

Origin and Dismasure: the Thought of Sexual Difference in Luisa Muraro and Ida Dominijanni, and the Rise of Post-Fordist Psychopathology

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You can't measure the efficacy of a movement
using the values against which it was born.
(I. Dominijanni)

ABSTRACT

In *Pensiero Vivente* (2010), Roberto Esposito investigates the issue of origin as a crucial axis of inquiry for Italian philosophy. His acute reconstruction of Italian philosophical thought, however, dedicates little attention to feminism and to the philosophies of those who carry out the labor of procreation and reproduction. This essay reframes the problem of origin from the point of view of the maternal, exploring the thought of sexual difference in the work of two prominent militants of the Diotima philosophical Community: Luisa Muraro and Ida Dominijanni. The aim is twofold: study how the notion of the maternal symbolic can be understood as furthering Jacques Lacan's construction of the feminine; show how the socio-psychological transformations produced by post-Fordism call for a rethinking of some of the basic assumptions of the maternal symbolic, particularly the notion of fixation.

Keywords: Maternal Symbolic, Sexual Difference, Formulae of Sexuation, Fixation, Hysteria and Psychosis, post-Fordism.

In his last work *Pensiero vivente: origine e attualità della filosofia italiana* (2010), Roberto Esposito argues that, beginning at least with Machiavelli, a constitutive trait of Italian philosophy consists in bypassing the "necessary negative tonality" of contemporary thought, which after the so-called linguistic

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turn seems capable of “affirmation only through negation,” as if “once having tied the possibility of thought, and thus of action, to the transcendental nature of language, philosophical experience was continuously sucked into the same entropic gorge that intends to escape.”¹ In this perspective, the source of any space of order –language, society and so on– vanishes into the dark night of negativity. According to Esposito, this is the typical retrospective effect of an “immunizing logic” that, protecting the coherence of a system “against the self-dissolutive risk of the partaking-in-the-commune,” usually “characterizes origin –originary community– in utterly negative terms, i.e. elemental chaos or the state of nature, so as to determine the necessity of its barring.”² The best Italian philosophy instead is characterized by a *living-thought* that critically engages the origin and draws from it not a paralyzing and static perspective, but the energy typical of beginning (*cominciamento*) and its originating force.

Looking at Italy from a distance—not only at its society, but also at its cultural production –one thing that continuously strikes me is how the country enjoys falling into a provincial image of itself. This is a common phenomenon. Under the gaze of foreign eyes people tend to reenact an exaggerated representation of their autochthony. Although Esposito’s idea of distinguishing Italian philosophy as driven by the problem of life seems a simple and thus brilliant intuition, one may think that it runs the abovementioned risk. Especially in the US context, it risks, in other words, attaching to the various philosophies produced in the peninsula the typical flavor of *italianness* that is so successful abroad: the vigorous, quasi-animal but charming and innocuous representation that Hollywood Academy usually welcomes.

Here, however, we should avoid the benevolent critique that dismisses this philosophical attempt simply because it exoticizes an irreducible form of cultural production. As a matter of fact, we should read the expected reproach of essentialism on the backdrop of an ideology, constructivism, that maintaining that whatever exists is constructed and mediated socially forecloses materiality and its dialectics. Contrary to what it seems, this sort of *provincialization* of Italian philosophy should be taken instead to its extreme degree. In other words, today’s task is showing how its marginality, or particularity, has deep social motives and in fact captures a specific historical configuration of modern biopolitics. As our times are marked by subsumption of the whole personhood in the work process –think of cognitive work or the care work typical of the sphere of reproduction– it is precisely this biopolitical

1 R. Esposito, *Pensiero vivente. Origine e attualità della filosofia italiana*, Einaudi, Torino, 2010, p. 9. From here on all translations from Italian are mine.

2 *Ibidem*, p. 247.

configuration that brings the issue of life (and its origin) to the foreground.³ Thus divesting Italian philosophy of its supposed claims of universality and framing it from the specific angle of the presentness of origin and its amorphous threat-force is an audacious enterprise, one that could free Italian philosophers from the traditional imperative of writing first and foremost historiography.⁴

In his genealogy of this philosophy of life, one current of thought that Esposito hastily mentions is feminism. I would argue that far from being just another example of Italian living-thought, the voices that constitute the plurality of Italian feminisms disclosed the precondition for that very practice. In other words, their *different* and *autonomous* theoretical stance should have a sort of logical precedence over any genealogy of Life-Philosophy. Isn't in fact the patriarchal order established precisely on a set of (immunizing) devices that neutralize and dominate the specific feminine power of procreation? Isn't patriarchy a macroscopic case of *excluding inclusion* typical of the dialectic of immunization?⁵ To put it in straight materialist terms: as the main agents of the work of reproduction, women inhabit a concrete social-natural ambit where capital and labor fight over a strategic item: the production of life—what Marx called labor power. This is why groups like *Lotta Femminista*, a neo-Marxist branch of Italian feminism, investigated the family as a (hidden) center of production of labor-power, disclosing how the latter constituted both

3 Today's centrality of life creates that paradoxical temporality at work in any evolutionary theory for which ideas elaborated in a distant past can be fully comprehended only in the now. Far from being a teleological ratio, this means that residues of the past acquire relevance for us in our act of interrogating them from our present condition. On the causes behind the turn to life see A. Negri, "The Labor of the Multitude and the Fabric of Biopolitics," *Mediations* 2 (2008), pp. 8-25; A. Righi, *Biopolitics and Social Change in Italy: From Gramsci to Pasolini to Negri* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2011); P. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, Semiotext[e], New York, 2004).

4 The weight of tradition and the typical Crocean approach to culture force Italian philosophy departments to work almost exclusively on the history of philosophy. In this sense, the prominence of life and the thought it generates can be innovative only insofar as this perspective maintains a clear non-idealistic direction. That is, if it does not fall into the trap of constructing a positive (laudatory) representation and instead stares at the different material developments that are produced. Thus in drawing a genealogy of living-thought, one must also be keen to foreground its reactionary degenerations. Consider for instance the group of intellectuals gathered around Strapaese who played a key cultural (and political) role during fascism as they constituted a strong, unitary image of Italianness built on autochthony, local folklore and mostly violence. If one examines the editorials that Mino Maccari wrote for the magazine *Il Selvaggio* (the herald of the Strapaese group) or other writings by Giovanni Papini, it becomes clear how their similar attention to nature gave rise to a pure masculine affirmation of the right of force and violence in every ambit of life. It is in fact paramount to explore the power dynamics and the social conflicts that lie behind any presumably a-temporal, a-historical return to the centrality of nature.

5 See M. Donà, "Immunity and Negation: On Possible Developments of the Theses Outlined in Roberto Esposito's *Immunitas*," *Diacritics*, 36.2 (2006), pp. 57-69.

the matrix of their subordination and a platform for rebellion. Others, such as the Milan-based collective called Demau (De-mystification of Patriarchal Authoritarianism) privileged a psychoanalytical approach that deconstructed the patriarchal organization of the sphere of reproduction thus elaborating an anti-institutional and antiauthoritarian critique that was highly influential for the 1968 Movement. But it is probably the Diotima community in Verona that more extensively interrogated the issue of life and its origin from the autonomous perspective of sexual difference.

Women's relation to procreation is complicated. Although praised as an exceptional gift, historically their capacity to reproduce life has been regarded as the emblem of their oppression. It is presumably this vicinity with nature that made her inferior to man, as the latter, claiming for himself an exclusive role in public life, moved civilization forward. The Diotima community aimed at disparaging this powerful masculine discourse that precluded any positive instantiations of an autonomous feminine dimension. It did so by reverting what was considered a sign of inferiority into the locus of authority. So it engendered a theory and a set of practices that shaped a different configuration of psychic and social life that they called the Maternal Symbolic.⁶

Looking at the thought of a prominent intellectual of the community, Luisa Muraro, in the next pages I will explore the ways in which the thought of sexual difference worked out key elements of Lacanian psychoanalysis, and thought through the problem of origin and its symbolic organization from a female point of view. In this sense, I will show how the notion of the Maternal Symbolic embodies a fundamental aspect in the deconstruction and critique of what Esposito calls the "paradigm of secularization" and its dubious "historical resolution of the originary nucleus" of life.⁷ Next, I will discuss the new challenges that the Maternal Symbolic faces drawing on the insights on Ida Dominijanni's work. Her reflection on the notion of *sexed subjectivity* in light of the transformations of the organization of labor –post-Fordism– in the so-called *society of enjoyment* is crucial to sketch the criticalities of contemporary psychopathology as well as its most promising elements of conflict.⁸

6 As Ida Dominijanni argues if "what a woman suffers from is being put into the world without a symbolic placement," the political task becomes "speaking her sexual difference and giving it social existence." See her "Radicality and Asceticism" *Italian Feminist Thought A Reader*, P. Bono and S. Kemp (eds.), Blackwell, Cambridge, 1991, p. 129.

7 R. Esposito, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

8 See T. McGowan, *The End of Dissatisfaction? Jacques Lacan and the Emerging Society of Enjoyment*, Albany: State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004. In discussing Post-Fordist psychopathology I kept in mind the thought of Massimo Recalcati as he expressed it in various interviews available on the Youtube channel: *Psichiatria on line Italia*. See Pol.it, Sept. 2011, <http://www.psychiatryonline.it/ital/current.htm>.

THE SOCIAL SPLIT OF HUMANITY AND SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

The translation of the power to procreate into a curse, into a pluri-secular form of disfranchisement and expropriation rests on a common assumption: the physiological difference between men and women. This difference defines procreation as a biological destiny for women, disciplining their processes of subject formation. Italian feminism turned around this notion and transformed it into a political practice. To fully appreciate the valence of this move, let us approach the problem of the difference between sexes from an anthropological point of view, and then move to its psychoanalytic significance. Here the question is: what is the most defining characteristic in the physiological dimension of sexuality across genders?

The first distinction we must draw is not one between genders, but between species, that is, between the animal and the human. As Mina Davis Caulfield noted, “almost all our living relatives” show “physiological cues, triggers to arousal for both females and males that effectively limit sexual behavior to the periods of maximal probability for impregnation.”⁹ Humans instead do not experience a specific sexual season and copulate independently from natural cycles. The loss of a sexual season, that is, the *loss of estrous* cycles where female and male respond to sexual cues, is the result of the evolutionary change occurred in the transition from ape to man. A whole set of repercussions proceeds from this assumption and constitute the foundations of what is commonly known as sociobiology. Donna Haraway has demonstrated how historically this discipline “has been central in the development of the most thorough naturalization of patriarchal division of authority in the body politic and in reduction of the body politic to sexual physiology.”¹⁰

Silvia Vegetti Finzi, psychologist and militant in the Italian women’s movement, stated that the woman is a “domesticated animal” (the absence of estrous is usually a characteristic that mammals develop in captivity). Furthermore, for a woman “the loss of estrous does not simply imply asynchrony with respect to natural cycles [...] but also estrangement with respect to her own body and desire.”¹¹ If for men the consequences of this primary alienation seem straightforward –the detachment from procreative

9 M. Davis Caulfield, “Sexuality in Human Evolution: What is Natural in Sex?”, *Feminist Studies* 2 (1985), pp. 344-345.

10 D. Haraway, “Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic, Part I: A Political Physiology of Dominance”, *Signs* 1 (1978), p. 26. See also the second part of the article “Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic, Part II: The Past Is the Contested Zone: Human Nature and Theories of Production and Reproduction in Primate”, *Signs*, vol. 2, 1 (1978), pp. 37-60.

11 S. Vegetti Finzi, “L’animale femminile”, in *Verso il luogo delle origini*, Centro Documentazione Donna di Firenze, La Tartaruga edizioni, Milán, 1992, p. 56.

ends creates the conditions for a socio-symbolic experience of sexuality—for women the matter is more complex. Women’s sexuality is still molded by reproductive processes, but since she simultaneously engages in non-procreative activities, it is also directed toward a non-specified goal. This goal is a point of great disagreement. If it is defined as the taking care of herself and her progeny, i.e. as sexual favors in exchange for protection, the conclusion is a social Darwinism upholding an implicit patriarchal view of society. If it is defined as an autonomous and liberating enjoyment, a neo-libertine call for authenticity usually is at stake. Is this ambiguity between sexuality as women’s self-determination (protection, pleasure) and contemporaneously as their over-determination (procreation) the genuine difference between men and women?

Slavoj Žižek argues that at the bottom of Jacques Lacan’s *formulae of sexuation*—that is to say at the core of the positions the subject assumes with respect to sexuality—resides the problem of the primary difference that is implicit in the loss and/or lack of estrous. Lacan’s inquiry in fact examines the passage “from animal coupling led by instinctual knowledge, regulated by natural rhythms, to human sexuality possessed by an eternalized desire” qua the emergence of the symbolic order.¹² This transformation cannot be articulated through a linear causal transformation. It is a derangement, a rift that breaks an established pattern. As with natural selection, this radical split illustrates the typical paradox of necessity. Necessity is always *retrospective*. At a certain point in time something new emerges, yet this emerging contains two contradictory characteristics: it *must be thought* as something that it did not exist before and, simultaneously, as something that was already posited and necessary for existence. This is the true non-teleological ratio of Darwin’s evolutionism: “contingent and meaningless genetic changes are retroactively used [...] in a manner appropriate for survival,” thus “temporality here is future anterior, that is, adaptation is something that always and by definition will have been.”¹³

The extinction of a regulated, overdetermined sexuality qua reproduction becomes a *lack*, a gap that transitions humankind into a new territory. This lack, however, should never be thought as a limitation, but as an absence that gives rise to a new openness. For instance, the unhooking of the sexual act from its biological base opens up a great variety of non-reproductive practices that fuel “the development of shared and learned behavior and symbolic

12 S. Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, Continuum, London, 2006, p. 73.

13 Ibidem, p. 99; this is also what John Bellamy Foster calls Marx’s logic of emergence of Darwinism, see *Marx’s Ecology. Materialism and Nature*, Monthly Review Press, New York, 2000, pp. 230-236.

communication.”¹⁴ In this new field *both* genders inhabit their biological base in a more reflective way. “Sexual pleasure –for instance– which originally signaled that the goal of procreation was achieved, becomes an aim-in-itself.”¹⁵ Detached from rigid natural patterns, sensuous pleasure is now invested with a whole set of meanings and values becoming the object of social negotiations. Sexuality is thus already on the human side of the rift. Its biological base is thoroughly complicated, traversed by social constructions and symbolizations.

I believe that this is the most natural element we can capture at the bottom of sexuality: the *grafting* on the biological base of sexuality as a social complex. It would be pointless to look for something more natural in the institution of sexuality apart from the grafting which retrospectively bears witness to its necessity. It is the self-positing work of humankind that in relation with (i.e. influencing and responding to) a complex and fluctuating environment experiences morphological changes. Morphology is self-causing. Sexuality is part of this set of self-transformative activities in dialectical relation with environs. Any archaic animal residue still informing women’s sexuality bears testimony to concrete historical arrangements. In a society where reproduction is crucial and those who perform that job are powerless, the pseudo-natural pressure of sexuality as procreation will hold sway. So the specific positions that males and females assume regarding sexuality –their different goals (pleasure or procreation) and the scrutiny of their imbalances– follow existing social organizations and their conflicts.

THE LACAN-ŽIŽEK TAKE ON THE FORMULAE OF SEXUATION

Historicizing the symbolic forms (i.e. patriarchy) that organize the biological base is central to the engendering of a new politics of sexuality. Adriana Cavarero, for instance, traced this occultation back to ancient Greek myths. Particularly in Hesiod’s myth of creation, she reads the mark of male domination “translating birth into the negative meaning of the beginning of death, the uterus into a container of evils [...] and all those other figures of misogynous culture that follow on the centralizing of the male

14 Caulfield, op. cit., p. 353.

15 S. Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies. On Deleuze and Consequences*, Routledge, New York, 2004, p. 141. In a recent writing on this matter, Žižek further clarifies this point stating that in the derailment of sexuality, the latter “changed in its very substance: it is no longer the instinctual drive to reproduce, but a drive that gets thwarted as to its natural goal (reproduction) and thereby explodes into an infinite, properly meta-physical, passion”. This is how “culture retroactively posits/transforms its own natural presupposition” and “denaturalizes nature itself.” Žižek, “Hegel, Sex and Marriage”, *Lacanian Ink* 37 (2011), pp. 113-114.

as the universal subject of thought and language.”¹⁶ But the claim feminists make is that also the discipline that studied these symbolic economies, psychoanalysis, contributed to the preclusion of a genuinely direct expression and construction of women symbolic unity, i.e. what they called the Maternal Symbolic. The French scholar Luce Irigaray, who is very influential among the Diotima group, argued that a key concept in Freud and Lacan, the *phallus*, is nothing less than the masculine expropriation of the relation to origin and of the desire for and as origin.¹⁷ “We know” Cavarero argues “that corporeal facts [...] are the raw material of the symbolic elaboration that expresses their signification.”¹⁸ Hence the task is to signify this sexual difference in a productive non static way.

To show how the philosophy of sexual difference outlined the configuration of the Maternal Symbolic I propose to go back to Lacan by way of Žižek. The Slovenian psychoanalyst is in fact particularly interesting for us as he does not propose a monolithic rendering of Lacan, but rather he looks at his work as a “succession of attempts to seize the same persistent traumatic kernel.”¹⁹ As Žižek notes: “In so far as sexual difference is a Real that resists symbolization, the sexual relationship is condemned to remain an asymmetrical non-relationship in which the Other, our partner, prior to being a subject, is a Thing.”²⁰ By recognizing the transcendental nature of woman as Other we deploy this asymmetry. According to Lacan, two different gender modalities exist that are expressed in his famous formula. The feminine is limitless, but at the same time not totalizable (not-whole); the masculine instead is universal and definite, but founded on exception (*phallogentrism*). Žižek argues that this symbolic placement crops out a factor elevating it to an absolute condition. This is what he calls “humanization at its zero-level” that is, “the elevation of a minor activity into an end-in-itself” that has the same features of a “deadly excess of enjoyment as the goal in itself.”²¹ Symbolic communication emerges out of this background as a barrier that mediates this form of *jouissance* without ever subsuming it completely. It is important to notice that this is a specific kind of “animalized” *jouissance*, an obsessive form of enjoyment that we will find also at work in post-Fordism.

16 A. Cavarero, “Thinking Difference”, *Symposium 2* (1995), p. 126.

17 L. Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Cornell University, Ithaca, 1985, p. 33.

18 A. Cavarero, p. 125.

19 S. Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*, Verso, New York & London, 1994, p. 173.

20 *Ibidem*, p. 108.

21 S. Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies*, cit., pp. 142-143.

Key to the formulae of sexuation is the “fundamental Hegelian paradox of reflexivity.”²² Žižek argues that “if the subject is to emerge, he must set himself against a paradoxical object that [...] cannot be subjectivized,” that is “a piece of flesh that the subject has to lose if he is to emerge as the void of the distance towards every objectivity.”²³ Men and women respond to this impasse in different ways and this justifies their different location with regards to Lacan’s schema. It is in seminar XX, *Encore* that Lacan lays out a complex topology, or logical space of sexual difference.²⁴ Here Lacan begins with man in order to work out woman’s position. The masculine side of the formula defines a relationship between him as a barred subject and reality: \$ — a. We said that the subject must emerge in opposition to an object. Žižek argues that this happens through the interpellation of another subject (an *Other* which is usually the mother) who addresses the infant. When the subject responds to this puzzling demand s/he establishes his or her conditions of possibility and, departing from his or her pre-symbolic state, begins positing him or herself as someone *for* somebody. This is the first step to initiate a process of subjectification that inaugurates the entrance of the subject into the symbolic order. Hence according to Lacan, and contrary to what we commonly think, we don’t begin as subjects, but as object for a subject, for somebody else. Fantasy is the proper name for this work that sustains subject formation, that is to say, for a procedure that offers a “way for the subject to answer the question of what object he is in the eyes of the Other.”²⁵ Responding to this demand (the demand of the Other) is an activity an individual will carry on for the rest of his or her life.

Yet as this asymmetry characterizes our subjectivity, it marks also our inconsistency. This means that the subject is hollow. In other words, inside our head (or our heart) there is no little replica of ourselves in charge of the operations, because we are born out of a request of/from the Other. This is why Lacan bars the S of the subject (\$). This vacuous essence of the self reflects also the early perceptions that infants have as they begin to realize their individuality. In the so-called mirror stage, the infant composes his or her “dispersed erogenous zones into the totality of a unified body.”²⁶ The symbol of this limitation, the *phallus*, delimits (or castrates) the subject

22 S. Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment*, cit., p. 105. See for instance Moi Toril, “From Femininity to Finitude: Freud, Lacan, and Feminism, Again”, *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 3 (2004), pp. 841-878.

23 S. Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment*, cit., p. 33.

24 See F. Regnault, “Introduction to *Encore*”, *Lacanian Link* 37 (2011), pp. 47-55; Ellie Ragland, *The logic of sexuation: from Aristotle to Lacan*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 2004.

25 S. Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment*, cit., p. 177.

26 *Ibidem*, p. 128.

and in so doing it also provides the future structure of reference for his desire. It becomes a signifier of a signified that cannot be fulfilled. Here desire is articulated in both its *transitive* meaning, as desire *for* the Other, and its *causative* meaning, as the desire for the recognition *by* the Other. What is paramount here is desire's relational structure. This rapport can be extinguished only when the radical difference between subject and Other is foreclosed as in the abovementioned case of the zero-level jouissance.

Moreover, the response (fantasy) the subject fabricates cannot be taken as something positive either. In the formula (\$ – a) the subject establishes through his fantasy a relation with the Other, which Lacan calls the *object petit a*. The *object petit a* is a sort of structural mechanism that feeds on itself comprising various level: "Objet a is simultaneously the pure lack, the void around which the desire turns and which, as such, causes the desire, *and* the imaginary element which conceals this void, renders it invisible by filling it out."²⁷ A good example Lacan uses to illustrate the structure of the *object petit a* is that of the book that goes missing from a library bookshelf. The book's absence is visible and –if we take for granted the physical impossibility to retrieve the volume– it now constitutes its presence. Thus for Lacan, those individuals located in a masculine position are continuously caught in the reproduction of this phantasmatic object. As he writes, this man "is unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except inasmuch as his partner is the cause of his desire."²⁸ But the cause of his desire is simply a fantasy, a filler of a void that cannot be filled.

This vacuous matter is not proper to the male only. According to Žižek, it is in *Encore* that Lacan revises his previous position concluding that the symbolic order too is inconsistent. Prior to the 1960s, Lacan believed that "the Name-of-the-Father *qua* the central signifier [...] guarantee[d] the consistency of the symbolic field."²⁹ In other words, the structure of reference constituted by the symbolic order was based on an exception, a principle ensuring from outside the coherence of the symbolic field. In *Encore*, however, he affirms that "there is no Other of the Other."³⁰ Here Lacan stages a negation that works at two levels. The first negation (*there is no Other*) implies that the symbolic order is not founded on a determinate distinctive element that defines it—for instance the famous Freudian idea of Moses as the non-Jew father of the Jews. The second (*there is not Other of the Other*) implies that the threshold of the

27 Ibidem, p. 178.

28 J. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality: the Limits of Love and Knowledge*, Norton & Company, New York & London, 1999, p. 80.

29 S. Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment*, cit., p. 173.

30 J. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, cit., p. 81.

symbolic is split open, operating as a fragmented border not defining what it is in and what is out, but rather generating an infinity of points.³¹

It is at this extremity that we encounter the woman. As Lacan argues “woman is that which has a relationship to that Other [...] in the most radical sense.”³² Her position is characterized the very structure of the borders of the symbolic field, borders that rely on a groundless basis. Therein we encounter her epistemological superiority. Her position is expressed by the following formula: $S - (\text{A})$. She is not a barred subject ($\$$), because she is not captured completely by the symbolic field. As we said she inhabits the zone of indistinguishability of the borders. Yet, as she replicates the same infinite structure, she is also in direct relation with the Other (A). Here the figure of the hysteric, as Žižek notes, better explains the female defiance of the symbolic inscription. Stormed by paradoxical requests, the hysteric personality is caught up in a masquerade that ultimately shows how behind these radically contradictory performances there is no subject. Thus the hysteric acts out the properly bottomless configuration of any subjectivity that is not subjected to the fantasy of *objet petit a*. In Žižek’s interpretation the woman retains a fundamental epistemological value insofar as she constitutes a transcendental condition. Accordingly, any positive determination of her essence, what he calls “the pre-symbolic eternally Feminine” is useless and gives rise in fact to “a retroactive patriarchal fantasy.”³³

In this regard Žižek but also other eloquent interpreters of *Encore*, like Ellie Ragland, maintain that, for however traumatic or fragmentary, it is the phallus that regulates the symbolic position “vis-à-vis difference.”³⁴ The woman instead –and this is a productive and positive difference that Žižek censures– entertains a special relation to jouissance for, as she escapes the phallic function, she is also simultaneously able to “take a certain distance from the *all* of the master discourse.”³⁵ Man, on the other hand, has access to phallic jouissance which hinges on some prop (the partial *objet a*) that momentarily satisfies the subject only to make him begin his search again. This fantasy propels a series of attempts that are multiple, continuous but also determined and mostly serialized. On the contrary, whoever occupies the feminine position does not follow recursive phallogocentric logic, but s/he operates on an economy of desire based on “quantitative infinity.”³⁶ For Žižek

31 Yong Wang makes a similar argument with reference to social system, in “Agency: The Internal Split of Structure”, *Sociological Forum* 3 (2008), pp. 481-502.

32 J. Lacan, *On Feminine Sexuality*, cit., p. 81.

33 S. Žižek, *Metastases of Enjoyment*, cit., p. 151.

34 Ragland, op. cit., p. 183.

35 Ibidem, p. 182

36 S. Žižek, *Interrogating the Real*, cit., p. 65.

this is a transcendental position, one that functions as a limit and does not allow the coming into being of a subject; so while he installs her in the throne of the transcendental, Žižek denies her access to a positive subjectification.

LUISA MURARO: THE MATERNAL SYMBOLIC AND THE FUNCTION OF FIXATION

With Lacan and Žižek we flew high on the wings of philosophy and theoretical conceptualization. By paying attention to more concrete life experiences, the Diotima group asks instead a series of more basic questions. If we take for granted Lacan's topology and the epistemologically superior position of the woman, is it actually true that she falls outside the domain of symbolic communication? Moreover, is it true that because of this peculiar relationship with the symbolic she becomes incapable of "free signification" and thus of expressing "a symbolic order of difference."³⁷ And most important, is it true that that deep, all-comprising love and tenderness of infancy all ultimately severed by the enigma of the Other and the following castration?

My argument is that the feminist revision of the psychoanalytic framework is based on two fundamental points. One is historical and disputes the immutability of the symbolic order as it has been delineated. The second has a metaphysical objective and challenges Lacanian thought by taking to full consequences the scheme of sexuation. We may assess these points in light of the work of Luisa Muraro beginning from a very simple, intuitive question she raises. It regards the relationship between the infant and her or his mother, but what is at stake here is also the hidden structure that lies behind the transcendental priority of women.

For what we have said so far, there seems to be a discrepancy between the symbolic as a structure that guarantees signification and the process of learning our native language as a concrete activity. Muraro points out that "we learn language from the mother or someone else on her behalf, and that we do that not as something beyond or at the margins but as an essential part of the vital communication we entertain with her."³⁸ In effect, even if language cuts through our symbiosis with the environment as a foreign medium and castration provides access to our future social interactions, this event entails a long period of apprenticeship. But in Lacan, as well as in Žižek, this seems to happen in a transcendental laboratory where moves, responses and dynamics are determined by abstract laws. On the contrary, in everyday living experience, it is usually the mother who carries out this linguistic labor establishing an expansive relationship with the creature she gave birth to. This

37 I. Dominjanni, "L'eccedenza della libertà femminile", in *Motivi della libertà*, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2001, pp. 50, 52.

38 L. Muraro, *L'ordine simbolico della madre*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1991, p. 42.

is a powerful and vital dimension. Why does it have to be severed? Muraro does not refuse the reality of the symbolic, which is objective and historically true, but argues that these theorizations only show us the particular point of view of the masculine social order.³⁹ Accordingly, the “symbolic order begins to be instituted in the relationship with the mother (or it will never be), and the cut that separates us from her does not respond to a necessity at the level of the symbolic order”⁴⁰.

The repressing or foreclosing of a *maternal* genealogy of signification is due not only to a historically male dominated society, but also to a lack of theorization, where with the term *theory* Muraro recalls the Greek definition of *theorein*, that is to “look at.” This incapacity to look at or show the logic and the role of a different Maternal Symbolic is what the thought of sexual difference strived to produce. Here we come to the metaphysical argument. I come to believe that the notion of the Maternal Symbolic that the Diotima group elaborates is in no disagreement with Lacan and the definition of woman as a non-whole; rather it represents a full development of its contents. Let us go back again to Lacan. As he notes the women position appears contradictory by standard logic only if framed in the context of a set theory based on a *finite* field. If the latter is *infinite*, however, “the not-whole [cannot] impl[y] the existence of something that is produced on the basis of a negation,” but rather it implies that of an “indeterminate existence.” The couplet “indeterminate existence” connects the idea of an open variability (*indeterminate*) to its concrete and individual actualization (*existence*). Indeterminate existence visualizes the idea of a split border, one in which the field, instead of being limited, grows as through a graph, or a series of variations. This is how, Lacan concludes, “woman is truth,” but as such “one can only half-speak of her.”⁴¹ Muraro articulates her full structure giving form to Lacan’s (precluded) truth by reconsidering the concept of *fixation*. Instead of an obsessive behavior caused to the persistence of an attachment to a libidinal level, Muraro transcends its pathological blockage rescuing a structural value, that of a principle able to organize the maternal dimension.

Why does Muraro focus on fixation? Doesn’t this approach clash with standard feminist theory that depicts repetition and sameness as the typical results of phallocentrism? According to Muraro fixation does not exactly entail the repetition of the same. A different (structurally more fundamental) kind of circularity displaces the endless replacement of the *objet petit a*. The concept of fixation is linked to *substitution* in such a way that in the former “something from our primordial relationship with the matrix of life is

39 Ibidem, p. 46.

40 Ibidem, p. 44.

41 J. Lacan, op. cit., p. 103.

kept” that actually enables any chain of substitutions.⁴² It is the permanence of an archaic trait that we inherited as infants: a presentness of the world that develops out of the first indistinctive feeling that newborns have before any proper symbolic individuation. In the pre-symbolic stage, this powerful and all-encompassing experience accompanies the subsequent individualization and actually funds the child’s capacity to relate with any ambit of his or her life experience. The radical point that Muraro makes is that our tendency to reactivate that configuration of being is precluded by the symbolic order, which allows its functioning only through the displaced object. But this attachment to the matrix of life constitutes an original horizon of sense which is necessary and that presents a clear maternal lineage.

Going beyond the masculine symbolic, this capacity engenders, moreover, an alternative form of signification. We said that fixation implies substitution, but substitution here does not mean exchanging something *for* something else. This substitution is also “restitution,” for we never replace “the mother with something *other* from her.” But how is it possible? Don’t we reach a sort of impasse where the presence of the original blocks any growth, any change? Muraro argues that the mother has a “symbolic predisposition to substitution” as any “woman becomes mother while being capable of not becoming it, and while remaining still the daughter of her mother, so that any biological mother is already a substitute.”⁴³ Hence the Maternal Symbolic takes the form of a plane in which the symbolic order represents only a regional area ruled by deterministic (phallogocentric) sets of laws. The plane instead is the immanent field of possibilities of the phenomenal world. The difficulty in conceptualizing it, Muraro argues, can be “resolved if we think about a substitution without the replacements of the mother, according to the structure of the maternal continuum. This is possible because it exists a substitution without replacements: it is the language we talk.” Here words, she continues, “do not substitute other words, they replace things without putting anything else in their place”⁴⁴.

The famous opposition between metaphor and metonymy that Muraro rethinks in her work *Maglia o uncinetto* (2004) better illustrates this point.⁴⁵ The masculine symbolic order organizes its field and ensures coherence through analogies, through resemblances among different objects that refer back to a common denominator: the phallus. So substitution here means the return of the same (the phallus). The variants that grow in the maternal

42 L. Muraro, *L’ordine simbolico*, cit., p. 56.

43 Ibidem, p. 54.

44 Ibidem, p. 62.

45 See L. Muraro, *Maglia e uncinetto. Racconto linguistico-politico sulla inimicizia tra metafora e metonimia*, Imanifestolibri, Roma, 2004.

continuum, on the other hand, follow a different logic, one which is marked by its sexual constituency. The woman relation to her sexual organs underscores the importance of interiority and contiguity –the lips of the vagina being here the primal referent. Metonym, in fact, follows “dynamics of the near and not of the proper, movements coming from the quasi contact between two unites hardly definable as such”⁴⁶. Metonym brings together what is close, thus expressing relations, vicinities among things or facts that happen to be already there. Metonym, thus, provides a more open and differential economy which is horizontal and contingent. This is why fixation *qua* substitution-restitution is compared to language, for it represents the deployment of what De Saussure conceived of as a linguistic system: an infinite syntagmatic field of associations *in presentia*.

Within this phenomenal plane, subjectification bears no nostalgia for an original, because that *origin* is already inscribed in the fabric that sustains its form of life. Where psychoanalysis saw an empty whole, the blind spot of subjectivity, feminism discovers infinite fullness: the diagram of maternal fullness. Psychoanalysis in fact constructs the idea of the sayable, of what can be determined or better signified, basing its configuration on the inaccessibility of the symbolic order, the barred subject and so on. But beyond this limited field, there stands also truth (and Lacan acknowledged it) with its indeterminate configuration. Yet, this duality cannot be reconciled as we can look at truth only from the point of view of the symbolic. Feminism instead turns the argument around and discovers a differential consistency that gives back a material and expansive dimension of being where nothing is lost.

In this perspective the figure of the hysteric changes radically. Hysteria is not simply the typical female masquerade behind which one finds the inconsistency of a positive subject. This fundamental gap actually shows how the hysteric is tied to the Other, her object of love, “as nourishment of her own sentiment”⁴⁷. This Other is the mother. Yet being too close to her, the hysteric refuses any substitution. In other words, “she does not recognize that substitution is restitution.”⁴⁸ The cure for this extreme case of fixation consists precisely in language. The *talking cure* developed by psychoanalysis, and its successive adoption among feminists through consciousness rising meetings – in Italian *presa di coscienza e di parola*– was a means to practice a relationality between mother and daughter beyond the masculine occlusion. It offered a way of being together that was communal and differential like speech. This is the true meaning of the symbolic maternal order: not a limitation but a possibility to populate being, not simply a theory to give form to a socio-

46 Irigaray, op. cit., p. 111.

47 L. Muraro, *L'ordine simbolico*, cit., p. 59.

48 Ibidem, p. 62.

symbolic configuration for women but its actual creative transformation as a living dimension. In conclusion, in the context of the patriarchal society, the maternal symbolic defined a political practice that dialectically turned what looked like a cause of oppression into a source of authority and strength.

POST-FORDIST PSYCHOPATHOLOGY, IDA DOMINIANNI AND THE PROBLEM OF INTERNAL ROTATION

The rise of post-Fordism brought forward new dynamics that put into question some of the principles of the theory of the Maternal Symbolic. The economic and the symbolic order usually go hand in hand, and this is all the more true today when the hegemony of a neo-liberal ideology coexists with the faltering of the Law of the Father and its symbolic order. The two are not disconnected. Just as the symbolic order of the Father, with its privileges and interdictions melts into thin air, society too loses its traditional vertical structures and customary norms. Similarly, in post-Fordist production we experience a de-structuring of the organization of work that produce zones of indistinguishability. Consider, for instance, the unification of labor place and living space, the indiscernibility between labor time and non-labor time or between consumption and production, and the dissolving of a standard of measurement to remunerate immaterial work.⁴⁹

Our experiential dimension of life changes drastically as well. Think of the vast and always new choice of products available on the market and how consumerism solicits countless modes of self-realizations, lifestyles and so on. This technical use of pleasure is embedded in the very being of the modern individual and constructs life as a boundless, but private and serialized, field of experience. The chief consequence here is that the notion of desire has now collapsed in the function of enjoyment, which is private, repetitive and excessive as the subject disposes of the object of pleasure precisely as a thing.⁵⁰ This is the libidinal face of post-Fordism; this is the lucrative disorder of the society of enjoyment. In the lack of measure of post-Fordism we perceive the thriving of an animalized form of jouissance, one that is caught in an obsessive circulation due to the lack of a symbolic intervention.

49 Immaterial work implies the employment of all aspects of one's personality and thus escapes the quantitative measurement used under Fordism: wage labor. Here one can see the two side of the problem: on the one hand the force and creativity of the new laborer, on the other the fact that the limited and exploitative dimension of wage labor constitutes the only safeguard against his or her starvation.

50 See M. Recalcati, *L'uomo senza inconscio: Figure della nuova clinica psicoanalitica*, Raffaello Cortina Editore, Milano, 2010, and *Forme contemporanee del totalitarismo*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 2007.

What happens to the thought of sexual difference in this context? This is a tough question because the theory of the Maternal Symbolic was elaborated in the wake of the patriarchal discourse and did not assess the techniques of power at work in post-Fordism. The problem is that these new economic mechanisms seem to reflect in a distorted way also some tenets of sexual difference. As Ida Dominijanni rightfully pointed out, the Maternal Symbolic cannot be thought as something monolithic, there is always a negative residuum that escapes and that “continuously needs to be reprocessed and reworked”⁵¹. The positive expression of the maternal does not erase the presence of what she calls a “trace or impression of the origin that always returns” and thus complicates the primary relationship with the matrix of life and desire.⁵² For one of the astonishing results of the affirmation of the theory of sexual difference is that “woman’s sexuality has progressively dissolved.” Paradoxically, she argues, “the more the mother became the sexed figure of the origin, of authority and of woman discourse, the more it de-sexualized herself”⁵³.

The question we need to ask is: what happened to the relation with the Other under post-Fordist biopolitical control of the masses? The eclipse of desire in favor of enjoyment and its compulsive pattern of repetition points toward the category of fixation that was central in Muraro’s analysis. Dominijanni gestures towards this issue when acknowledging that in post-Fordism a shift occurs from the centrality of the hysteric figure to that of the anorexic. In her view, it is now the anorexic that bears testimony to a general disorder in our processes of symbolization. As she notes: “if the hysteria was the symptom that accompanied the women’s entrance into modernity, and to which feminism gave a political response, anorexia does not only represents the symptom of female resistance against postmodern hedonism and consumerism, but also the paradoxical and unforeseen effect of the [...] symbolic revolution of women.”⁵⁴ In what sense is anorexia replacing the hysteric position? Hysteria is tied to modernity as the latter is defined by the patriarchal order, where the absolute transparency and consistency of phallogentrism begins to falter but still keeps under control society. As we said, through the masquerade, women registered and gave form to the ontological reality of a saturated attachment to the mother as the object of love. Based on a strict exclusionary principle of order, the patriarchal order did not allow such dissent and thus forbid these compartments. In its extreme

51 I. Dominijanni, “L’impronta indecidibile”, in *L’ombra della madre, Diotima*, Liguori Editore, Napoli, 2007, p. 180.

52 Ibidem.

53 Ibidem, p. 183.

54 Ibidem, p. 187.

pathological form, hysteria is a neurosis caused by interdiction. This symptom cannot hold sway in today's society of enjoyment, whose salient features are narratives that command systematic satisfaction instead of injunctions to defer and repress desires. In such a context, individuals are pushed to realize themselves under the command of enjoyment thus following patterns that are properly psychotic. In psychosis, in fact, the subject's responses and actions are literally absorbed by the pressure of the Real, for the symbolic has lost its morphological capacity to structure reality. The postmodern individual thus lives in a hallucinatory dimension, where these hallucinations are manifestations of the Real. As Massimo Recalcati affirms, if in neurosis one can detect "a symbolic return of the Real repressed through the apparatuses of the subconscious, in psychosis there is a symbolic collapse and a return to the Real as such, without any symbolic mediation"⁵⁵. Hence the fixation, the compulsive repetition typical of psychosis.

The anorexic girl (but the same holds for the male) is caught in this psychotic loop, only she projects it on her body. Dominijanni argues that the anorexic is confronted by an overwhelming presence that she identifies with the figure of the mother: "The de-sexualized body of the anorexic" refuses the talking cure that was so effective with hysteria and "presents itself as an identitary datum, a return of the Real that cannot be symbolized"⁵⁶. This residuum resists symbolization and seems to produce a "discontinuity from the maternal, a feminine difference from the mother that must be signified and given room to"⁵⁷. It is in this conflicting relation with origin that we catch a glimpse of the heuristic potentiality of the anorexic in post-Fordist psychopathology. On the one hand, she is the result of decades of struggles in which sexual difference wrestled its spaces of affirmation out of the masculine foreclosure. On the other, with her mute protest she also crops out the criticalities of the maternal continuum in the context of post-Fordist dismeasure. The anorexic embodies a more critical position than other common psychotic figures of our time such as, for instance, the cocaine addict or the workaholic. Perfectly functional to the post-Fordist imperative of performance and self-entrepreneurship, both figures enthusiastically commit themselves to the pattern of reiteration while they dissipate and exhaust their being. On the contrary, the anorexic nightmare of the disciplinary control over the body implies sufferance and pain. These are evidences of a stubborn

55 Recalcati, *L'uomo senza inconscio*, cit., p. 16.

56 I. Dominijanni, "L'impronta indecidibile", cit., p. 187. On the clinical significance of the anorexic see also M. Recalcati, *Elogio del fallimento. Conversazioni su anoressie e disagio della giovinezza*, Edizioni Erikson, Trento, 2011.

57 I. Dominijanni, "L'impronta indecidibile", cit., p. 188.

refusal; they are markers of an implicit unruliness to the injunction of enjoyment.

If we look at the anorexic from a slightly different angle, beyond the return of the Real qua mother, we also perceive a dangerous attack to the category of *fixation* as an organizing principle. The circularity of the substitution-restitution seems saturated by a movement that lost its capacity of mediation/innovation. But isn't this blockage again a symptom of the socio-economic transformations of post-Fordism? Isn't this the effect of the technical organization of excess produced by immaterial work? In effect, a Post-Fordist society does not need a coherent structure of reference. Its key words are: deregulation, decentralization, flexibility but also social cooperation in the guise of the network based production. Thus neoliberalism recognizes the openness of the field and controls it horizontally and molecularly, from the inside of the very individuals that populate it. Through a compulsive reiteration to work and consume more psychotic compartments proliferate that internalizes this form of control as former restrictions or limitations –among which basic social rights typical of a liberal democracy– are progressively dissolved.

So psychosis is not an individual pathology: it is the whole socio-economic infrastructure that organizes it. Consider, for example, a common trait of our life: *self-exploitation*. This phenomenon is tied to the passage from the Fordist figure of the wage-worker to the post-Fordist notion of human capital and immaterial labor. Here, the worker –leaving behind rights and the infrastructure guarantying personal social services– is supposed to prosper in the market by realizing his or her full potentiality⁵⁸. As Andrea Fumagalli notes “the self-employed worker subsumes wage laborer and entrepreneur: his remuneration is strictly dependent from the self-exploitation of his or her laboring skills and from the negotiating power that the latter has on the market”⁵⁹. Be it a lucky and prosperous enterprise or a less fortunate one, one which struggles daily with precarious incomes, the self-employed worker needs continuously to invest on him or herself developing skills, knowledge, capacities as if they were economic assets. Alienation here seems to disappear as the worker comes into being precisely by profiting from his or her own valorization. Yet this also means that labor becomes indistinguishable from non-labor, from life. Obviously this merging engenders an inexhaustible dynamism, an excess. Post-Fordism feeds on this excess and cannibalizes it by inciting laboring practices that ultimately expropriates –the financialization

58 See M. Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2008, p. 229.

59 A. Fumagalli, *Bioeconomia e capitalismo cognitivo. Verso un nuovo paradigma di accumulazione*, Carocci, Roma, 2007, p. 142.

of real economy (its speculation and cyclical crisis) is but the most blatant example⁶⁰. Thus self-realization blurs into mere survival; efficiency and performance lead to the dissolution of bodily and mental energies. Therein the immaterial laborer assumes onto him or herself an unlimited form of command that follows a psychotic behavior.

Neoliberalism foments and disciplines our present dismeasure and disaggregation producing a final form of dissipation which impacts the human, but also the social and certainly the ecological life of the planet –if we consider our pending environmental catastrophe. Thus the anorexic represents both the effect and the critique of this short-circuits. In other words, she is a *symptom*. In her challenge one can detect the contours of a future “subject of difference that emerges –not by accident– with the decline of the identitarian subject, accelerat[ing] the deconstruction and crisis of the latter without nihilistic or auto-annihilating results”⁶¹.

In this sense, Ida Dominijanni tries to impress a new turn to the thought a sexual difference, one that echoes Esposito idea of *internal rotation*. After the reactivation of the fault plane of life through a critical elaboration –in our case the maternal symbolic– one must “work on its internal rotation: turning it from a defense barrier against the external to a differential procedure that transforms that which it identifies.”⁶² Hence if Luisa Muraro, especially in her *L'ordine simbolico della madre*, deploys sexual difference through the recovery of the fullness of the maternal continuum, in the society of enjoyment the latter must undergo a new torsion, one in which fullness assumes on itself its radically differential and self-reflexive premises. This implies reinforcing the idea that sexual difference is to be conceived as a productive practice that gets re-signified in the collective dimension of today's society. In addition, the chain of substitution-restitution must reinvigorate its circulatory and generative capacity avoiding relapses in a saturated restitution of the mother while simultaneously creating order.

As we said Post-Fordism exploits the excess of social cooperation intensively and internally, for it works through the psychotic drive to a self-consuming recursivity. The problem is to give measure to the immeasurable respecting its ethic, in other words finding a distribution that connects two side of the same question: the finite of singularity and the infinite spectrum of

60 See C. Marazzi, “The Violence of Financial Capital”, in A. Fumagalli (ed.), *Crisis in the Global Economy: Financial Markets, Social Struggles, and New Political Scenarios*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles 2010. On the exploitative dimension of immaterial labor in itself see M. Paquinelli, *Animal Spirits: A Bestiary of the Commons*, NAI Publishers / Institute of Network Cultures, Rotterdam, 2008.

61 I. Dominijanni, “Heiresses at Twilight,” *The commoner* 11 (2006), p. 102.

62 R. Esposito, op. cit., p. 250.

its variation. This would be the eternally contingent and historically concrete *fixture* of a new concept of *fixation*. This is why Dominijanni warns that the real *concrete* mother, the source of love but also conflict and pain, will never be completely subsumed by the maternal continuum. It is important to keep that singular person in front of us and continue to interrogate and renegotiate our specific relationship with her. This emphasis on the concrete, historical condition of the maternal is also a response to the de-sexualization of the mother. Hence Dominijanni urges to take into account the father as well. What is the economy of desire that relates him to the mother and the daughter? How do we re-signify these relationships in the context of the faltering of patriarchal figures of power?

At a theoretical level the materiality of sexual difference must be safeguarded as well. Hence sexual difference must play itself out so that its “undecidable” nature, its being an “imprint” more than a symbol, becomes a reflexive supplement⁶³. Somewhere Lacan said that the unconscious lives in the temporality of the *not yet*. The interval between the now of the symptom, its origin and its meaning, allows us to dispose of it as a manifestation, as an always looming possibility for the emergence of a singularity. Doesn’t this virtual dimension offer the most productive way to think the presentness of origin in our life, to project the constituent capacity of beginning into the architectonic of the now? This is the sort of reflective difference that Dominijanni calls “Venus strabismus.” Hence we should “keep a sort of cross-eyed view on the present, both on the best and the worst of our present,” because this distorted perspective “can preserve us from delusions of omnipotence and from considering female freedom as a progressive or definitive conquest, which is not subjected, like it indeed is, to counterthrusts, backlashes, regressions”⁶⁴.

This is a good methodological tip. It’s an example of *good* dialectic, one that men should entertain as well as they discuss how to re-negotiate their masculinity and their desire in light of the decay of the symbolic order and the rise of psychotic forms of enjoyment. Men too should begin by recognizing the distinguishing traits of their symptomatology. And while performing this analytical work, we should all remember the structural connection that binds the symbolic to the economic: men and women alike. If, in fact, contemporary capitalism puts to work our *bios* –i.e. our corporeal and psychic dimension– it is there that political practices should uncover the potentials for tomorrow’s decisive conflicts. I believe the key question that still remains open for both sexes is how to overturn the biopolitical ordering of excess in our society. In

63 I. Dominijanni, “L'impronta indecidibile”, cit., pp. 195-196.

64 I. Dominijanni, “Venus’s Strabismus. Looking at the Crisis of Politics from the Politics of Difference”, *Iris* 2 (2010), p. 182.

other words, how to re-appropriate the potentiality of dismeasure developing the promises of freedom it lodges. It is, once again, the old Marxist question of how to turn forms of vassalage into triggers of liberation.

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