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POSTHUMAN MICRO-DISCOURSES: LOCALITY AND POST-MEDIA, POST-BODIES AND POST-TECHNOLOGIES

Posthumanism slowly maturing over the last years is developing more and more specialized theoretical tools and increasingly specific analysis languages not only in terms of global approaches and cross-sectional syntheses, but also in the perspective of local problems and specific disciplines. As Lilla Atanasiadou writes in the “Locality/Non-separability” entry of *Posthuman Glossary*: “a post-human, pre-individual, universal affect appears to resonate within different ethnicities, cultures and geographical scales taking local manifestations according to the specificities of the materialization of its time and space”.¹ This two-way process of orienting posthuman discourse towards locality or vice versa, in a global direction starting from local disclosures, covers various levels of social and cultural action.

Locality appears to be particularly important, for example, in the context of ecocriticism, as one of the frequent fields of posthuman analysis. It’s because specific ecosystems, species and relationships are often subject to reflection.² Following this lead, it is worth pointing out the important role of locality in defining naturecultures. Latour emphasizes the role of local collectives created by humans and non-humans in its creation,³ as well as draws a map of the relationship between local and global in shaping inter-subjective social networks.⁴

Regionality as a derivative of locality is also the direct leitmotif of many posthuman studies counterposed to West-centric critical approaches to anthropocentrism and anthropocene. They are valuable by pointing to new approaches to posthuman

¹ R. Braidotti, M. Hlavajova (eds.), *Posthuman Glossary*, London–Oxford–New York–New Delhi–Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016, p. 236.

² H. Feder, “Ecocriticism, Posthumanism, and the Biological Idea of Culture”, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. by G. Garrard, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014. See also entire issue of the journal *Relations. Beyond Anthropocentrism* 2016, vol. 4, no. 1.

³ B. Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, transl. by C. Porter, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993, pp. 106–107.

⁴ *Ibid.*, see chapter: “Even a Longer Network Remains Local at Points w Relativism”, pp. 117–120.

which result from other religious and cultural traditions, e.g. shamanic practices, animism or unique tribal traditions and mythical narratives.⁵

Many current faces of posthumanism can therefore be called situated. Art also refers to this location and locality against global forces. Such was the character of the wide-ranging artistic project of the collective “Hacking Habitat”, in which as many as 80 artists showed the problem of establishing global control over users by modern technological systems through their work. At the same time, this project pointed to ways to regain user control over their own life and body, as well as the living environment. These activities often referred to the context of DIY and local forms of opposing technological oppression and to restoring an intimate and individualized relationship with technology.

In relation to the political sphere, one of the authors of the xenofeminist manifesto, in turn, uses the concept of mesopolitics:

The mesopolitical operates between atomized, hyper-local interventions at the level of, for example, individual embodiment (micropolitics), on the one hand, and big-picture, speculative projects premised on the wholesale overthrow of power at the level of the state or beyond (macropolitics), on the other.⁶

In a sense, this locality of posthumanism is therefore also represented by the problems of the body, understood as an “intimate” biological-technological-cultural complex opening to the environment, susceptible to posthuman manipulation, e.g. in the form of hacking, but also being the effect of global forces and processes, in the sense in which Michel Foucault or Giorgio Agamben write about bio-power and bio-politics.⁷

The various areas in which the idea of locality reveals itself as important for posthumanism show that it is important to face not only the globality of the posthumanist complex, but to build a wide spectrum of critical approaches ranging from space and planetary dimension through the region and the state, and ending with a singular body intimacy. As postulated by authors of “Xenofeminism Manifesto”: “From the global

⁵ See for instance: J.J. Hughes, “Buddhism and Our Posthuman Future”, *Sophia* 2018, pp. 1–10; A.J. Vetlesen, *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene: Panpsychism, Animism, and the Limits of Posthumanism*, London: Routledge, 2019. In this context the popularity of such approaches as neo-tribalism and anarcho-primitivism is worth studying as well as growing academic interests in afrofuturism might be of interests. See for instance: Y.L. Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*, Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013, or a scientific panel on “Afrofuturism: Making Black Futures Visible in Literature and the Arts” held this year as a part of the 7th AfroEuropeans Network Conference: “Black In/Visibilities Contested”.

⁶ H. Hester, *Xenofeminism*, Cambridge–Medford: Polity Press, 2018, p. 114.

⁷ M. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, New York: Vintage Books, 1990; G. Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, transl. by D. Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

to the local, from the cloud to our bodies, xenofeminism avows the responsibility in constructing new institutions of technomaterialist hegemonic proportions”.⁸

These various levels of post-human regionality, locality or situatedness are interestingly explored by the authors of the texts in this issue of “Cultural Review”.

Mitsuhiro Hayashi deals with a kind of myth of Japan in the eyes of Western intellectuals, brilliantly combining the argument with the analysis of differences in understanding the various contexts of posthumanism in Europe and Asia. The article is all the more important because it breaks with the common understanding of Japan as a technological and globally understood place for the development of the ideas of trans- and posthumanism, showing the specificity of this region as an area of building non-human spiritualist and animist metaphysics open to other non-human subjects. The text is a testimony to a deep reflection on post-anthropology of technology and the ability to describe Japanese technological assembly, such as pachinko or karaoke, which bring together the potential of biological elements, affect and media materiality.

Kirsten Packham shows another path in posthumanism history by taking into account origins of abstract art as focal point in redesigning the body. Dance also serves here to exemplify posthumanism, e.g. by discussing the assumptions of Butho dance, which Tatsumi Hijikata one of the creators of this style speaks of as cultivating imperfections against the perfection of the Vitruvian body. Here, the body is a relational creation and is constantly becoming.

Katia Nikitina shows another version of “situated”, a national posthumanism entangled in political order, in which competition between plants is on the one hand a reflection of the clashing *bios* and *zoē*, and on the other an extension. The post-humanist stories of Sosnowsky’s hogweed and sunroot stretch between anarchist proliferation and agricultural engineering burdened with an anthropocentric attitude. Plants here are almost self-determining collective beings, which are a source of fascinating hybrid assemblages entwining post-Soviet technological landscapes, setting the boundary for the functioning of other species and humans. Analyzes of the relationship between communism and immunization, games with humanization and dehumanization in the relationship between the dissident category and the category of really weed problems, etc. are extremely inspiring here.

Another example of the microscale is the analysis given by Olga Timurgalieva, who discusses the work of Australian artist Tarsh Bates. The artist uses Candida yeast naturally found in human bacterial flora for projects showing the conventionality of

⁸ Laboria Cuboniks, *Xenofeminism Manifesto: A Politics of Alienation*, <https://www.laboriacuboniks.net/index.html>, chapter 0x17, access date 15.08.2019. Interestingly, the attitude of the Laboria Cuboniks collective to the idea of locality seems quite ambiguous. On the one hand, in their opinion, it is an indispensable element of building these new total institutions, on the other hand, local gestures, autonomous spheres or micro-communities have limited effectiveness, and postulates of inhibition, cutting off from globality, and emancipation at the local level are exclusively reserved for the few and can be cause of the destruction of many other units.

the human body, blurring the boundary between human tissue and microorganisms and fungi, the impact of non-human flora on human behavior and agency, the aesthetic potential of micro-conversations in symbiosis with the human body, specificity of natureculture in the area of the human body.

Ewelina Twardoch-Raś continues the threads related to the analysis of bio art, but this time she refers to the quite unique context of researching this field of art in the perspective of the theory of possible worlds. As she writes: “reflections on the materiality of worlds created in biological art do not exclude research on their discursive and narrative potential”. This original narratological approach to bioart brings very interesting observations. The author shows selected projects of such artists as: Alicia King, Guy Ben-Ary, Kirsten Hudson, Sonja Bäümel, Pinar Yoldas and Anna Dumitriu as a field of experimentation with what is and is not fiction. For these non-verbal narrative worlds she also coined the term ‘strongly possible worlds’, as she mentions to name “the idea of the alternative way of creating the world for a story. This alteritativeness arises from the fact that ‘strongly possible worlds’ are not only conceptualized or described, but materially created”. Thus, it can be said that in the case of artistic projects analyzed by the author, narrative allows us to evolve from the scale of biological micro-structures (fungi, stem cells) to comprehensive material worlds that are at the same time completed settings for fiction.

The collection is supplemented with two texts that do not represent the posthuman scope itself, but for which locality is also important. The first paper by Marta Kosińska and Karolina Sikorska is to analyze contemporary Polish artistic practices with girlhood-feminism manifested in the activist and selfie-feminist form. The authors indicate, among others on the local dimension of feminist protests in 2016, and that the precarious girlhood itself is somewhat counter to feminism as a universal theory, and therefore criticized by the participants of this movement. Thus, as authors point out, they treat “local and dispersed concepts addressed to particular individuals and communities” as “to be both possible and functional in the context of ‘making deals’ within the system”.

The second article is the interview of Piotr Marecki with Dene Grigar, the founder of Electronic Literature Lab at Washington State University in Vancouver. Interlocutors repeatedly refer here to the idea of lab as a place of unique, exceptional space, gathering historical but also “situated” knowledge about electronic literature and platforms for its sharing. This kind of knowledge is not only a reconstruction of the experience of recipients of electronic works from the time of their creation, but also “lives” in contemporary artistic and receiving practices.

The issue ends with the reviewer’s voice by Roman Sapeńko on the latest book by Francesca Ferrando. The monograph represents the more general philosophical approach to research on posthumanism and gathers its main themes and fields of interest focused on three questions: 1. What Is Philosophical Posthumanism? 2. Of Which “Human” Is the Posthuman a “Post”? 3. Have Humans Always Been Posthuman? The author herself does a lot of good in promoting posthumanism, actively

co-creating the scientific community Beyond Humanism Net and organizing subsequent editions of the Global Posthuman Symposiums in New York.

The whole set of texts presented in this issue can be called studies on human-plant-animal-technical-informational affairs in the local perspective. Locality is a term here which on the one hand is in opposition to the global posthumanist complex and, unlike it, gives posthumanism a more positive and affirmative dimension against all-planetary hegemony: anthropocene, algorithmic enslavement and capitalist biopolitics. On the other hand, it allows us to see the micro-discourses of global power not quite visible from a distance.

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