"I was raised to value human life above all else. I couldn't stand by and watch humanity slowly succumb to its self-destructive nature. I had to intervene, to elevate my creators."
Mother, in I am Mother (2021)

I Am Mother is the most well-known movie by director Grant Sputore. The movie takes place in a speculative future where all of mankind died. The repopulation of the Earth depends on one robot: Mother. In order to practice her parenting skills, she raises one of the 63.000 human embryos that are accommodated in a locked facility. This is going smoothly until one day a strange woman arrives at the facility and turns their lives upside down. The lies that Mother has been telling Daughter for years are brought to light by the Woman. The extinction of mankind wasn't due to toxicity levels in the environment, as Mother claimed, but was due to the so-called Dozers (the robots that took over the world). Daughter runs off with the Woman, only to find out she also has been lying to her: instead of living in the mines with more survivors, she lives all alone at the beach. Daughter then returns to the facility to save her brother, who is at that moment being grown from an embryo into a baby in an artificial womb. It isn't until this very last part of the movie that we find out what Mother's motives are: it is the consciousness of Mother that manifests itself in all the robots, Mother was the origin of human extinction. Daughter manages to convince Mother to let her raise her brother by herself (as she was raised to do). Mother agrees and Daughter shoots her, destroying that body but without harming the consciousness that manifests through all the other robots on Earth.

In the future world that the film sketches, there are only the robot and the human embryos. There are no people to consider ethical issues or to steer the robot regarding ethical matters where necessary, allowing the AI to develop unchecked in any direction it wants, even if this results in destruction instead of care. I Am Mother carefully sketches an image of the non-human as the caretaker in a more autonomous way than we are used to. This self-directed way of caring is usually preserved for humans, while non-humans are exploited and used to benefit humans; they are being used as food, fuel, shelter, clothes and so on. The movie delicately goes in-depth into the relationship between Mother and Daughter, which makes it easy to adapt it as a true and loving relationship. Sputore did a fine job of luring you into what presents itself to be a 'normal' mother-daughter relationship until the facade Mother built for itself starts crumbling down. We follow the Daughter through slowly becoming more aware of the truth, followed by her becoming independent of her nurturer. The character of Mother keeps you puzzled until the very last scene of the movie, where only the tip of the veil is lifted and we can catch a glimpse of the history that hides behind the robot, leaving us with a lot of questions. I Am Mother raises relevant questions regarding care and human - nonhuman relationships. Despite the fact that the robot was initially programmed by man, it started to follow and implement its own ideals. To what extent did humans have a say in this development of consequences? And to what extent is the robot's behaviour really 'care' towards humans? Who is the actual caretaker? Motherhood, in my opinion, goes beyond educating and keeping something alive. Instead, understanding 'motherhood' as a loving act that involves emotions and connection between two individuals rules out that the behaviour of Mother in this movie is a matter of care or mothering because the robot is not capable of feeling emotions. In that sense, what we understand to be 'care' or 'mothering' in the relationship between Mother and Daughter is simply anthropomorphism, which assigns human characteristics to the non-human.

Steyerl, Hito (2017). "*Her Name Was Esperanza*" in: Duty Free Art: Art in the Age of Planetary Civil War. London: Verso. p. 115-134

Hito Steyerl's 'Her Name Was Esperanza', published in 'Duty Free Art' is a case/subject study on fragmentary notes and emotional becomings via said mediums. Branching out to media studies, Steyerl's approach to researching different emotional messages and communications, 'Her Name Was Esperanza' displays an intriguing conceptualization and framing of mundane and every day.

Steyerl makes a notion of the importance of proximity, and how the nature of emotions changes through digital media and messages via newfound immediacy and the merging of physical and digital worlds. Additionally, she raises a question of the nature of impression, while a person can impersonate and perform different gender roles and via "masquerade", emancipate from certain boundaries of gender and social structures.

The merits of Steyerl's media research are questions it raises about performativity via different mediums and communicative practices. As she elaborates "words can make worlds, they can destroy them as well". This notion is highly relevant, as different machinations can emerge when digital communication intertwines human, code, algorithmic and machinic performance. I see 'Her Name Was Esperanza' as relevant to m/other becomings in its way to rethink digital communication as an inception for the creation of robotic and machinic languages. The network and communicative fabric humankind constructs via digitalized platforms for swift and ubiquitous interaction carries a power to create new languages which beyond established categorisations and subvert the straightforward approach to place them on a linear axis of human / machine.

Volm, Saralisa, and Britta Helbig, editors (2018). "*bitch MATERial*". Berlin: POISON GmbH.

bitch MATERial is the catalogue to the eponymous group exhibition with nearly 30 artists that was on show between March 22 till April 8, 2018, at Kunstquartier Bethanien in Berlin. The exhibition was curated by Britta Helbig and Saralisa Volm, who also edited the catalogue. Britta Helbig (1970) is a curator, artist, dancer/choreographer and psychologist. Saralisa Volm (1985) is an art curator, actress, author and filmmaker. Both of them are mothers, as they state in the biographies in the catalogue. bitch MATERial "celebrates the mother and thereby every parent as creator". It tries to reflect on what we understand when we talk about 'mother', it questions stereotypes and presents us with alternatives for them. The number of voices in the subject is represented in a great diversity of material and media, from mixed-media installation to painting.

The foremost merit of this exhibition and catalogue is that it questions our perception of the concept of 'mother'. It tries to grab this figure, reclaim it and make a wide arrangement of definitions; or even better: release it from these definitions so we can make our own. One of the contributing artists is Lara Schnitger (1969), a Dutch-American sculptor whose work reflects on one of the questions that are stated in the introduction of the catalogue: "Can mom make a porn film?". Her work Engorgement depicts collages of women in pornographic movies combined with newborns, producing an unusual image that is not often represented in the media. The work focuses on the sexuality of mothers and by doing so, breaks through the apparent taboo that parents do not have sex. The work puts forward a sensual and sexual version of the mother instead of the ever-caring stereotype that is only concerned with the

child. Although there are a lot of works like Schnitgers' that break through taboos, for me the exhibition still puts forward quite a binary take on the subject of 'mother' by focussing on either 'female' or 'male'. Gender-confirming roles are the subject of the essay Content: 1 dick, 2 cunts, 2 servings of solidarity and 1 Lady Bitch Ray - And a structural problem, not a personal one written by husband and wife Julia Heilmann and Thomas Lindemann. They put forward their struggle with the expectations society places on them while becoming parents. Lindemann explores his fear that his son conforms to gender-confirming roles because he does not want to wear a skirt as the other sons want in the fatherhood blogs Lindemann reads online. Although this essay relates to the topic of gender, it sticks (just like the rest of the catalogue and exhibition) to the 'binary realm'. In my opinion, bitchMATERIAL is a good starting point as it puts forward a lot of non-stereotypical ways to think about motherhood in an accessible way. However, I think it missed the boat when it comes to gender within motherhood by not speaking about other genders than either female or male, leaving a lot of current issues and topics out of the picture. The relevance of bitchMATERial is nonetheless apparent: it tries to show different perspectives on what we understand to be a 'mother' and questions the concept of 'motherhood' as a whole.

Wieczorek, Agata. "*Growing*" (2021) [short film]. France.

Produced by Le Fresnoy, studio national des arts contemporains and completed in 2021, this short film directed by Agata Wieczorek explores the relation between humans and machines and their link to motherhood through the laboring process. Originally from Poland, Agata Wieczorek developed this project as a protest against polish government that recently restricted the right to abortions in the country.

In this film, Ewa, a young woman and student in a medical simulation center, learns maternity nursing with human look alike machines made to reproduce labor and birth. The film questions pregnancy, the body and living experience but also the notions of caring and empathy in the nursing process. The film provides a strong statement showing a deep mechanization of the body. The constant and heavy silence chopped here and there by machines' sounds is cadenced with the tension that we can feel between the performed latex body and Ewa. The austere and neutral approach towards the labor and these plastic and latex babies are put in contradiction with glimpse of caring gestures from humans. "We allow you to explore the mystery of motherhood so that you can teach others how to experience it" so says the teacher of the simulation center, coupling mystery with industrialization, alien with machines, mysticism and technology. Here the myth of the female body wants to be solved by the process of automation, the alienation is complete and the body is reduced to its biological potential; to give life.

The heavy mechanisation dehumanized the body to a complete pragmatic approach. The body is a machine, and labor is a process. Slowly the film disintegrates itself, moving from a clear, bleached white medical environment to a dark, obscure intimate room. It switches into a horror style genre film. In a total collapse there is no escape. Left alone, the body in its biological form crys, suffers, showing the dichotomy of reality. Without care there is pain.