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Under the Parallax of Visual Feminisms: Post-Biological and/or Post-Oedipal

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Abstract

The present study will make use of the parallax method in its attempt to analyze and verify the relationship between postmodernism – representation – feminisms, reinterpreting concepts such as subject-object, ideology, dedoxification, with an interest in the relationship between postmodernisms – feminisms.

In this sense, the article will resort to two forms/formulas accompanying its theoretical basis – clona societatis (Orphan Black) and the post-Oedipal model (Those Who Kill), varieties which, although asymmetrical, can visually reconsider the biopolitical statute of feminisms, either by the option of self-multiplication, or through its constant actualization.

Keywords:

Postmodernism, Feminisms, Representation, Post-Biological, Post-Oedipal;

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Introduction – Warning: the Parallax as Method

Starting from what Slavoj Žižek (2006) reassessed when (re)maintaining the illusion of using/utilizing the same type of language for phenomena which are mutually untranslatable and can only be understood through an appeal/recourse to *the parallax*, as possible/constant perspective displacement between/in two points which do not accept the possibility of synthesis/mediation, the present study will use *parallax methods* translated as: different positioning – by adjacency or distancing – towards a certain technicizing assemblage (translated in the category of visual-feminine representations – the serial, with all incumbent upon the *bio-environment and meta-biology*); movements/changes, reinstated inside the theoretical space of political philosophy (*postmodernism – representation – feminisms*); a meeting between double observations/perspectives from/in the triangle's edge – *biopolitics* and/or the attractively of a *feminist clona societatis* and the *post-Oedipal alternative*.

Under the sign of *parallaxes disparities*, Žižek (2006) signifies by this the confrontation between two weld(ing) perspectives inside which any sedimentation of a common ground is impossible. Inside their neutral values the perspective extracts its mode/model of being from (a Kantian) attribution of the *parallax* as another name for a fundamental, (un)medially antinomy maintained by an oscillation of the philosophical-political soil between mechanical materialism and idealistic obscurantism. Such an ascertainment only deepens the recessively – secondary relationship of placement within the socially-substantial interstices of any community – a position of distant – capture which in its turn nullifies identification with any kind of socially-positive identities.

Any attempts to clarify the term [*parallax*] cannot avoid (here) a re-launching of the *network concept* – a concept decreeing that *any subject is marked by/through a fundamental passivity*, and any movement is *maintained* (almost paradoxically) by *the now-active object*.

Such an inversion of roles was reviewed by F. Jameson (2006) and accepted as symptomatic dislocation, re-deepening of postmodern relativisms, mode of re-anchoring inside the narrative-Lyotardian designs as a method of repositioning for “postmodern” – causality weakened mobiles, historical agents, events, historical philosophies – a discourse already subsumed to narrative mechanisms implying that *X narrates the story of quantum theory, while Y tells a totally different story*.

In the folds of *parallaxes thought*, the object can be determined-exclusively in a direct mode – by the intercession of triangulations based on the incommensurability of observations. Hence the evidence stating that the object maintains its own non-preventability by distancing itself from the Lacanian *psyche* and deepening the problematization of personal identity translated into radical/fundamental inadaptability.

One cannot therefore simply elude, in a clarifying sense, the definition stating that *the parallax* postulates the apparent displacement of an object (change of position) caused by a shift in the observation angle which delivers a different perspective. The noted difference is not just “subjective” but maintained by the presence of an object in/on the “outside”, as it is perceived from different positions/points of view.

In a Lyotardian sense the present study will operate inside a optically-perceptive displacement method – (here) as a (trans)cription onto another surface of two (in)scriptural areas of the aforementioned code, [areas] which are nothing more, from a Moebiusian perspective, than the amalgamation of a non-versatile ribbon: a formula/proceeding whose function is representation itself.

An appeal to TV series registries – recalibrating postmodernism’s statute as more-than-visually-sonorous narrative – (Kellner, 2001) hides (almost psychoanalytically) quantifiable architectures or significances beyond the surface of either text or image.

Kellner (2001) warns about the types of enlacements with which mediatic-cultural narrations/images operate, with deepening effect upon any set of attitudes belonging to the subject/protagonist, reactions which hitherto become *weak models*: the significantly permutated image - before - narration, captivating through fascination, fragmentation and the ephemeral.

These impulses confirm a certain mediatic continuity – decreed by the series itself, as it does not need to justify its innovatory statute but all too often just integrates itself in tradition/predisposition – of being (re)placed in a specific context through maintenance of confluent effects (re)launched by the media culture: *the hard effect* (a stimulus-response model, a dependent, hegemonic formulation), limiting ingredient (as perceived by the “two-step flux” precept which implies the fulfillment of every point on the daily agenda) or *the soft effect* (a “uses and gratifications” type of scheme, allowing a predilection for reception analysis).

Hence our first evidence, that the function of any re(dose)d series with all its particular ensigns is (here) to assist in what Lyotard (1993) calls *the com-possibility* of interaction/intersection of social and psychic sections (the series as a *sectioned corpus* is organized in/through a translation of the esthetics act into episodes and seasons), by delivering two micro narratives in a Jamesonian key. The first, with direct recoil into the evidence shows that any institutional signification (*clona societas*) starts from the single multiplied case, cannot avoid the recourse to the artificial/laboratory/simulacra. The second is focused on introducing a force inside an adjusted-tension circuit – acknowledging the point of the triangle as meeting point, new inscribable surface with an inner and an outer double at the same time, as both transplant of digital epidermis and psychological tensor crossing.

Placing the context delivered by two opposite points of view under the sign of parallax designs, the series *Orphan Black* (2013) and *Those Who Kill* (2014), (un)separated from what Linda Hutcheon (1989) defined by a *dedoxifying* conquest of authority, the present study's evidences will now focus upon a stabilizing implication of two recessive formulas, as they are delivered through a cybernetizing language: in the first place-memory, as clarification of a system already unsettled by a recourse to reference units (*first model, first clone*), an endeavor articulating any mode of social coagulation/presentation and hence the building of *societas*; in the second place, a registry of the aforementioned memory's loss, a vanishing identity block(ed) in its own (re)anchoring process and unable to control/anticipate either effects or affects.

Any recourse to this alloy (and not any other) is refurbished from its direct contact that both possibilities acknowledge: *Orphan Black* as a series with high public impact, actively maintaining its quota of active “consumers” – and *Those Who Kill* as a series with low audience rates, leading directly to the 2014 midseason cancellation; both confirming, in a postmodern key, the fact that any individual product is subsumed to memory [the consumer] and an appreciation of his momentary reactions.

First evidence would take into consideration the attachment to the *object-which-becomes-active*, a connection to feminist dominance over a majority of social positions/hierarchies; or, in post-biological language, the clone preserves its *attractiveness* (*the animated object becomes a subject*) by establishing that, even if a body stays the same, the social body is in continuous movement. The second evidence deepens *the (un)attractively* of

the subject itself, charged with fundamental passivity and establishing a temptation of feminisms to fall back upon themselves, to use self-representation while at the same time producing their own hierarchies; in fact, Oedipus sliding from his masculine condition towards a post-feminist perspective, through which any representation is diluted-artificial by recourse to *delirium*.

These observations state that feminisms distance themselves from their own postmodern equivalences in the sense in which the latter would be tempted by a certain annihilation/simplification of their own political program. The only operating relationship between/from postmodernism and feminisms would be, confirming all Hutcheonian assertions a representational intersection – a formulation already interconnecting both images/narratives and the ideology producers. In this sense, feminisms constitute a verbal symbol of difference and plurality, and express a multiplicity of opinions, ideas and theories which hold in common the idea of representational politics (Hutcheon, 1989).

With the absolutely needed mention that any *dedoxification* action which postmodernism might trigger offers a chance of affirmation for subjective gender-based theoretizing constructions, because both *feminisms* – in their dual role as social-political movements and plural occurrences inside art history – and *postmodernisms* represent just parts of the same cultural authority crisis.

The political impulse of postmodern/feminist art needs to be perceived as a challenge for any conditions allowing for the fulfillment of desires; hence, *desire* becomes a norm of consumer society - an occurrence which both Marxist critics and feminist activists still try to decipher.

The objector movement promoted by feminism is actualized (in) the post-Oedipal warning aimed towards any patriarchal traditions. In a Hutcheonian (1989) key, a denial of any privileged positions defines a no less ideological attitude than feminism's militant commitment. Because the term *representation* (a concept borrowed from Aristotle) ensures the legitimizing power which allows/ permits the occurrence of representation.

In a comparative key, Hutcheonian postulates state that feminism is a politics in itself, while postmodernism is not: postmodernism does not theoretize any action, does not have any

resistance strategies; it manipulates, but does not transform the significant; it disperses, but does not rebuild any signifier structures.

Feminism and the Post-Biological

While establishing aptence for techno-culture as the first level of feminist visual representations, seen as a model/experimental formula, we will deliver the Haraway (1985) recourse to simulation inside the condition of postmodern clones, while at the same time seeing it as biotic component, artificial citizenship or genetic engineering, and also as ideologically-ontological mode of reassembling *bio* inside technologies which affect any new clon(ing)ly dominant identity.

If cyberspace can deliver itself in disguise as a generous environment for postmodern fiction through narrative fractures, hyperlink intertextualization and interactivity, its feminist-symbolic-virtual production promotes the product-placement of *the cyborg* – as a technological-biological hybrid – considered to be both a de-corporalized and de-territorialized being, within the unraveled twines of *exteriority - interiority separating surfaces*.

Although referring more to bio-informational textures and less to any iconic process of global structural building, Donna Haraway's (1985) anthropological theory transparently reconfigures the human-mechanical relationship from a perspective of hierarchic-causal permutations, of gender, species or sexual difference neutering. By a "post-gendered" (re)reading of the human as cyborg type or autonomous bio-iconic, neutralizing or un-substantialized formulation, this approach could offer a recapture/recovery/reactivation of any vivid(izing) formulas.

The result is rendered by Roy Ascott (2006) by a change in the nature of perception itself as a pretext for launching *cyber perception* as post-biological faculty referring to the sum total of telematically mediated interactive systems, as parts of our sensory apparatus. Hence the superposition of virtual function/dysfunction as a diagnosis oriented towards *extropianism* – a philosophical formulation for the "transhuman" which amplifies "extropy" (a measure of intelligence, information, energy, vitality, experience and diversity).

Launched through Mark Derry's (1996) voice-proclaiming at once the imminent birth of "post humanity" and the emancipative detachment of consciousness/ social roles/ bodily representation, any

active difference would recharge itself from various contact-taking situations (*context*, we underline) within the network (Pralea, 2003).

Within network logics Manuel Castells (2000) actualizes the concept of *network society* by targeting modern society's capability of reacting electronically to ever-changing social-cultural processes, and admitting that the new informational-technologizing paradigm already constitutes the material fundament for expanding the whole social structure.

Or, in a Howard Rheingold (2002) key, the network postulates the existence of a functioning community inside a new social dynamics, accepting network space as its place of action and functioning on the limiting edge between *its logic* (at a technical level) and its *social logic* (of social behavior inside the network).

Not at all randomly, the *Orphan Black* (2013) series operates within a visually-paroscopic delivery of the clone as auto-subjectifying individuality, with hierarchical- causal permutations and gender, species and/or sexual difference neutering.

If Morton Heilig delivered the alternative of a *second life - maintain a game of* as early as '63, *Orphan Black* plunges inside multiplicity knotting, free simulacra deliveries, control of appearances, complicities, illusions and secrets, "same-on-same" couplings – confirming, up to a point, what Baudrillard (1996) repeatedly found in *the clone/automaton's* profile: not a vanishing of the natural form in the perfection of the artificial but on the contrary a disappearance of the artificial within the natural's evidence; up to a point, because the series is in danger of recomposing the clone's status from a purely feminist stance (there is nothing randomly in the postmodernism-feminism conjunction blueprint), (willingly) maintaining the design of a cloned Eve (*Dolly! sic*) and the deliberately- exaggerated social roles of its opposites (the clone as detective – delinquent – mother – wife – artist - biology PhD candidate – assassin – holder of an official position).

Under the imperative of the artificial/total simulacrum, (re)computing the number of clones in season 1 (10) and adding yet another one in the first episode of season 2 (of different nationality – delivering the perspective of a globalizing clone reminiscent of every evil cliché - Helena the Ukrainian killer) the female clone circle maintains its hermetic sense (inside which only a feminized version of Felix can be accepted – as the only subject – both brother and on the active-passive

sexual fringe at the same time- mediated through Sarah Manning's orphanage institution).

The series delivers a new concept which can be accepted as *clona societas*, marked by a recomposing of nodal points that Z Bauman (1993) saw as/in heterogeneity, inequality, status differentiation or nominal systems.

Scientifically-biologizing changes – Neolution (the next step, through a multiplication of the One effect, of *Matrix's* Neo), Dyad (a concept acknowledging not just the genetic sense of repeatable/repeated DNA sequences but also the sociological sense of associating Greek philosophy's import of the *other*- here seen as the *multipliable alter*) or Proletheans (with all implied mythological – religious - political allusions) – all maintain a game of escalating secrets/ illusions, strengthening their effect through omnipresent allusions to character onomastics (from the paleo-anthropological wedding – Aldous Leekie – to the allusions contained inside the Thomas name - twins) and multiple-sense alloys.

Beyond any possible connections to neo-post-fictional realities and/or screenplays (with their rattling - or even amputated! tails, or designs in the registry of connected natural systems interacting with/in the purely theoretical moment of superstrings, accepted by physicists as the ultimate texture of our Universe) *Orphan Black* maintains a world of the overly-animated in which the clone represents a synthesizing product of combinatorial models with all implied side-slips in/between original and copy. In fact, an elastically-feminine biological perspective is delivered, while at the same time maintaining the anthropological model of continuous manufacturing.

Such a statement does not elude risk situations received from within glossing upon “losing the subject's essence” or suspensions of axiology, while at the same time tolerating the (volitional or non-) insertion of bio-environment into postmodernity.

With the needed warning stating that the model cannot distance itself from what Freud decreed to be “the pleasure- creating repetition”)

Hence the obvious statement that force charges itself from anonymity, in the sense of a *clona societas* marked by effects and not by causes.

In a Lyotardian manner, the clone ideology overbids the binding posts of a multiplied, electrically conducting body, through a

disinvestment of its channeling and exclusion devices as properties or large closed bodies; in fact, the power of a conducting body/active subject, free in its intensity connections (Lyotard, 1993).

In the original-copy relationship, and in the same lost-origin Freudian sense, *Orphan Black* implies the sense of “orphan” only through its title- the status of the female deprived of clear membership, by (re)anchoring the feminisms of a search (not for the unknown-lost origin - but for causes, responsibilities, identities, desires, power).

Feminisms and the Post-Oedipal Effect

In the same Žižekian (2006) note the nodal points of the present subchapter state that subjectivity operates an accent change *from desire to demand* – opposed and opposable formulas decreeing that any model of cultural criticism reaffirms a return to/reinvention of desire within yet another prohibition. The design is easy-to-adjust to the imperative – *Oedipus returns; all is forgiven* - in the sense in which demand, when it is unburdened by compulsion, betrays just the sense/signal of desire.

Hence the evidence stating that any Oedipal return marks the passage (sliding) from active to passive. Return implies, on the one hand, a certainty of repositioning, and on the other an insecure profile and an insecure act: *another Oedipus returns pushing the back forward*.

Anchoring such observations upon/in the soil of demands which abandon the idea of addressing themselves to the Other, in the sense of non-assumption of his identity (*The Other is dead!*) we reclaim the *re-Oedipal* effect as a tri-phased mode of reacting to ideological changes: if the fundamental structure of the subconscious (in a Freudian manner) is still intact, the designs of a new/another paradigm can only be superficial temptations. The passage towards/to a *post-Oedipal feminist* society implies a loss of any ethical-symbolic coordinates, at the same time reaffirming a kind of clarifying of paternal laws sliding between global chaos and violence (or private trauma, molestation). With the mention that any new legitimacy implies a design of neurosciences, by redefining their therapeutic role in treating “new anxieties”.

The modified/recalibrated profile with emphasis upon self-fulfillment and an exponential growth of self-control affirm the individual as being a passive object of biopolitics, with a delirious replacement inside a specific world (in the case of *Those Who Kill*, the world of crime).

Becoming attractive through exaggeration in the case of the male hero (see in this sense, selectively, the series *Monk*, *Perception*, *Lie to me*, *Luther* etc.) the welding between *dissociation* (specific dysfunction, primary deficiency) and *autism* (delirium, detachment from reality, a predominance of inner life) - seems not to function in the case of female heroes.

What the *Those Who Kill* series manages to deliver is a reaffirmation of a *willing genealogy*, in a Deleuze-Guattari (2008) note, as an inclusion of Oedipal designs or as consequences of social reproduction: of matter domestication and genealogical forms which elude or of nuclear complexes which can alternatively acknowledge *generalizing* (casual sex, pulsions, non-affects, singularizing relationships - Catherine Jensen's relationship reduced to the way she intersects with Thomas Schaeffer, attracted- but still psychically unstable - inside the universe of crimes and personal clarifications), *serial* (negative complex), or *group interrelations* (in the sense of multiple interactions between victim-perpetrator, the accretion of three psychotic generations - the missing brother, the abusive father - Judge Howard Burgess - Catherine Jensen).

Under the sign of a *willing code*, the profile of post-Oedipal feminisms is subsumed to plunging fluidities from one code to another, to not accepting the same sequential explanation while at the same time towing behind them sequences of non-assertion and non-irritation of the Oedipal code, with the clear intention of overtaking it and accessing another power/dispute withdrawn from the social and (re)anchored inside its deliberately-effervescent unconscious. A kind of phantom identification, a reassessment of any strategy used to overcome traumatic experiences.

Almost paradoxically, the post-Oedipal effect maintains its own ontological promotion as a plenary structure (Ferenczi, 2002); a device which dilutes identities in/from the moment of contacting lived experiences and multiplies or simplifies them with the purpose of making any experience bearable.

Instead of Conclusions: Biopolitics – Apex of the Triangle

In any attempt to re-read actual biopolitics as a mode of *parallaxes meeting* for the two stated perspectives - as the apex of the triangle - this could represent the ethical-social-political reflection upon

any problems biological techno-science might pose, with an accent upon political powers interested in biotechnological possibilities.

In Jean-Luc Nancy's terms (2002) biopolitics indicates the order of a bio-actively determined politics, destined to study, take care of and control any globalizing tendencies; or, following Michel Foucault (2003), on the threshold of the modern age natural life starts to be included in the mechanics and calculations of state power, politics thus becoming (*bio*)*politics*. The idea is maintained - with all it implies - by a recalibration of *zoon* on an axis of bioactive political processes.

After Ferenc Fehér (1994), American critics of *biopolitics* (i.e. of "identity politics"!) consider the term to be pretentious, artificial and subsumed to the general(izing) tendencies of prevention liberalism. As Ágnes Heller (1996) warned, there are two directions inside modernity – that of "freedom priority" and that of "maintenance of life" – formed as responses to agents placed either inside biopolitical potentiating of life, or in a politization of the body itself.

In a retrieval and recapitulation exercise for all "biopolitical reflexes" Nikolas Rose (2005) anticipates new perspectives on the *politics of risk*, with all implied deviations from "the registry of life sciences" through which politics becomes *molecular biopolitics*, strengthened by the techniques of *biomedicine*.

The imperative is reinserted into the human body equation, originating in a single cell (close to the *clone* blueprint) charged with/by the same genetic material, the essence of biopolitics being a corporeal(izing) model of increasing the quality of life, in the presence of an accelerated rate of specialization and accelerated technological advances.

In fact, the immediate-order observation – with recourse to the series used as support for the idea of *clona societas* and post-Oedipal models - would take into account any biopolitical orbiting formulations inside the radius of *desire-ideologies* which decree feminisms to be just ideologies of re-modelled bodies and socially-acceptable subjects. In fact, a readable biopolitics blocked inside categories of self-multiplication or constant self-actualization.

One cannot avoid the late capitalism's reflexes - the ones superimposing the manufacture/ multiplication/ conceptualization of the self with its implied social existence, productive potential, close to

the landmarks of a neoliberal self (Bălă escu, 2004), with an effect in creating images inside the already-prescribed, (pre)schematized and normalized field) - and the post-Oedipal effect which translates the individual's disappearance in favor of individualism, in the sense of those post-human landmarks which occur after the historical consumption of liberalism.

In fact an accumulation of potential errors, irrigated by general(izing) tensions, as a model/formula for *a society explicitly made from pre-manufactured ways of self-actualization*. With the absolutely needed mention of the fact that post-biological and post-Oedipal designs are not and cannot be symmetrical, but maintain different possible scenarios for a replacement of feminisms in a *soft* relationship with postmodernisms.

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