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Behold the Monkey : Queer Jesus and the Queer Posthumanist

Account of Art

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**Abstract:** This paper attempts to combine queer and posthumanist theories in order to re-think the figure of Jesus and challenge the anthropocentric readings of art. The site of the analysis is the phenomenon of *Ecce Mono*, the restored fresco in the small town in eastern Spain which gained popularity on the internet in summer 2012. The mechanisms of playing down the non-human agency in art are studied with the goal of providing a different language for thinking about art, a language that does not privilege humans over non-humans. It is argued that, in *Ecce Mono*, Jesus transgresses the boundaries of species, sexes, and life, while queering matter, religion, and queerness itself.

**Keywords:** queerness, Jesus Christ, *Ecce Mono*, posthumanism, apes, art

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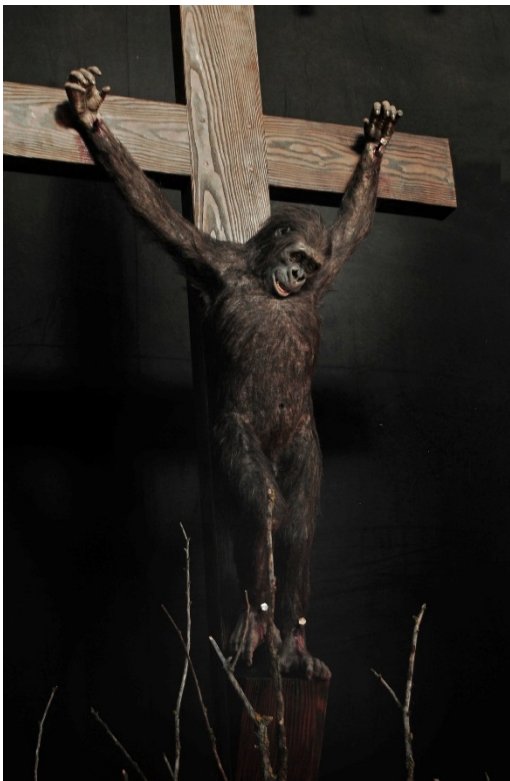
## 0. Foreword: The Electrocuted Black Simian Jesus



*Figur 1. Black Pieta. Artwork by Paul Fryer. Source: paulfryer.net*

The London-based artist Paul Fryer has produced, among other artworks, two curious and thought-provoking installations: *A Privilege of Dominion* and *Black Pieta* (both 2009). Both are documented on Fryer's website. *A Privilege of*

*Dominion* depicts a faux monkey on a cross, while in *Black Pieta* we see in the electric chair a black person whose position and facial expression clearly reference Jesus. These artworks are intense meditations on Christianity, racism and speciesism, and, read together, they present us a different way of talking about, interpreting, and engaging with Jesus Christ, who becomes a monkey in *A Privilege of Dominion*, and changes the colour of his human skin in *Black Pieta*. In the latter, electrocution takes place of the traditional motif of crucifixion.



Figur 2. *A Privilege of Dominion*. Artwork by Paul Fryer. Source: paulfryer.net

In Fryer's art, the reworked body of Christ makes political statements concerning racism, speciesism, and capital punishment; it is the process of deterritorialization of Christ which makes the artworks political. The wax figures of the monkey and the human are pictured in the state of suffering endured by Christ when he was crucified, or, in the case of *Black Pieta*, electrocuted. With their rather straightforward message but a clever way of working with the legacy of Christianity, both *A Privilege of Dominion* and *Black Pieta* facilitate thinking about the body of Jesus Christ in its transformation from the commonly accepted in Christianity white cisgender human male figure into the wax dummies of a black human male and a simian, the latter being coated in synthetic fur.

These artworks open up a space for thinking how Christ's body could be subversive and emancipatory, helping humans and other earthly critters in their quest for liberation from speciesism, capitalism, racism, patriarchy, and the

repressive legacy of Christianity. This paper utilizes queer theory and posthumanist approach in order to rethink Jesus Christ and his body, his humanness and inhumanness, his divinity and carnality, in a way that attempts to evade constructing humans as solitary active subjects of life, and to critically evaluate the distinctions that cut through the body of Christ, as well as through all other bodies.

## 1. Introduction

The title of this paper reads “Behold the Monkey”, and many readers brought up in a Christian tradition – no matter if self-proclaimedly Christian or “secular”, “post-Christian” as the triumphal and deceitful platitudes of today never grow tired of insisting – have probably found it easy to recognize the wordplay with *behold the Man*, or, in Latin, *ecce homo*, a quote from Gospel of John 19:5 depicting the scene just before the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The readers possessing a good memory in relation to the mass media fuss from August 2012, remember the hype about *Behold the Monkey*, or *Ecce Mono* (the word *mono* stands for monkey in Spanish), a fresco in the small Aragonese town of Borja. The fresco, painted in 1930 by Elías García Martínez, flaked off over time due to moisture, and then restored by Cecilia Giménez in 2012, hit the headlines in its time, with both laymen and art critics mocking or expressing tongue-in-cheek praise to the restoration. The picture (figure 3, see next page) that shows the fresco before and after restoration says it all.

The diffractive (Barad, 2003, 2007, 2014; also see subchapter 1.2 in this text) analysis of this restored piece of art is central to the theoretical and political arguments made by this paper. This text lies in the growing transdisciplinary field that is at times called “posthumanities”, and makes interventions into art history, feminist social theory, and queer theory. My main theoretical inspirations for the analysis are Karen Barad, Marietta Radomska, and Giorgio Agamben; this paper also heavily relies on Jacques Derrida’s assessment of thinking about animals in

the Western philosophical canon, as well as on the posthumanist reading of queerness.



Figur 3. *The Ecce Homo fresco before and after the restoration. Source: The Mercury News.*

There are several arguments I make in this paper, and they all are predicated on the idea that the Western philosophical tradition, including its most subversive and radical thinkers, systematically re/produces human exceptionalism, which could be in this context defined as a set of axiomatic assumptions that exclude various non-humans from being fully-fledged members of the world in its dynamics. Here, I step on the ground already populated by very distinct thinkers; this “ground” is called *posthumanities*, and I present a brief overview of the field later. By means of the combination of posthumanities and queer theory, I attempt to analyze art and religion, as well as phenomena that become related, or entangled, with the specific cases I bring up in the analysis.

## 1.1. Structure

The paper exhibits a structure that Radomska calls “spiral”, which means that each part of the text “attempts to connect, deepen, and elaborate on what has been said in the preceding parts” (Radomska, 2016, p. 163). The chronological succession of the paper is as follows: in the following subchapters of the Introduction, I provide a brief account of the methodology of queer diffraction, state the research objectives of the paper, and summarize its relevance to the contemporary discussions in the fields of feminist theory, art history, and posthumanities. The next chapter (2) presents a theoretical exposé, focusing on Barad’s agential realist account and several insights on the relation between the human and the animal from Agamben. This is followed up by the terminological discussion and the introduction of several concepts that will be important for the following analysis.

The analysis itself is presented in the following chapter, “The Queer Posthumanist Account of *Ecce Mono*”. I believe that before rethinking Jesus Christ and performing a posthumanist reading of *Ecce Mono*, one needs to understand the dynamics and mechanics of power that reproduce anthropocentrism in the context of the restored fresco. Therefore, the first subchapter (3.1) analyses workings of Cartesian apparatuses, a concept that I introduce in the last section of the theoretical chapter (2.3). This subchapter (3.1) is focused on presenting the workings of the Cartesian cut, i.e. the stable separation between subject and objects, in reporting and thinking about art, in genres of mass media, blog, and academic texts. Then, I deconstruct two of the identified Cartesian apparatuses by showing their anthropocentrism. This is done in the Interlude and in the subchapter 3.2, with the latter presenting an analysis that meditates on the entanglements of the organic and inorganic, the living and the non-living within the life of the artwork in question. This deconstruction that aims at dismantling the Cartesian apparatuses identified in 3.1, informs the following subchapter (3.3), which deals with the way Jesus Christ is queered in *Ecce Mono*, diffractively reading the artwork through the canons of representations of non-human apes and



Jesus Christ in Christian religious images, evoking the theoretical and political insights of queer theory.

I then wrap up with the concluding chapter, in which I summarize the main points of the thesis, and offer some wider reflections on what these points might inform, both politically and academically.

This paper is better read continuously, without the omnipresent academic habit of jumping from an introduction to a conclusion. There are several instances of breaks or ruptures from the previous lines of thought, all made in order to eventually come back to the primary argument in question after some necessary derailment to the problems related to it. Although I tried to be as clear as I could in the conclusion about the points I have developed throughout the text, the structure of the text and the fact that some arguments could be understood only in the context of their development throughout the paper prevent this text from being an easy and straightforward read, for better or worse. Some paragraphs and ideas are located in one place, and then enacted in another: this is the way I tried to write, in a way attempting to be pedagogic, assuming that in the fields of gender and feminist studies, as well as in sociology, the tradition of posthumanities from which I write is not that widespread, especially in the rather peculiar configuration of posthumanities and queer theory that is developed throughout this paper. I have placed internal references within the text to serve as a way to help the reader navigate through it, but I would like to encourage the reader to develop xir own strategies of reading it.

## **1.2. Methodology: Queer Diffraction**

It is customary to include a methodological chapter in a thesis; I, however, decided to go against the tradition and dedicate only a rather short subchapter to the methodological discussion. There are two reasons for it: the structure of the paper, and the queer diffractive methodology that informs the text, itself. With the former, the spiral structure of this thesis necessitates the constant re-working of theories and methodologies, as they travel through different contexts and change

accordingly; thus, methodologies are always in the process of re-assembling which never finishes. For the latter, the situation is more complex.

What I call a *queer diffractive methodology* is a mongrel of posthumanist queer theory (see 3.3.1) and diffractive methodology proposed by Karen Barad (I elaborate on her agential realist account in 2.1). Barad's diffractive methodology is inspired by the process called diffraction, or interference, and is counterposed to reflection, which promises faithful representations and, therefore, sameness. Diffractive methodology entails conceptualization of knowledge as material and performative, and is employed in two ways<sup>1</sup> in this paper. The first is a rather metaphoric usage: instead of reflecting upon various theories and concepts, I read them through each other (see, for example, subchapter 2.3 for a diffractive reading of concept of queerness, and subchapter 3.3 for the interference of queerness, Jesus Christ, Ecce Mono, apes, humans, and non-humans). Barad (2007, p. 90) calls such reading 'diffraction grating' and sees it as an inherent part of the diffractive methodology. The second is the diffractive methodology that informs this paper as a whole, and could be summarized as an attempt to think knowledge as material and performative, understanding observation and analysis as a part of the studied phenomenon that influences it. So, what is diffraction as a physical process? Barad uses the example of a pond in which pebbles are thrown: the diffraction pattern emerges when the waves, caused by the pebbles, overlap (Ibid., pp. 76—77). There is no reason why the diffractive methodology cannot be diffracted itself (see Barad, 2014), so this paper attempts to work with a methodology that is the diffraction pattern which happens when the waves from the pebbles of 1) diffractive methodology, inspired by Barad, and 2) posthumanist queer theory, overlap. I believe that queering and diffraction, both thought as naturecultural (see 2.2) processes, are entangled in some strange way; at least,

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<sup>1</sup> Such separation of diffraction into two "ways" it is implemented is a deliberate simplification of the concept for the reader who is not familiar with Karen Barad's take on entanglements of epistemology, ontology, and ethics.

their effects are similar, as both queering and diffraction result in multiplication of differences and creation of new unexpected connections.

Another example of diffraction, briefly mentioned by Barad (2007, p. 80), is the rainbow pattern that appears on a compact disc exposed to sunlight. This example is a good metaphor for the queer diffraction pattern that this paper itself is. The light beams diffracted on the surface of the restored fresco are the light beams coming from Jesus Christ, representation of apes in the Middle Ages, the colour of International Klein Blue, the internet outburst after the Ecce Mono became widely known, and many others. These are the pebbles thrown into the murky water of Ecce Mono. And it is of extreme importance to state that it was not me who threw the pebbles or directed the light beams. Indeed, I am a pebble that was thrown into Ecce Mono in the course of the dynamic performativity of life that has no subject which could be identified once and for all (see 2.1 and 3.2). I see queer diffraction as a critical knowledge-practice that facilitates non-normative entanglements, is aware of its own situatedness in the world, and is responsible for the interventions it makes. Queer diffraction cannot be used as a tool of acquiring data that pre-exists the observation, since such data does not exist (see 2.1); queer diffraction is a material engagement with the word, a differentiating contribution to its dynamics.

So, the queer diffractive methodology informs the analysis, highlighting the strange encounters and queer entanglements, such as those between the simian and the divine (see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3). The analysis itself is a queer diffraction pattern, a result of many different entities overlapping, and the culminating point of the analysis is the discussion on the multi-faceted differential figure of Jesus Christ presented in 3.3.3. Apart from queer diffraction, I also utilize deconstruction, which in the context of this paper entails a detailed criticism of concepts and other entities by setting them against themselves, showing their limitedness, historicity, and unmasking the power relations they precipitate.

### 1.3. Research Objectives and Questions

Various binary oppositions, such as “reality/representation”, “nature/culture”, “man/woman”, are omnipresent in Western thought (Burman, MacLure, 2005, p. 284). These binaries, often if not always hierarchically ordered (i.e., man is ascribed a positive value, woman – negative; other examples are white and black, right and left; positivity and negativity themselves are also binarized and ordered in such way), are also thought to reinforce and reproduce the power relations existent in society (Radomska, 2016, p. 55). The division between subject and object, or, in purely Cartesian terms, *res cogitans* and *res extensa* (Descartes, 2013, pp. 78-90), forms one of the main cornerstones of the subsequent philosophical and scientific enterprise in the West. This inherent, unchanging subject/object separation is precisely what Barad calls “the Cartesian cut” and what most scholars in posthumanist philosophy, speculative realism, Deleuzian feminism, as well as in many other fields of contemporary theory, try to object. A wider perspective is offered by Wolfe (2010) who argues that posthumanities should scrutinize how “what we say, what we write, how we ask philosophical questions open up certain lines of thought – indeed, the imagining of whole worlds” (Ibid., p. 60). This is precisely what I attempt to do in the first analytical section of my paper (3.1).

The first research objective, then, is demonstrating the workings of the Cartesian cut, which functions as “how”, as a mechanism of foreclosure of the very idea of non-human involvement in art. The research question might be formulated like this: how does the subject/object divide get enacted in art, or how and on what premises do the apparatuses that enact this divide function, in the specific case of *Ecce Mono*’s coming to prominence? This question is dealt with in subchapter 3.1.

The second research objective follows from the first: to conceive and to perform a posthumanist analysis of art, i.e. an analysis that does not privilege the human subject and tries to image the world that has been foreclosed by the apparatuses

identified previously (that is, in the process of answering the first research question). How do we stop the functioning of those apparatuses? How the non-human and human, living and non-living entities participate in making art? What is the result of these processes? I primarily talk about that in 3.2.

What follows concerns the implications of *Ecce Mono*. There, I propose a different reading of this piece of art after doing away with the Cartesian cut-informed interpretations. The third research objective is reading *Ecce Mono* Jesus with the conceptual apparatus of queer and posthumanist theories; in other words, queering “the Fluffy Jesus” (and being queered by Jesus). How can Jesus be liberated from his theological signature, and thought in queer and non-anthropocentric terms instead? The sub-chapter 3.3 attempts to answer this question, providing a reader with a *queer posthumanist analysis* of *Ecce Mono*. This part of the paper discusses the multiple queer entanglements of the divine and the carnal, organic and inorganic, living and non-living that happen within and on the surface of the body of Jesus Christ, as well as Jesus’ emancipatory potential in the context of the multiple oppressive systems that intersect, among other points of intersection, at his body.

For all three research objectives, the aforementioned fresco will function as the site of analysis. This is because this fresco is a perfect example of the situation in which the apparatus, in Barad’s conceptualization of the term which will be explained later (2.3), does not function properly. And “only when things stop working that the apparatus is first noticed” (Barad, 2007, p. 158). I also analyze several other artworks, but these are not the central focus of the paper. It then has to be noted that this paper is primarily a desk research, as all the artworks were accessed from the computer at what is locally known as *Hangaren*, the study area at the Gender Studies Department at Lund University.

This thesis is written at the department of sociology, so it must be acknowledged that such research questions are not among the most widespread in the contemporary state of development of sociology. Sociology, however, often

evades talking about many things: John Law enumerates “pains and pleasures, hopes and horrors, [...] mundanities and visions, angels and demons” (Law, 2004, p. 2) among things that receive insufficient attention in sociology. I adhere to his idea that sociology should open itself to such inquiries, and try to study the messiness of life as it presents itself when sociological categories, for this or that reason, no longer seem to properly function.

#### **1.4. Backgrounds**

There are many takes on feminist ontology, ethics, and epistemology, as the different accounts stem from varying philosophical traditions; hence, there is no unified “feminist theory” as such, and it never could be. If I am to identify the line of thought that this paper adheres to, it would be the tradition of materialist posthumanist feminism, often illustrated by the works of Donna Haraway (1997; 2013), Elizabeth Grosz (2011) and Rosi Braidotti (2013). This branch of feminist philosophy shares with other feminist accounts a commitment to the radical criticism of power structures such as capitalism, sexism, and racism, but diverts from most feminist approaches in its staunch rejection of anthropocentrism and human supremacy. There is obviously not enough place in this paper to thoroughly describe this branch of feminist thought; I will present the exposé of the theory of the materialist posthumanist feminist Karen Barad in 2.1.

Feminist scholars attempting to dislodge anthropocentrism from its central position in the Western philosophy are not alone in this undertaking: the disciplines and fields of inquiry that share the same concern range from the actor-network theory in sociology, represented by, for instance, works of Bruno Latour (1993), John Law (2004), Annmarie Mol (2002), to the affect studies, from the critical animal studies to the diverse field of speculative realism in philosophy (Graham Harman’s object-oriented ontology, dark ecology of Timothy Morton, among others). These fields share many background assumptions, and I use the umbrella term “posthumanities” to denote this variety of areas of study. So, what is posthumanities?

Jacques Derrida, who has once tried to sketch out what should interest “new”, “transformed” humanities. In his account, among others, it is “nonfinite series of oppositions by which man is determined, in particular the traditional opposition of the life form called human and of the life form called animal” (Derrida, 2009, p. 231) that should be studied by the proposed field. Rosie Braidotti uses the concept of “the postanthropocentric turn” that “strikes the human at his/her heart and shift the parameters that used to define Anthropos” (Braidotti, 2013, p. 5) to denote the reworking of humanities, using the examples of Anthropocene, environmental and digital humanities as pioneers in the field. In 2007, the University of Minnesota Press launched a new series called *Posthumanities*, publishing the works of posthumanist scholars. In Linköping University in Sweden, a research group titled The Posthumanities Hub was launched in 2008. It describes itself as “a postconventional research group practicing advanced cultural critique and some seriously humorous feminist creativity. The Hub is a platform for enacting and hosting research in postdisciplinary arts and sciences” (The Posthumanities Hub, n.d.).

Thus, the process of institutionalization of posthumanities is on the way. I situate this paper in this field, as I share some important assumptions that make posthumanities what it is: namely, radical anti-essentialism and insistence on relational ontology. The feminist posthumanities, which this work is a part of, insists that “we have never been human” (Gane, 2006; a pun on Latour’s famous “We have never been modern” (2012)), questioning the role of human in the world; it is highly skeptical of the liberal human subject engrained in the Western philosophical thought, and tries to come to new ethico-ontological modes of thought and practice for the Anthropocene, while being attentive to the issues raised in other branches of feminist theory. This is engrained into my paper as well; if one is to extract an essence, “a gist” of my analysis, it would be an attempt to think beyond human for the better world for humans and non-humans (the political ramifications of my analysis are articulated in the concluding parts).

Among the issues in posthumanities is that it has not created a posthumanist theory of art and a methodology or approach that allows to study art without the humanist/Cartesian lenses. The research on art done by actor-network theorists, assemblage or object-oriented philosophers, is rather sporadic and rarely consistent, which, however, did not prevent the emergence of several very illuminating studies: to name a few, Grosz's Deleuzian reading of art (2008), Law's discussion on baroque (2011), Baker's analysis of animal art and art that uses animals (2013), multiple discussions offered by Cary Wolfe's (the most famous being, probably, one on the Eduardo Kac's work (Wolfe 2006)), and Radomska's (2016) PhD dissertation on bioart. Most of the posthumanist and related to posthumanism attention to art, as noted by Radomska, has been directed towards the question of "what the art does", not "what it means" (Ibid., p. 89). Grosz's contribution mostly centers on the animal forms of art (such as birdsongs) and its philosophical significance, while Radomska's account uses bioart as a way to formulate a theory of life and underscore its processual and non/living character (which I will discuss in 3.2.2). This paper is not an attempt to clarify what the art means: instead, it aims at providing a coherent queer materialist posthumanist feminist account of art, incorporating the insights that had been developed in relation to other settings, such as medicine, science, and politics.

### **1.5. Interventions / Limitations**

Although I locate this thesis in the field of posthumanities, the philosophical project of this paper intersects with several other fields of study. Posthumanities is a hybrid network in the constant process of non-linear self-reassembling, and this paper shares these promiscuous dynamics. Throughout the entire paper, I use concepts and theories that come from, or find inspiration in, various fields of study: among others, queer theory, sociology, quantum physics, art history, chemistry. I take up methodologies offered by sociology and art history; both are intended to help me construct a version of queer material semiotics, built upon relationality and acknowledgement of the material dynamics of the world, as in classic works in the actor-network theory (e.g., Callon, 1986; Mol, 1999; Latour,



1987). There is a constant process of de- and recontextualization of ideas, names, theories, objects; this process follows the logic of queer diffraction I have stated above (1.2).

In the latter stages of the text, queer theory is heavily utilized, although it is not used throughout the most stages of the text. In spite of this usage, dictated by the structure of this paper, queer theory is integral part of this thesis, and is employed as both political and theoretical tool that sets up the direction of the analysis in the subchapter 3.3, which is the culminating section of the paper, where its main project, that of discussion of the figure of Jesus Christ through the lenses of a synthesis of queer and posthumanist theories, is performed.

As Niels Bohr and Karen Barad claim, an observation is always an intervention (see 2.1); henceforth, this paper intervenes into the field it touches upon, especially such disciplines as queer studies, feminist theory, art history, actor-network theory, and sociology of culture. However, I would, using all the authority I am given under the Cartesian apparatus of authorship (see 3.1, the Interlude, and 3.2.2), claim that this paper could not be attributed to a specific discipline, apart from the hybrid posthumanities; it is transdisciplinary, which, in this context, means that it refuses to take for granted the boundaries and barriers that both separate and constitute the disciplines and sets of disciplines (such as natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences), and attempts to transform and transgress these disciplines and these boundaries. This transdisciplinarity is common for the posthumanities: for example, in Cory Wolfe's important book "What Is Posthumanism" (2010) Derrida's theory of deconstruction and Luhmann's system theory are synthesized (or, as Karen Barad would have suggested, are diffractively read through each other), allowing Wolfe to develop a distinct and highly original theory; Karen Barad, the main theoretical inspiration for this paper, mongrelizes the Copenhagen interpretation of quantum physics with Judith Butler's account of performativity, yielding agential realism (see 2.1); other examples include most, if not all, theorists in the field of posthumanities.

This paper, then, is a proud hybrid of the simian and the divine in the diverse and multiculturetribe of hybrids, tribe which I have identified as the posthumanities.

However, I should warn the reader that Cartesian habits find their way into writing even in spite of the percolation of posthumanism into my thinking. The undertaking of doing away with Cartesianism and human exceptionalism is by no means an easy task, as both Cartesian legacies and anthropological machines are legion. Following posthumanism as a thread that, hopefully, shows me the way out of the labyrinth of dualistic anthropocentric thinking, this paper builds upon the skepticism in regard to the firmness of the boundary between the human and the animal (and the human and the non-human), unearthing the subterranean mysteries and undertones of the nature / culture separation, but does not claim to be completely clear of those itself, as they grow well in the favourable climate of Anthropocene. Let this work be considered an attempt to escape the prescribed wisdom of *sapiens*' exceptionalism, an endeavor to think the unthinkable, and a political gesture in a space where the parliamentary politics of our day do not dare to tread; though, as I will show later, the consequences of the nature/culture, human/animal separations are intensely political, and, as Agamben (2004, p. 80) puts it, are "the decisive political conflict" of our civilization.

Upon writing "our civilization", I have reached the point where I have to note: I would enjoy writing something in the decolonial fashion, but the arguments that I make are relevant to, arise from, and struggle against the Western philosophical tradition. We have to note that the West itself is a hybrid, including the very dissimilar entities and allowing for its own zones of indistinction between the West and the East, the North and the South; in this paper, I relate to what is normally called Western philosophical canon, i.e. the canon that has its origins primarily in Western Europe and is built upon the Greek and Roman traditions. It is possible that the figures of the ape, Jesus Christ, and the queer, are viewed, categorized, and enacted differently in other traditions, hence I do not discuss the

non-Western and indigenous ontologies and world-views, as well as their responses to Christianization. The philosophical canon with which I work in this paper largely corresponds geographically to the spread of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christianities, though one can argue that the Orthodox Christian canon (from which I partly originate) is often overlooked in this paper. More than that, there are diversities and inequalities in representation of research on the divine, the simian, and the queer within the primarily Western Christian non-colonized countries and areas: say, has anyone ever thought about analyzing the ape lore in the Baltic sea region? No, and most accounts and examples in the Janson's (1952) detailed book on the representation of the ape in the medieval era and Renaissance (I bring it up in 3.3.2) exclude the Baltic Sea Europe, privileging the Mediterranean and Western Europe instead.<sup>2</sup>

After this rather long introductory chapter, let me articulate some of the theoretical and epistemological ideas that this paper builds upon, in detail.

## **2. Theory: The Cartesian Cut and Beyond**

In this chapter, I present two theoretical and axiological accounts that will be used throughout the text. First deals with the theory of agential realism, elaborated by Karen Barad. Second is the discussion of what Agamben calls caesura between the human and the animal, i.e. the very inconsistent and historically contingent line that separates the two in the Western philosophical and everyday life discourse. This is followed by the section in which I clarify the concept of Cartesian apparatuses that will be central in the analysis of mechanics of ascribing subjectivity and agency to humans in the case of media reaction to the restoration of *Ecce Homo*.

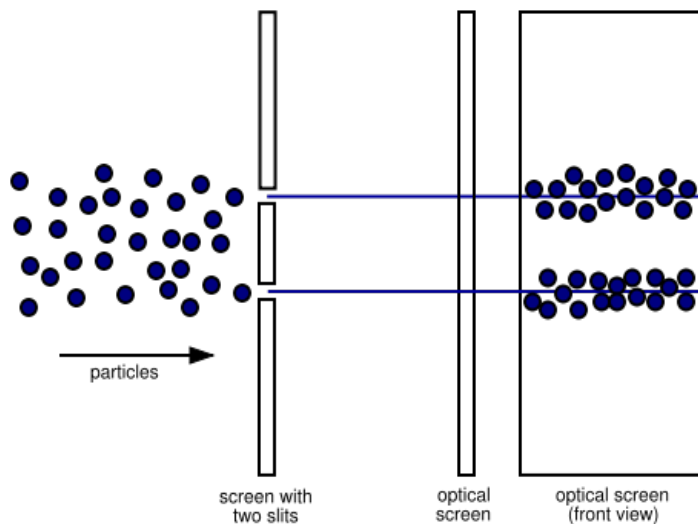
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<sup>2</sup> Note that Janson is a Baltic German himself. In a sense, the same implied question – why not study the tradition one comes from – could be directed to me, who originates from the Eastern part of the Baltic Sea.

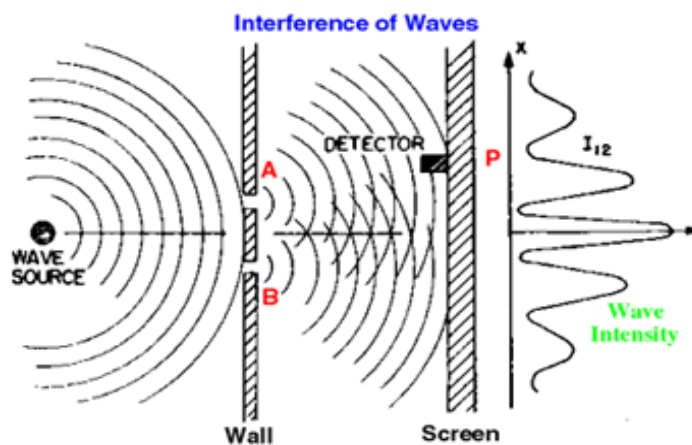
## 2.1. Agential Realism

A primary ontotheoretical framework for my analysis is Karen Barad's agential realism, rooted in Niels Bohr philosophy-physics. Barad (2007) proposes a well-defined theory that logically follows the so-called Copenhagen interpretation of quantum mechanics, while also drawing on the poststructuralist theoretizations. In this sub-chapter, I present an exposé of Barad's theory, primarily focusing on the concepts and ontological insights that are central to my posthumanist analysis of art.

The departure point for Barad is the famous double-slit experiment for electrons, first conducted in 1927. The experimental devices for the double-slit experiment



Figur 4. Two-slit experiment with particles. Source: Starts with a Bang! at Scienceblogs.com

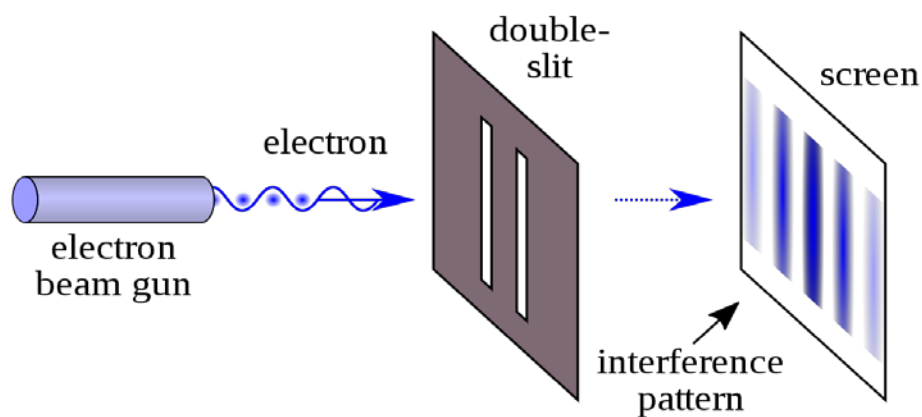


Figur 5. Two-slit experiment with waves. Source: Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory

are these: a source that will fire electrons, a plate with two slits (i.e., holes through which the electrons can go) and a screen after the slits that detects where exactly the electron has to land. For the purposes of an explanation to those

unfamiliar with experiments, I will follow Barad's way of describing and start with double-slit experiments with particles and water waves before moving to electrons. If one shoots particles (for example,

balls) towards the two slits (figure 4), then it can be observed that the particles land directly opposite each of the two slits. If one shoots water waves (figure 5), say, using a water dispenser, in the direction of the slits, a different pattern emerges: when the waves come to the obstacle (the plate with two slits), they, after passing through the slits, spread out, with the greatest intensity of waves being detected at the centerline of the detector between the two slits (this type of behavior is called interference or diffraction). Then, what happens if we fire electrons, small parts of atoms? On the detection screen, one can observe the mark of each individual electron – same as particles, but the marks also produce an interference pattern, same as waves (figure 6)! This is already weird for classical physics, as, in the neat Newtonian world, the particles are particles and the waves are waves; there could be no substance that exhibits behavior of both. Then, it all gets even more complicated if one tries to fire one electron at a time, first detecting its individual position, then firing the next electron, detecting its position and so on. In this case, electrons do not produce an interference pattern, which means that *the very fact of observation changes the behavior of electrons!*



Figur 5. Two-slit experiment with electrons. Illustration from Wikipedia

Physicists tried to make sense of it, and several interpretations were proposed. Barad follows the interpretation by Niels Bohr, the so-called Copenhagen interpretation. For Bohr, as Barad argues, “quantum theory exposes an essential failure of representationalism” (Barad, 2007, p. 124), that is, our belief in “the

classical metaphysical assumption that there are determinate objects with determinate properties and corresponding determinate concepts with determinate meanings independent of the necessary conditions needed to resolve the inherent indeterminacies” (p. 127). Bohr’s explanation of the fact that the two-slit experiment yields different results under different setup of experiment builds upon the idea that the observation itself *materially* influences what is observed. The observation, its setup and practices linked to it (together they form what Barad calls an apparatus) make possible the defined delimitations of the measured object: the observation together with what is observed form a *phenomenon*, i.e. the ontological inseparability of objects<sup>3</sup> and apparatuses (instruments used to produce knowledge about them; I offer a detailed discussion on apparatuses in 2.3); even the theoretical concepts are not just linguistic entities: they are “materially embodied” in the agencies of observations (p. 129). The case of shooting multiple electrons at once is one phenomenon; shooting them one by one is another phenomenon. Phenomena are conceived as the primary ontological units by Barad, who insists that *relata* – the objects of the relation – *do not pre-exist their relations* (Barad, 2003, p. 815).

Reality, then, is composed of phenomena – not of things, as presupposed by classical Cartesian and Newtonian ontologies. The central concept in Barad’s performative understanding of phenomena is that of intra-action, through which “the boundaries and properties of the ‘components’ of phenomena become determinate and that particular embodied concepts become meaningful” (Ibid.). Intra-actions operate through agential cuts between subject and object *within* the phenomena, thus radically reformulating the notion of causality. The subject is something or someone – not necessarily human or even a living organism – that “enacts a resolution within the phenomenon of the inherent ontological (and

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<sup>3</sup> In another work, Barad uses the concept of “components” instead of “objects” (Barad, 2003, p. 815).

semantic) indeterminacy” (2007, p. 140). I will illustrate this using the example of the double-slit experiment.

The whole double-slit experiment is a phenomenon, its components include the electrons, the two slits and the plate on which the slits are located, the electron gun, and the measuring screen. When the measuring screen does not work, i.e. when the apparatus has not yet come to its role as an apparatus, the condition of the phenomenon is that of ontological inseparability – indistinction between the apparatus and other components, indistinction between the observed and the agencies of observation; when the apparatus starts working, it performs an ontoepistemological agential cut, intra-acting with other components, taking the role of the apparatus and inscribing the role of the observed to the electrons. This intra-action *materially influences* the electrons, so they pass through one or another slit (we don’t know which one with this setup) and form an interference pattern after passing through the slits. In the case if the apparatus involves a device that measures the individual position of the electron when it passes through the slit, a different intra-action emerges, altering the material behavior of electrons: as I noted above, the diffraction pattern does not emerge. In the first case, the observational setup “gives the determinate meaning to the notion of ‘wave’, while the second provides determinate meaning to the notion of ‘particle’” (Barad, 2003, pp. 815—816). Two different apparatuses perform two different cuts, thus different intra-activity happens, thus there is nothing contradictory in the experiment, *a contrario* classical physics. Causality is not something determined once-and-for-all, but is a local, often contingent, agential cut that creates the cause and the effect; these cuts are always provisional and temporary, as in nature exists no “fixed dividing line between ‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘past’ and ‘present’ and ‘future’, ‘here’ and ‘now’, ‘cause’ and ‘effect’” (Barad, 2012, p. 46).

The concept of agential cut is counterposed to the idea of the Cartesian cut. The primary difference between the agential cut and the Cartesian cut is that, while the

former attunes to the temporality and locality of causal relations, their flowing and dynamic nature, the latter is static, preserving the subject-object separation once and for all. The Cartesian cut is founded on the belief in the inherent distinction between the knowing subject and what xe studies (what Barad (2003, p. 815) calls “the condition of exteriority”); this belief does not stand the test of the double-slit experiment, which shows the enmeshment of the observer and the observed, their “ontological inseparability” (Ibid.) within phenomena.

Barad’s account presents a strong challenge to the focus on language, prevailing in most of the feminist theory, underpinned by the social constructionist and poststructuralist accounts. Although it is often the name of Judith Butler that is used to critique the linguistic monism of the feminist theory, Butler’s performative theory confronts these assumptions, focusing on the processes of materialization of bodies that produces the subject and its characteristics, specifically concentrating on the production and performance of gender. In Butler’s account, body’s materiality is highly important: “what constitutes the fixity of the body, its contours, its movements, will be fully material” (Butler, 2011, p. xii). She proposes “a return to the notion of matter” (p. xviii), however, underscoring that the crucial role in the materialization of bodies is played by the discursive “regulatory norms” (p. xii). In the formulation of these regulatory norms, Butler draws on the Foucauldian notion of power (p. xxix), and this is the place where she gets caught in the nature-culture binary. Butler fails short of coming up with a theory that would overcome this dualism, as matter, even though liberated from being a bare surface on which the power leaves its marks, is still rendered passive to the social, discursive, and anthropocentric practices of materialization. Following the ideas set up by Butler, Barad proposes a reformulation of the theory of performativity.

In the agential realist terms, matter is not an object, passive or active. It is not the building bricks out of which reality is constructed. It is “a substance in its intra-active becoming”, “a doing, a congealing of agency” (Barad, 2007, p. 210), or, in



other words, matter is active in the constant processes of becoming that constitute reality. In turn, agency, often thought either as a characteristic of humans (or objects as well, if one follows Latour's line of thought (Latour 2005, pp. 63—86)), is not, in agential realist account, a property of animals, humans, objects, cyborgs etc.: this is so because all individual entities do not exist before the relations of agency have been enacted. Baradian conceptualization of agency is tied to intra-action: it is the “ongoing reconfigurings of the world” (Barad, 2003, p. 818), “the iterative dynamics of intra-activity” (p. 823). Then, agency cannot be properly assigned to anyone or anything: it is the processes of change, or the never-closed possibility of change, that is inherent to the constant differentiative becoming of the world. Barad's notion of agency includes potentialities of change, even a responsibility to do so (p. 827), but does not include any notions of subjectivity and intentionality. Performativity, then, is the iterative process of materialization of matter: the crucial difference with Butler is that it is not the categories of identity, such as gender or race, are performed and inscribed on bodies due to regulatory norms and power structures, but bodies, and matter itself come to matter in the nondeterministic causal performativity of the world – its intra-activity (p. 823). Nature, this differential unfolding and becoming of matter, is therefore performative.

## **2.2. The Human and the Animal**

In *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), Donna Haraway introduces the concept of naturecultures in an attempt to bridge the historical divide between the concepts of nature and culture. This dualism is put into question by her manifesto, in which she describes the multitude of ways in which dogs and humans co-constitute each other. She mentions the co-evolution of dogs and humans (p. 29), with humans and dogs being continuously shaped by each other through the “successful evolutionary strategy” (p. 30) of domestication. One example is that of dogs, or, better, wolves-to-become-dogs migrating with humans, as they would feed off the human waste dumps (p. 29). Another example of complex dog-human relations is dog agility sports, which involves complex relations of training and

subordination (pp. 40-62); using dogs as shepherds or guardians for cattle is another story of entwinement of natures and cultures (pp. 66-87). Human practices are rarely completely human, as they involve other species; human itself is never human completely, for, as Radomska (2016, p. 37) notes, the human body includes multiple microorganisms, without which it could not function. In Haraway's account, "Humans are products of situated relationalities with organisms, tools, much else" (Gane, 2006, p. 146), and are never *only* humans.

Giorgio Agamben, often overlooked by the posthumanist theorists, presents an interesting analysis of what he calls "anthropogenesis" (Agamben, 2004, p. 80): the separation of the human from the animal that results in the constitution of human. He presents a genealogical analysis of the constitution of human in the Western thought, coming up with a concept of the "anthropological machine" to denote the philosophico-scientific apparatus that produces the human/animal distinction. This apparatus functions by inclusions and exclusions: an example of the former is the XIX-century science which tried to find the "missing link" between the human and the ape and hypothesized the existence of species, so-called "ape-man", that would be similar to human, with the primary difference being the absence of language, hence classified by the biologist Ernst Haeckel as *Pithecanthropus alalus* (Greek for "ape-man without language). The example of the latter is the Jews in Nazi thought: Agamben identifies the Jew as "the non-man produced within the man, [...] the animal separated within the human body itself" (p. 37). It has to be said that the modern forms of racism work in a similar fashion. Agamben findings, however, go beyond that. He insists that the human-animal separation is always at work, as the human "overcoming" of the animal within him or her is "an occurrence that is always under way" (p. 79). The focal point of Agamben's analysis is that "the decisive political conflict [of the Western culture], which governs every other conflict, is that between the animality and the humanity of man" (p. 80).

Agamben's analysis does not tell us what is human and what is animal: it was the last thing to expect from Agamben anyways. Instead, he offers an analysis of the constitution of human and its historically contingent nature. Humanness, for Agamben, is a form of apparatus, in the Foucauldian sense of the word (*dispositif* in French); one that produces sets of distinctions that are manifested in political choices from meat consumption to immigration laws, from the constitution of the Global South to the recent appropriation of the notion of Europe by the European Union, from laws excluding women from voting to the World Bank funding grants, from *die Endlösung der Judenfrage* to slavery. I discuss the concept of apparatus in detail in the next section.

### 2.3. Apparatuses and Cartesian Apparatuses

*“And so if Michel Foucault had never existed, queer politics would have had to invent him.”*

— David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault. Towards a Gay Hagiography*

In the exposé of Karen Barad's work that I have presented above, a reader might have noted the use of the word *apparatus* as something – a device, a setup of experimentation, and practices linked to it – that gives a specific meaning to the objects within a phenomenon. In other words, the measuring screen in the double-slit experiment is an apparatus, together with practices of scientists in regards to the device (for example, setting the precise position of the screen). When we talk about intra-actions that happen outside quantum physics laboratories, we have to scale the notion of apparatus accordingly; and obviously, when one talks about apparatuses, one cannot escape a discussion of Foucauldian legacy. In this sub-chapter, I attempt to diffractively read the concept of apparatus through theories of Barad, Foucault, and Agamben, in order to arrive at a concept of apparatus that could highlight some of the similarities present in these theories.

First I should note that the use of the concept of apparatus in Barad is linked to Foucauldian usage of the word (*dispositif* in French), and this concept in Foucault

is far from simple. According to the definition that Foucault gives in the 1977 interview, apparatus is a relation that “can be established between [...] elements” of the “thoroughly heterogeneous set” that can include everything, both discursive and not (Foucault, 1977b, as cited in Agamben, 2009, p. 2). For both Barad and Foucault, apparatus is something that gives meaning to the whole, and for both it is what Agamben (Ibid., p. 3) terms “the intersection of power relations and relations of knowledge”. In fact, for both Foucault and Barad knowledge and power are so closely knit so they become inseparable; and it prompts both to investigate the function of knowledge, in the assessment of which both, yet again, seem to be relatively close. There is a famous, perhaps over-cited quote in Nietzsche, *Genealogy, History* that illustrates Foucault’s treatment of the notion of knowledge:

History becomes “effective” to I the degree that it introduces discontinuity into our very being— as it divides our emotions, dramatizes our instincts, multiplies our body and sets it against itself. ”Effective” history deprives the self of the reassuring stability of life and nature, and it will not permit itself to be transported by a voiceless obstinacy toward a millennial ending. It will uproot its traditional foundations and relentlessly disrupt its pretended continuity. This is because I knowledge is not made for understanding; *it is made for cutting*.

(Foucault, 1977a, p. 154, italics mine)

I put a larger quote instead of citing only the last sentence because the crucial concept of “cutting” has to be understood within its context. The function of knowledge is to destabilize and undermine the idea of historical continuity, to cut the “reassuring stability of life and nature”. This account of knowledge is one that belongs to a new historian envisioned by Foucault (and the figure of whom he extracts from Nietzsche’s work), but nothing in Foucault prohibits us from thinking about the notion of cutting in a more generalized sense, following the definition of agential cut proposed by Barad that I have hitherto stated. To some

extent, Foucault's wording in the aforementioned quote ring some posthumanist bells: what is this "reassuring stability of life and nature", what is this multiplication of human body<sup>4</sup>, if not the not fully developed promise of recognizing what Barad calls "radical ontological inseparability", i.e. the state of the world before the measurement? The function of knowledge, if we try to make Foucault's thought radically de-Cartesian, is to serve as a hinterland for meaning-inscribing and sense-making, it is about coming to terms about definitions, about what is a cause and what is an effect.

Now, with an altered notion of knowledge at hand (I shall come back to a different aspect of it later, in 3.2), I proceed to apparatuses. It is in the work of Giorgio Agamben where Foucault is read in the posthumanist manner. He proposes a simple yet productive – effective, Foucault could have said – separation (Agamben, 2009, p. 13), diving the world into

1. Living beings, and
2. Apparatuses that "capture [...] the living beings" (p. 14).

"Capture" is the word that denotes various workings of power – control, management, limitation, production of desires. The aim of power which saturates our lives especially in the conditions of late capitalism is its own replication (Ibid., p. 22). Agamben's redeployment of the concept of apparatus does not, at least formally, privilege humans over (living) non-humans, and allows me to re-think it further, following my reworking of the notion of knowledge in Foucault. If knowledge is made for cutting, then *the role of an apparatus is to direct, manage the process of cutting*; in my account, an apparatus is precisely about capturing, but in a wider sense compared to Agamben: apparatuses direct the practice of ascribing objects with distinctions that allow us to structure the world according to those distinctions. These distinctions are usually binary (black/white, man/woman); often, they are more complex than that, say, as the apparatuses that

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<sup>4</sup> Wonderful work by Annemarie Mol *The Body Multiple* (2012) comes to mind right away.

produce divisions into ethnicities or nations. *The function of an apparatus is to distinguish and differentiate through knowledge*; an apparatus is, indeed, an observational device as in Barad, a device that produces the cause-effect relationship and the distinction between subjects and objects by cutting through the previous condition of inseparability. Note that my account of what an apparatus is synthetic, and all entities that are called apparatuses in both Barad (observational devices) and Foucault (specific constellations of relations between things and words, such as penal system) fit within my definition of an apparatus. However, the definition proposed by Agamben is wider (it includes, for example, mobile phones) compared to mine; I view his assessment as useful but oversimplified, as in Agamben, an apparatus is something that may function without producing knowledge, and I cannot agree with this point (production of knowledge becomes crucial in my later discussion on the non/living in 3.2).

It is, of course, not a revelation of any kind that power operates through apparatuses that produce binary distinctions. What is important here is the diffractive reading of three theories (Barad, Foucault, Agamben) that allows me to combine the agential realist theory proposed by Barad with the studies of power, its apparatuses and institutions undertaken by Foucault and the scholars inspired by him (including Agamben, but also Judith Butler). By situating myself in this tradition, I attempt to make clear some of the foundations that the following analysis has – not only in terms of theoretical tools and concepts, but also in terms of ethics and politics of this paper that I find particularly well-expressed in the passage from *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* that I have quoted earlier.

The last thing that remains now is to extract, temporarily – for the duration of this paper, – from the infinitude of apparatuses one group of them, the group that I call *Cartesian apparatuses*. These are the apparatuses that direct and perform the Cartesian cut, i.e. the apparatuses that create the separation between the subject and object in Cartesian terms, ascribing the subjectivity to humans (one can say, *some* humans: the exclusion from subjectivity, the de-humanization and

separation of different types of life is studied by Agamben and Braidotti, among others), while naming everything that is not-human “objects”, simultaneously taking agency away from the latter and giving it to the former. This concept will be central to the next chapter, in which I discuss the mechanisms of enactment of the Cartesian cut. I call mechanisms the underlying performative logics within Cartesian apparatuses that produce the precise knowledge in which the human is separated from the non-human and the former is attributed with agency and subjectivity, while the latter is conceived as devoid of those.

### **3. The Queer Posthumanist Account of *Ecce Mono***

This chapter is divided into three subchapters. In the first, I attempt to track and identify what I call Cartesian apparatuses and their *modus operandi* in the context of the discussions surrounding the restoration of the *Ecce Mono* fresco. After that, I placed the interlude on another case of restoration; it simultaneously serves as the continuation of the discussion of 3.1, and sets the stage for the further exploration of Yves Klein’s art in the following chapter. In the second subchapter which follows after the interlude, I attempt to perform a reading of art that does not privilege human agency; before that, I offer a detailed discussion of the notions of responsibility and non/living required for the nonanthropocentric reading of art. This is followed by the third subchapter, in which I introduce the apparatus of queer theory in order to discuss Jesus Christ and the transformations he passes through in *Ecce Mono*, as well as showcase his emancipatory potential brought to light by *Ecce Mono*.

#### **3.1. The Cartesian Apparatuses in Art**

In this sub-chapter, I concentrate on the analysis of online media boom that happened in August 2012 after the restoration of the *Ecce Homo* fresco in the small Spanish town of Borja. It has to be noted that this part does not concentrate on the fresco itself: what I am interested in here is *the production of the anthropocentric interpretation of art*; in other words, this sub-chapter is the description of the mechanisms through which the Cartesian cut is being enacted.

One can classify this description as a discourse analysis of representation of the fresco in question, and I do not object to such categorization; instead, I would enhance this wording to say that what is below is a *discourse analysis of the deliberate bracketing of anything that is non-discursive*, in the most widespread, linguistic turn-inspired definition of discourse; it is a discourse analysis of discursing the non-discursive, and it is a cursory recourse into the discourse to correct its course; what matters in this analysis, to continue with the silly puns, this time inspired by Karen Barad, is how matter does not come to matter.

So, in August, 2012, as well as several years and gigabytes of parodic pictures after, the restored fresco has generated a plethora of news and opinion pieces, some blog posts and academic articles and at least one Change.org petition to save *Ecce Mono* from reverting it to the original version. The whole corpus of texts on the fresco requires an elaborate automated analysis, but this is not my objective in this paper. I took nine different texts from various sources, representative of diverse genres in which *Ecce Mono* had been discussed: all other texts, at least in English language and in my knowledge, are written in similar moods and with the usage of similar thematic techniques of (re)presenting the human and the non-human and enacting the subject-object separation in and through the text. I call these techniques *tropes*. The logic of classification of tropes is analytic: in most cases, they mix with each other, contributing to each other's realization in the text; the identification of a trope is based on its thematic distinction with other tropes (hence the name). First I introduce the tropes, and then move to identifying the mechanisms of enacting the Cartesian cut through the trope, as well as attempting to trace the Cartesian apparatus upon which the enactment depends.

The first trope is that of the portrait of an artist, Cecilia Gimenez, counterposed to the “dire but highly amusing” (Govan, 2013) quality of restoration. Most accounts depict what one can call “the portrait of an artist as an old lady”, as the age of Gimenez is articulated in all accounts but the Change.org petition (Domingo,



2012). Gimenez is described as a “well-meaning parishioner” (‘Ecce Mono’<sup>5</sup>, 2012), or “this pious art lover” (Jones, 2012), with her motives being “so sincere” (Handler, 2016). Her personality is set in contrast to the “damages” that she, with all the good intentions, caused to the fresco: the article in the Financial Times even starts with this sentence: “‘I was only trying to help,’ must be among the six words most feared in any language.” (‘Ecce Mono’, 2012). The problem is that “[s]omething just went wrong this time” (livius\_drusus, 2012), and the result was “probably the worst art restoration project of all time” (Minder, 2012). This trope also brings about the figure of the painter of the original fresco, Elías García Martínez: the discovery of his oil painting after which the fresco was modeled makes a headline four years after the restoration (Govan, 2016).

The second trope is the social relations that surround the fresco. In many cases, the possibility of legal action of Gimenez is cited, as well as the fact that her work was conducted with the approval of the local priest; the Sydney Morning Herald article (Govan, 2013) even focuses on this very priest being accused of theft of money received from tourists visiting the fresco. Many accounts mention the profits from tourists that allowed the local economy to recover (Ibid., ‘Ecce Mono’, 2012; Govan, 2013, 2016; Bergua et al., 2013, p. 24; Handler, 2016; livius\_drusus, 2012); the notion of fresco becoming an internet meme is presented in all accounts; both tourist and internet attention add up to the trope of social relations around *Ecce Mono*.

The third trope is the tongue-in-cheek praise of the restoration. Instead of dubbing it “botched” (Minder, 2012; Govan, 2013), The Curator Ship contributor Moritz Neumüller (2012), who visited the church in Borja, talks about “appreciat[ing] the masterpiece”, also using the expression “chef-d’oeuvre” to describe the fresco. In Neumüller’s account, irony, or, indeed, sarcastic notes are omnipresent: “the colors she used [...] which seem to come from her personal collection of *vernis à*

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<sup>5</sup> No author of this article in the Financial Times could be identified; hence, I’m using the title of the article.

*ongles*<sup>6</sup> (commonly known as Nail Varnish).” (Ibid.). The Change.org petition originally written in Spanish and translated by the poster at thehistoryblog.com reads:

The daring work of the spontaneous artist in the *Ecce Homo* of the Sanctuary of Mercy of Borja is an endearing and a loving act, a clever reflection of political and social situation of our time. It reveals a subtle critique of creationist theories of the Church, as well as questioning the emergence of new idols. The result of the intervention cleverly combines primitive expressionism Francisco de Goya, with figures such as Ensor, Munch, Modigliani or Die Brücke group of German Expressionism.

(Domingo, 2012, trans.; cited in livius\_drusus, 2012)

Livius\_drusus, the author of the blog post, wittingly adds: “Also the Monchichi school of Sekiguchi Corporation and Hanna-Barbera.” (Ibid.).

Speaking of the fourth trope, it is primarily present in the two selected scholarly works try to meditate on the popularity of the restored fresco and its consequences for society and art. Bergua et al. (2013) argue for the “demonopolization of expertise” on art (p. 26) and introduce the concept of “dialogued art” (p. 27), and even go as far as to proclaim “‘desartification’ of the classical fields” (p. 30), while Sophie Handler (2016) applies the concept of the grotesque to explain the surge of online parodies inspired by *Ecce Mono*. In an opinion piece on The Guardian, the art critic Jonathan Jones (2012) even urges to send Gimenez to Italy to restore, in a manner similar to her restoration of *Ecce Homo*, frescoes in the deteriorated condition that, according to him, are not “second-rate” as *Ecce Homo* in Borja, in order to facilitate wider public interest in them. The fourth trope is, then, the meditations on the effects of the popularity of *Ecce Mono*.

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<sup>6</sup> Italics as in the original.

To wrap up the preliminary results, we have four tropes relevant to what is discussed in this paper. These are: 1) the personality of Cecilia Gimenez, counterposed to the damage to the fresco, 2) the social relations surrounding the fresco, 3) the facetious praise to the restoration, and 4) the meditations on the media burst regarding the restoration. The separation of the tropes is purely analytical: in the analyzed texts, they intermingle with and support each other. Now I take each trope and discuss the ways it contributes to the enactment of the Cartesian cut, and also identify the apparatus that influences and defines the enactment.

The mechanics of the participation in the enactment of the Cartesian cut of the first trope are the following: it tells the story of the human, presenting the personal traits of Gimenez, while playing down the accounts of the deterioration of the fresco before the restoration. In other words, all accounts provide a brief, if existent at all, mention of the chemical and physical reasons the fresco has come to the condition that required restoration, while extensively focusing on the person who conducted the restoration work. The story that is being told here is extremely one-sided, and, in an attempt to explain the phenomenon of the fresco, it privileges human agency, centering on the subjectivity and (good) intentions by describing Gimenez's personality. The claims about the damage done to the fresco are informed by the intersubjective notion of artistic value, and function through claims that the fresco has been damaged (not, for example, repaired, retouched or transformed). What is of interest to my inquiry is the separation of the "damages" done to the fresco into those caused by various "natural forces" (which are the focus of the next sub-chapter), and those done by Gimenez. It appears that the first type of damage does not need any explanation and require only a brief mention, as the 'natural' causes are seemingly 'objective' and 'independent' of human actions; on the contrary, Gimenez's actions are those that need the background (the restorer's personal traits) to serve as an explanation to what happened. It might be connected to the notion of responsibility that is pronounced in several texts (Minder, 2012; Ecce Mono, 2012; livius\_drusus, 2012): in legal processes,

the humans can have a say, while the fresco walls cannot. The legal process against Gimenez opened by Spanish courts, as mentioned in the articles, is what makes the Cartesian apparatus visible; Gimenez's responsibility is presumed, and this is precisely through the binary of the accountable and the unaccountable the Cartesian cut functions: it is the Cartesian apparatus of the juridical system through which the notion of responsibility / irresponsibility of humans and non-humans is reinforced. I will return to the problem of responsibility in the next chapter; for now let me state again that here we witness the workings of something similar to Agamben's notion of caesura (2004, p. 12), through which the divide between the human and the non-human is articulated through the exclusion of the very possibility of accounts of the non-human.

The second trope is relatively straightforward. It concentrates on the human actions that underlie and result from the restoration, ranging from the statement quoting Gimenez about the local priest's knowledge of the restoration process (Minder, 2012) to the estimations of the profits raised by the church from tourists wishing to see *Ecce Mono* with their own eyes (Handler, 2016). Though they might have concentrated on, for example, the questions of preservation of art in humid climate conditions and the ways in which various type of dye and paint behave age, the primary interest is in the humans' attitudes and reactions. Here, the Cartesian cut is enacted by the media expertise in what they think people who read the texts are interested in; and, although this seems obvious in the profit-based economics of mass media, it is important to state this among the other mechanisms through which the Cartesian cut proliferates. Mass media functions as the Cartesian apparatus here, with the support of underlying logic of capitalism that intends to reproduce the prejudices and the already-existing habits of mind to gain larger readership numbers. In the case of mass media, one can go as far as to say that capitalism itself is a system that standardizes the relationships between humans and non-humans, naming the first group owners, and the second property.

The third trope concerns the witty comparisons praising the restoration. Yet again, the human / non-human divide is preserved by the clear attribution of the changes made to the original fresco to Gimenez, in a fashion similar to the first trope. Here, the first trope is re-read with the use of irony, and implicitly poses a question of what gets and does not get defined as art. It is the use of irony and the appeal to one of the most troubling questions for many (what is art and what is not) that makes this trope participate in the Cartesian cut. One can contemplate about why no-one asks the question if the Martinez fresco in the “damaged” state before the Gimenez’s restoration (i.e., with some parts of the paint flaked off due to moisture) does not cause comparisons to renowned artists, be it just any painter whose name features in the popular art history textbooks. I argue that the unquestioned legitimacy of the very practice of restoration is the focal point of this trope: the “damages” done by forces perceived as uncontrollable are deemed something that requires restoration, as evident in Jones’ (2012) opinion piece that attempts to shift readers’ attention to other frescoes that need conservation work. The concept of restoration is informed by the societal conviction that the paintings, conditions of which change over time, need to be restored; it is this precise boundary between the subjectivity of human as a painter and the objectivity of natural causes distorting the original intention that is created by the enactment of the Cartesian cut. Subsequently, then, it is the question of the originality, original intention, and, in the end, authorship, that functions as the Cartesian apparatus.

The fourth trope primarily concerns the scholarly work regarding *Ecce Mono*. Here, the academic knowledge production becomes an element in the network of the proliferation of the Cartesian cut. One easily witnesses the academic inertia: the outcomes for art and society are about “giv[ing] voice to the subjects that are not traditionally consulted”, as Bergua et al. (2013, p. 27) claim. The problem is, as expected, the subjects: the emancipatory potential of the restored fresco is not fully realized in the aforementioned paper, as it never attempts to think beyond the anthropocentric machine, workings of which it tries to correct. Here, the scholarly

knowledge perpetuates the inherent subject-object separation by limiting its political program of emancipation, thus academia functions as a Cartesian apparatus. One might find it quite ironic that academia with its liberating promise in fact reproduces the existing binaries, the same binaries it has discovered and insists on criticizing, such as those between nature and culture, and functions as an apparatus that fossilizes thought into the static subject / object separation with the use of general legitimacy of academia in wider society.

Let us summarize the results in the form of a table.

<b>Trope</b>	<b>Mechanism of enacting the Cartesian cut</b>	<b>Cartesian apparatus</b>
The personality of Cecilia Gimenez and the damage to the fresco	Accountability of Gimenez, unaccountability of nature	Legal system
The social relations surrounding the fresco	Media knowledge about what interests their readers	Mass media
The facetious praise to the restoration	Legitimacy of restoration	Originality / authorship
The meditations on the wider consequences of the restoration	Emancipation	Academia

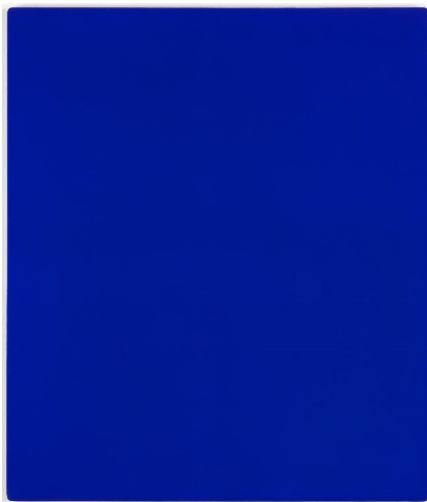
We have four mechanisms corresponding to the tropes extracted from the texts; these mechanisms are the practices of inscription of the static subject / object divides that are performed by the Cartesian apparatuses that I have identified. In the following interlude, I concentrate on the problem of attribution of agency and the interlinked notion of authorship, elaborating on its functioning as a Cartesian apparatus. In the next sub-chapter, I continue the discussion on accountability and responsibility that I have started during the analysis of the first trope.

## *Interlude: Restoring the Immaterial*

*“The deepest of interludes, the myths that you destroyed”*

— Manic Street Preachers, *“International Blue”*

Yves Klein is a French artist known for creating a series of monochrome paintings and sculptures in a colour he patented and named *International Klein Blue* (IKB). His paintings and sculptures are stored and exhibited in various museums and collections: Tate, Guggenheim, the Menil Collection, to name a few. In this short interlude, I briefly focus on the restoration of one of Yves Klein’s monochromes. The interlude is intended to enlarge the scope of analysis presented above, and serves as a background for the next subchapter (3.2). The significance of Yves Klein’s painting and sculptures goes beyond that of creating a colour widely used in design; his sculptures provoke thinking along the lines close to posthumanist, and, as the Welsh band Manic Street Preachers has noted in the very recent song dedicated to him, his art does shatter some of the foundations of the nature / culture binary, as I will show in 3.2.2.



*Figur 6. IKB 79. Artwork by Yves Klein.  
Source: tate.org.uk*

“Restoring the Immaterial” is the title of the short technical account of the restoration of Yves Klein’s blue monochrome IKB 42 by the paintings conservator Christa Haiml.

Immaterial here refers to Klein’s desire to paint something that could not be defined, as, according to Klein, “Blue has no dimensions, it is beyond dimensions, whereas the other colours are not” (Klein, 1959, cited in

Wikiquote (n.d.)). In order to paint the immaterial, Klein invented a highly complex

technique that Haiml attempts to recreate in order to restore the painting from the Menil Collection in Houston. The restoration of the painting was a delicate procedure that involved, among others, using a polyvinyl acenate resin in several

mixtures; stirring the pigment by hand and straining in through cheesecloth (Haiml 2007, p. 152), attaching the inserts to the damaged parts of the painting with “a tool with a pointed silicon tip” (Ibid., p. 154), and following spraying and retouching – all with the intent of “replicat[ing] the surface texture as closely [to Klein’s original paint] as possible” (Ibid., p. 152).

The immaterial, then, is the result of the highly complex arrangements that involve human and non-human actors. One example of the non-human agency, as conceived by Radomska<sup>7</sup>, in this case is the issue with absorbency of two materials in rollers: as Haiml writes, “the same paint mixture will result in a darker and more saturated paint when applied with the foam roller and a lighter and more underbound paint when applied with the lambskin roller” (Ibid.). What is at stake for Haiml, though, is not the agency of different materials; her goal is getting the color similar to that of Klein, and finding the way to attach it to the damaged parts of the painting, where the color already exists, but is deformed. Restoration, not only in this case but as long as it attempts to preserve the intention, the technique, the style, the material, or any other special feature attributed to the author or the original, functions as a Cartesian apparatus. Think of restoration of historical buildings which is sought to resemble the original as much as possible. The whole set of non-human agency is distilled and played down in order to restore and celebrate the original that is considered to be a result of human talent and authorship.

### **3.2. Disassembling the Cartesian Cut**

In the previous sub-chapter I have discussed the Cartesian cut and the apparatuses that facilitate it. This section takes the insight of the previous sub-chapter further and tries to think about *Ecce Mono* in a way that does not privilege humans, i.e. without enacting the Cartesian cut. In order to do this, the deconstruction of the

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<sup>7</sup> Radomska’s notion of agency contradicts that of Barad. In Barad’s assessment, agency cannot be attributed to anyone or anything; it is the ongoing force of reconfiguration of the world. In this interlude I use Radomska’s account that allows attribution in order to shed some light on the imbalances of the practices of such attribution that privileges the human over the non-human.



apparatuses mentioned above is required. In this paper, I focus on two of those apparatuses: the legal system and the authorship. I first discuss the concept of responsibility, related to the apparatus of legal system, in an attempt to do away with the anthropocentrism of this concept that is often taken for granted. This deconstruction and the following reconstruction of responsibility (3.2.1) is followed by the discussion of the idea of authorship, in which I introduce Marietta Radomska's concept of non/living. I theorize it using the case of another artwork of Yves Klein (3.2.2). In 3.2.3, I perform the posthumanist analysis of *Ecce Mono*: this is quite short due to rather limited information available to me in the given conditions, but still enough to allow for the later contemplations about life and queerness of *Ecce Mono* (3.3).

This subchapter is informed by the previous analysis (3.1) where I pinpointed the apparatuses I intend to deconstruct. However, I decided against deconstructing the Cartesian apparatuses of academia and mass media, as both require a prolonged discussion that goes beyond the scope and accepted size of this paper, while I believe that the posthumanist analysis of *Ecce Mono* is possible without such deconstruction if we agree to take both mass media and academia, and the knowledge and information they produced about *Ecce Mono*, with a pinch of salt. This decision has allowed me to have a rather deep discussion on the anthropocentrism apparatuses of legal system and authorship, which I present below.

### 3.2.1. The Non-Human Responsibility

One of the Cartesian apparatuses that I have noted in the previous sub-chapter is that of the legal system, operating through the mechanism of the differential ascription of accountability to humans and non-humans. In legal discourse in general, as well as in the case of the discussion of *Ecce Mono*, the notions of accountability and responsibility are blended together, as to be accountable in this discourse is synonymous to being able to bear responsibility. Now we have to

dwell on the concept of responsibility for a while; it has to be discussed in detail to open up the space for further analysis.

McKeon (1957) traces the development of the concept of responsibility from Aristotle's works. In his historical analysis, he shows the ways the Western philosophical thought has evolved to the concept of responsibility as commonly understood today. As he notes, responsibility is linked to the 17<sup>th</sup> century debates on the free will (Ibid., p.12); it presupposes intentionality by an actor and punishment. Intentionality is seen as a human trait; therefore, responsibility is something tied to the human realm. With the advent of poststructuralist theory, the debates on responsibility take a new turn, complexifying it with the notion of collective responsibility: i.e. that of any aggregate of humans that cannot be reduced to the sum of individuals. In the brilliant article titled *Posthuman Praxis in Public Transportation* (Moore, Richards, 2018), an example of the public bus service that causes a disaster for the authors of the paper themselves is brought up. Who is responsible? The representatives of the transport company are individual people, such as CEOs, workers, managers etc., but can they personally be held accountable for the actions of the corporation? In this case, who is responsible is the matter of convention, and, as a result, a matter of contestation. The same question may be raised in relation to wars, genocides and discriminatory policies: if the white Europeans as a group are responsible for the colonialization of the non-European spaces, such as those of Africa, Siberia and the Americas, then who precisely should be held responsible? The rulers? The murderers? The rapists? The sailors and expeditioners? The so-called 'common folks'? In some cases of what might be seen as responsibility of a large "imaginary community", the question of who bears the responsibility for mass crimes was actually negotiated: think about the Nuremberg trials and the following development of international law that resulted in the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the tribunal that may prosecute individuals, but not "groups or states" (International Crime Court, n.d., p. 5). One can ask: even if a nation, an ethnic group, a race, or just any other group cannot be held responsible in a court, are there ways to

ensure it is morally responsible? But do nations or other groups possess their own distinctive morals? That being said, what I can claim is that the ways in which responsibility is enacted depend on a plethora of factors that go beyond the reach of human morals and consciousness (even if we believe that the Germans – whatever and whoever this collective notion might entail – experience the collective guilt about Shoah, do the Turks feel guilty about the genocide of the Armenians, or do the Americans and the Russians feel guilty about the destruction of native cultures of North America and Siberia, respectively?<sup>8</sup> As the old saying goes, might is right, which – in the context of this discussion – is another wording of “everything depends on the context”).

The later complication is that the humans, as I have noted in 2.2, are never completely humans. One can think of many cases in which the notion of human responsibility is dislodged by shifting responsibility to the non-human agents: think of a crime committed in a drug-induced condition. Although in many legal systems crimes committed under an alcoholic or narcotic influence are considered aggravating circumstances, the philosophical question of responsibility has to go beyond that: is a person who commits a crime while being drunk the same person that s/he would have been if not under the influence of alcohol? The question is up for debate, and that is precisely because the boundary that separates a responsible and an irresponsible human is contextual and fluid: take, for instance, mental disorders that oftentimes serve as the mitigating circumstances for crimes, as the reduction of legal responsibility of people who suffer from mental disorders has become commonplace in many legal systems. In this case, we see that not all humans are seen as responsible; there are also other delimitations, such as age. The same logic of shifting responsibility from humans to non-human and non-material entities works in case of actions performed with certain affects, such as love, revenge or jealousy, have taken hold of someone, or, indeed, in cases of

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<sup>8</sup> And how did it come to be that I have just excluded the native peoples of North America and Siberia from being Americans and Russians, since it is one of the identities they can take?

claims of someone's mind being possessed by demons or indefinable "something", as in expression "something came over me"<sup>9</sup>. The conceptualization of alcohol as aggravating condition is an example of responsibility being shifted in other direction, from non-humans to humans: even though humans under the influence of alcohol are not necessarily responsible, in a sense of being accountable for their actions, it is the very fact of alcohol consumption that is seen as a human free-will and choice, and something for which the human itself, and not the non-human elements in his or her body, that should be deemed responsible. Responsibility, then, is something that changes, is fluid, and may switch from humans to non-humans and vice versa.

The question of "what is to respond" boils down, as Derrida shows, to the question of what the word 'word' means (Derrida, 2009, p. 8). Attempting to deconstruct the animal / human separation, he recalls the backbone of the Western philosophical tradition, claiming that its most famed practitioners, from Aristotle to Heidegger, differentiate between human and animal on the grounds of the latter lacking the language, or the absence in animal of "a response that could be precisely and rigorously distinguished from a reaction" (Ibid., p. 32). He then continues to say that this separation is man-made, conceived in human terms, and, by the very usage of the word "animal" in singular, in spite of great diversity of animals, humans constitute themselves – the conclusions similar to those of Agamben (see 2.2.1). In Derrida's assessment, this criterion does not stand for two reasons. First is based on the 'empirical' evidence: he says that animals possess "a large number of social phenomena" (Ibid., p. 95), and, closer to Derrida's engagement with the history of philosophy, the notions of animals mourning – another trait that is used to distinguish animals from humans – could

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<sup>9</sup> On Wiktionary, there is a nice definition of the verb "come over": "[t]o affect in a sudden, unprecedented or surprising manner; to overwhelm a person's ordinarily contrary impulse", with this example sentence: "I apologise for my behaviour last night. I don't know what came over me". In this case, the responsibility for the last night behavior of the narrator is explained away by something that s/he does not know, but it is this something is to be held responsible, not the narrator.

be found as early as Antiquity, in the debates about vegetarianism (p. 85). The second reason is philosophical, and this is where Derrida shines at his best. He reconstructs and then lays bare the very assumptions of which the human / animal separation is performed in crucial thinkers of the Western philosophical tradition, consequently tackling Kant, Levinas, Lacan, and Heidegger, understating that the ‘human’ capacities of which the animal is deprived in the arguments by the aforementioned scholars do not necessarily refer to humans. The differences that these thinkers presuppose to be the demarcation lines between humans and animals can lie within different humans, as well as some humans and some animals – here is why Derrida rejects of the usage of the word ‘animal’ in singular. The strategy that Derrida proposes is that of multiplicity and difference (pp. 159–160), and consists in a rejection to attribute the ‘essential’ qualities of human, the list of which is necessarily limitless (Ibid., p. 135), to only humans, as, for the first reason, some animals also possess these qualities, and, for the second, humans do not necessarily possess those – the very principle of conceptualizing the essences of the human and the animal is self-referential, and, as Derrida uncovers the assumptions of this strand of Western philosophy (which he traces from Aristotle through Descartes to Lacan and Levinas), is contradictory. For the discussion on the responsibility that we are having now, his analysis of Lacanian humanist subject is of extreme importance. In a nutshell, the separation between human and animal that Derrida finds in Lacan lies in the sphere of unconscious, which the human presumably possesses, while animal does not (Ibid., p. 121), due to the differential access to language which evokes the unconsciousness. Here, the distinction between response and reaction becomes extremely important. For Lacan, while the human has access to language, which it enacts through *responses*, animal possesses no language, but a semiotic system, a code that only allows *reactions* (p. 122). The distinction is this: “[w]hen bees appear to ‘respond’ to a ‘message,’ they do not respond but react; they merely obey a fixed program, whereas the human subject responds to the other, to the question from or of the other” (Ibid., p. 123). This distinction between response and

reaction is precisely what Derrida finds problematic: if the logic of the unconsciousness, as Lacan claims, builds upon the logic of repetition, then why do humans are claimed to have unconsciousness if we the very concept of repetition involves the learned reaction, not the differentiated response? (Ibid., p. 125) The very distinction between semiotic system and language rests upon the very boundary it attempts to create, as what distinguishes the human response from the non-human reaction? Only the attribution of the response to the human and the reaction to the animal (or machine); this binarization is completely self-referential. The machine, which interests Derrida only in passing, only inasmuch as Lacan uses the term in his account, is what we should dwell on in this subchapter that surreptitiously takes form of a philosophical – and ethical, for sure – treatise. Before this, however, let me present the way in which Karen Barad reformulates the problem in question.

Barad's posthumanist assessment of ethical questions that penetrate the question of responsibility is focused on the concepts of knowledge and intelligibility. Indeed, to know and to be able to respond are crucial in the commonly-held view on what it means to be responsible. Barad insists on the view on knowledge that dislocates it from the human realm. The common-sense notion of knowledge is built upon the nature-culture divide, argues Barad, as when one thinks about "responding", presupposed is the human linguistic interaction, similarly to the aforementioned example of Derridean deconstruction of Lacan's thought. Instead, she proposes the idea of knowledge as that of differential responsiveness to what matters, and that is not necessarily a human practice. In Barad's example of brittlestars (Barad, 2007, p. 375), the deep-ocean creatures that have no brain, it is their practices of distinguishing itself from the environment with which they intra-act that constitute *the performance of knowledge as agentive differential responsiveness*. Brittlestars change their colouring depending on the light of the environment, and are able to break off their body parts when they are endangered by predators. As Barad notes, "[brittlestar's] body materiality is not a passive, blank surface awaiting the imprint of culture or history to give it meaning or open

it to change” (Ibid., p. 375); it is the agential cut performed by the brittlestar when it enacts the different boundaries between its self and the surroundings (such as in the case of breaking off the body parts: in the case in which it does not break off, the body part in question is a component, a part of the brittlestar; in another case when it is separated as a response to the danger, it is not). The example of brittlestar is used to show that “[b]odies are not situated in the world; they are part of the world” (p. 376), as the very notion of what a brittlestar is changes according to surrounding environment, as the brittlestar’s knowledge is differentially performed.

What I intend to do, and what I need to do in order to perform the post-humanist analysis of *Ecce Mono*, is to tackle the question of the non-living that is played down in accounts of both Derrida and Barad. In spite of significant differences between them, the notions of knowledge and the responsibility that lie exclusively in the human realm are taken with a pinch of salt by both; they, however, do not focus on the responsibility of the non-living, something that will become central for us in a very short time. The non-living, be it the machine in Lacan, the stone in Heidegger, the atoms in Barad, is a part of a separation that is even more strongly reinforced in philosophical tradition of the West, the separation between the living and the non-living. Here is the point where I must make a detour to Bruno Latour with his analysis (published under the pen name Jim Johnson, 1988) of the door-closer, in which he evokes an example of the door that does not function properly. What renders the words “door is on strike” meaningless, while the expression “the porter (or the concierge) is on strike” makes sense to us, although both of them, the door and the human, perform (or fail to perform) the same function of opening/closing the door? Latour comes with two terms, “sociologism” and “technologism”, to answer this question, both denoting the assumptions humans have of themselves and non-humans, but we have to go further than that and ask the following question: if we try to think without being caught in sociologism and technologism, can the door be responsible for not opening or for opening so rapidly so it hits human noses (as in one of Latour’s examples)? My strategy to

deal with this problem is Derridean, the strategy of *différance*. My claim is that, as I have hitherto shown in discussion of responsibility of groups of people and organizations (how, and who precisely is responsible is the matter of convention) and legal responsibility of humans who acted under alcohol or narcotic influence, or humans who are deemed mentally ill, as well as the processes of shifting responsibility from humans to non-humans and vice versa, *people do not necessarily 'possess' the inherent quality, trait of being responsible. Instead, responsibility is always in the process of re-assembling, depending on who, or what, is tried.* What one can analyse is not who is responsible, but who is made responsible, for whom, by whom, for what reason, and for what costs; and, importantly, who and how is made irresponsible. This is a kind of ethos I inherit from Haraway's discussion on technoscience (1997, especially pp.49—119) and Barad's analysis of ethical politics of nanotechnologies and biomimicry (2007, pp. 353—369). The questions such as those above are what my previous work within this paper was about; and this is not yet something I can call the posthumanist analysis as of yet, although it is built upon the posthumanist concepts and insights.

So, the provisional result will be the following: the restoration of *Ecce Mono* is not something that should be conceived as the cultural and able to respond linguistically force of inscription on the silent nature; it is the agency that is not the property of the parishioner, but of phenomenon that she is a part of; Gimenez's responsiveness is no way broader than that of the moisture or the chemical structure of the paint; it is different, but the responsiveness of things we perceive as natural is also intelligible; it is the Western philosophical tradition that is particularly good at not engaging with what the non-living has to say. The same applies to the "restoration of the immaterial" by Christa Haiml: her restoration is built upon the responsiveness of the non-living, its responses to, for example, usage of different mixtures of acenate resin. The problem is human coding of such responses, addressed in Chen (2012). It is with this notion of responsiveness of the non-living, and, subsequently, its responsibility that I intend to perform a posthumanist analysis of the phenomenon of the restored fresco.



There is another question to be solved, though – and one more dichotomy to deconstruct.

### 3.2.2. The Non/Living

This dichotomy is between living and non-living, and here I should turn to the theoretical work done by Marietta Radomska. First I will discuss another work by Yves Klein, the series of sculptures titled *Relief Éponge Bleu*, introducing the concept of the non/living coined by Radomska. Then I will show that some of the same apparatuses that separate the human and the non-human (of which I talked in 3.1), perform the cut between the living and the non-living.

As in the monochrome paintings discussed in the Interlude several pages before, the same synthetic color, IKB, produced by mixing specific amounts of ethyl alcohol and ethyl acetate with the specific resin, named Rhodopas M60A (Haiml, 2007, p.150), is used in Klein's sculptures *Relief Éponge Bleu* (Blue Sponge Relief). There, he applied the pigment and the resin to the natural sponge (pic. 8,



Figur 8. *Relief Éponge Bleu* (Kleine Nachtmusik).  
Source: [staedelmuseum.de](http://staedelmuseum.de)



Figur 9. *Untitled Blue Sponge Sculpture*, source:  
[yvesklein.com](http://yvesklein.com)

9). The sculptures are very much in line with Klein's hitherto cited understanding of blue as the colour beyond dimension: the aforementioned binaries which neatly categorize human perception simply stop working in these pieces. These sculptures, in their enmeshment of the organic and the inorganic, the living and the non-living, form the Agambenian zone of indistinction between these categories that are often seen as dichotomous. So, what is it, a living sponge or an artificial, non-living installation? The answer is that the IKB sponges are the non/living.

The concept of the non/living emerges in Radomska's analysis of bioart. In contemporary biology and chemistry, as well as in philosophy, the definition of what is 'life' is far from being unambiguous; as planetary scientist Chris McKay points out, "life forms don't seem to have any observable property that distinguishes them from inanimate matter" (2004, p. 1260). The debates about the definition of life is ongoing, though oftentimes sidelined from discussions in natural sciences: as molecular biologist Patrick Forterre (2010, p. 157) points out, "this is clearly not a scientific question, but a philosophical one". In recent experiments (Hanczyc, 2011), the synthetic entities that exhibit "lifelike characteristics such as sensing, motility and memory" (Ibid., p. 28) were designed; the question of whether viruses could be defined as living organisms, is also debated: say, La Scola et al. (2008) have discovered the virus named *Sputnik* that infects other viruses: this leads to an argument that viruses are living entities, as "only living organisms can become ill" (Forterre, 2010, p. 157). Prionoids are another entities that resist the rigid classification as either living or non-living. As these boundaries are unstable, Radomska, arguing for the 'enmeshment of the living and the non-living', comes up with a concept of 'non/living'. The non/living possesses a processual character, i.e. it has a capacity to change and function within a contextual system (Barad would have called it a 'phenomenon', while Radomska uses the concept of assemblage to denote the non/living); it can be altered and manipulated, it also exhibits temporality and duration (Radomska, 2016, pp. 97-98). The living and the non-living, then, are not seen as binary

oppositions; instead, they are “intra-active, dynamic, and enmeshed with one another” (Ibid., p. 115). The same applies to living and dying: these are seen as processes that pre-suppose and intermingle to each other, as the death of one organism gives life to others, as Radomska shows with the examples of bioartworks, when the ‘semi-living’ sculpture is contaminated and consumed by fungi (pp. 163—169), and landfills, where the ‘waste’ – ‘dead’ mixtures of different materials are “constantly transformed by microorganisms and geological processes” (p. 172). Thinking in the agential realist terms, the non/living stands for the way of matter’s becoming in the state of indeterminacy, i.e. when the agential cut by the apparatuses inscribing the notions of the living or non-living have not started working. As Radomska notes, following Barad, the cuts between living and non-living are always provisional: “they are “never contained in separate “boxes”” (p. 193), and should not be seen as binaries; instead, Radomska argues for a view of living and non-living as “intra-active, dynamic, and enmeshed with one another” (p. 115). It also should be noted that non/living is a concept that allows to think life differently: *life is the non/living* (p. 52), as life, in its dynamic intra-active becoming, is the enmeshment of the living and non-living (Ibid.), and it is only through provisional and temporal cuts we establish what is living and non-living.

However, the non/livingness of the *Real Éponge Blue* escapes attention due to the fallacies in our categorizations. In the account of these sculptures on the DePaul University website, the digital media researcher Stuart Grais comes close to the reading I propose, but his interpretation is thwarted by a variation of the anthropological machine at work. He writes: “He [Klein] made unique work that vacillated between the organic and inorganic” (Grais, n.d.). For Grais, the possibility of reading of the sculpture as the non/living (and the in/organic) that I propose is thwarted by the attribution to the human agency: “He made unique work”.

Let this not be interpreted as that I propose that this work should not be attributed to Klein. However, thinking about the use of language allows to notice the Cartesian apparatus at work, and this apparatus is not even that of the attribution. This device has been noticed by many scholars long before: it is the apparatus of the author. I argue that we should view the author, the practice of authorship, in the current historical conditions, as a Cartesian apparatus. In Grais' interpretation, the subject – Yves Klein, the painter, the prophet, the genius – manipulates the passive matter: that of sponges, resin, and pigment. My reading focuses on the very assemblage of the sculpture: it is the enmeshment of agencies of Klein, sponges, pigments, the exhibition space; the very material flows of the non/living; the phenomenon that came to existence not only because of Klein's artistic flair, but also because of various agencies that are played down if we only think of the sculpture as the result of Klein's insights.

The workings of authorship as a Cartesian apparatus is similar to Foucault's account of the 'author-function' counterposed to the notion of the author as the individual who writes (Foucault, 1971, pp. 14—15). In Foucault's words, the author-function provides the nodes of coherence to the "great incessant and disordered buzzing of discourse" (Ibid., p. 21). The author-function rarefies and defines the potential limitlessness of discourse<sup>10</sup>; it is the pre-requisite for the Cartesian cut. A different language has to be conceived in order to allow for a posthumanist reading of art, not only that of Yves Klein, but **all** art; an attempt to develop this kind of language follows.

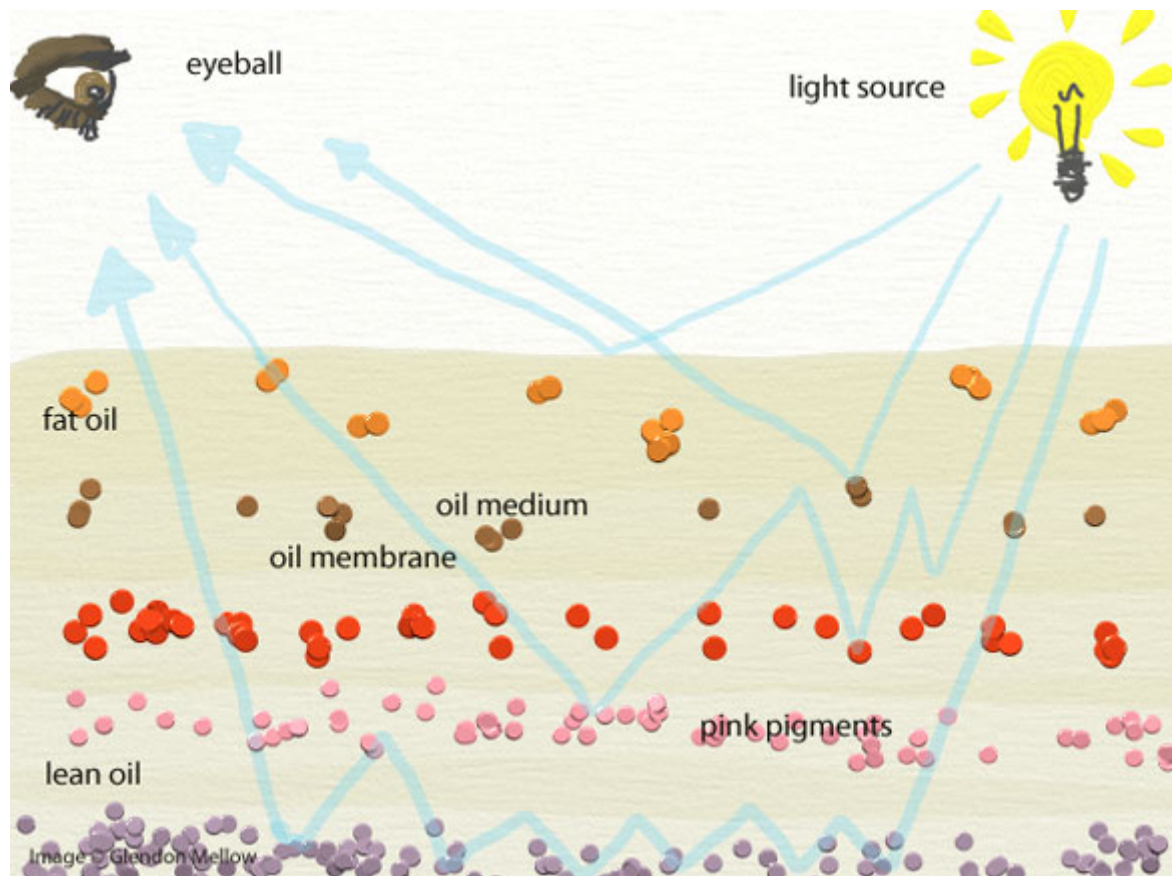
### 3.2.3. The Non/Living Life and the Deterritorialization of *Ecce Mono*

The fresco has come to its condition that required restoration due to, as we learn from the same media articles that I have hitherto analyzed, the paint flaking off from the church walls. Here, the way the original painting was made become

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<sup>10</sup> The notion of discourse in Foucault's paper quoted here partly resembles the concept of the material-discursive of Barad. Unfortunately, there is not enough place to elaborate on the similarities and differences between the two in detail; suffice it to say that for both discourse is not about what is said, but more about potentialities of things and words.

important: as livius\_drusus (2012) notes, the fresco took two hours to paint, and the oil paint was applied directly to the wall, i.e. the wall was not primed or plastered, contrary to the normal practice of applying the oil to plaster. Priming a wall and then painting causes the chemical reaction between the oil paint, the plaster (or another substance applied to the wall before the paint), and air. In a popular science article ‘The Chemistry of Oil Painting’ in *Scientific American*, an artist Glendon Mellow (2011) gives a brief explanation of chemical processes happening with the paint and various techniques used by painters in order to not let the paint flake off or crack. In Mellow’s article, there is even a picture showing the chemical workings of the luminous effect of glazed oil paint:



Figur 7. Luminosity of oil paint. Source: *Scientific American*

On the picture (figure 10), one sees the approximate paths the light beams, radiating from the light source, travel, as they are reflected by the non-

homogenous layers of oil. Note that if the eye and the light source move, the pattern changes; if one of them disappears (say, the light bulb is turned off or the eye blinks), the luminosity will cease to exist as well. Luminosity is a good example of a phenomenon in Barad's sense, with eye working as an apparatus (observation device), intra-acting with the light and oil which also intra-act with each other. Different eyes will see different patterns (say, if the observer's eyesight is myopic).

In the case of the pre-restoration *Ecce Homo*, the chemical reaction between air, the substances out of which the church wall was built (either brick or stone), and the paint itself (probably, linseed, as it is the most used type of oil paint) has resulted in the flaking off of the paint, the process otherwise known as delamination. Although this reaction seems trivial, the delamination in question is an example of the ontological dynamics of the world, where the organic (the oil paint) blends with inorganic (the stone and the brick, both containing no carbon) and the air, which is conventionally thought to be inorganic in spite of containing increasing amounts of carbon<sup>11</sup>. The process could have also involved other elements, as delamination might be the result of sun and water exposure, extreme dryness, or, conversely, humidity. The restoration is a different chemical reaction which involves an additional element, the paint used by Gimenez. It is, again, the mixture of the organic and inorganic, the result of which is the *phenomenon* – again, in Barad's sense, i.e. the ontological inseparability of the elements – of the paint flaking off; the phenomenon that is in/organic in its dynamic intra-activity.

According to agential realist account, there exist no wall, air and paint separate from each other; they all are intra-active, or potentially intra-active with each other, and it is only through intra-action and subsequent agential cut they could be separated. There is *the* wall-of-Ecce-Homo, there is *the* air-of-Ecce-Homo, and there is *the* paint-of-Ecce-Homo, and they are named this way under our

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<sup>11</sup> Within chemistry, there is a field of research called “inorganic carbon chemistry” that studies compounds that are not seen as organic in spite of containing carbon.

observation, when we use our ideational concepts (wall, air, paint) to name them. They are inseparable, as the dynamic non/living matter, until the cut is made; the cut is the specific delamination that inscribes, for example, the dryness of air in the region where the fresco is located, as the cause, and renders the condition of the fresco its result. The cut before delamination was the painting itself, the process of applying the paint to the wall; lots of other cuts were made, temporarily solving the inseparability of the phenomenon. I should note that the fresco is in the process of eternal transformation, i.e. the cut should not be understood as an event: it possesses a processual character; delamination doesn't happen at one moment, it is continuous. Prior to the intervention by Gimenez, it is the non/living agency of the in/organic phenomenon. Then, when she comes into play, the Cartesian apparatuses perform their Cartesian cuts, as I have shown earlier: now, a different phenomenon is at work, and it involves Gimenez, who is, with all the endless Cartesian cuts, attributed to be the agent of the 'dramatic' change. However, another way of looking at it is one that involves thinking of the non-human elements of the phenomenon: the new paint that mixes with the old, the intake of air. Here, the 'reasons' and 'causes' become less obvious, and, depending on the observation and apparatus at work, one can even render Gimenez herself the effect of the intra-actions of the phenomenon: and indeed, would we have ever heard about her without the intra-play, the intra-action within the in/organic phenomenon? I.e., would Cecilia Gimenez exist without the *Ecce Mono*, and if yes, would it be the same Cecilia Gimenez?

Depends on who, how, and for what reason performs the cut.

What is ascribed to Cecilia Gimenez, i.e. the transformation of the fresco, could be seen differently, following the Deleuzian idea of deterritorialization. As Radomska notes, this concept "refers to forces and intensities that take life beyond itself, beyond the containment of established boundaries and relations" (Radomska, 2016, p. 186). Then, the phenomenon of *Ecce Mono*, is not, or, at least, is not only a clairvoyant intervention into the art performed by the well-

meaning amateur, a figure reminiscent of the noble savage of the XIX century; it is the intra-active dynamics of life which, de-territorializing itself, crosses and questions the boundaries between Jesus and an ape, living and non-living, divine and profane, and many others. The life of the non/living phenomenon of pre-restoration *Ecce Homo* destroys its conditions of existence in its old form, as a delaminating fresco, and enters a new life form as a restored *Ecce Mono*, which gets itself into the spotlight of many people around the globe, and also allows us to think itself differently, reaching to the contexts to which it had previously no relation whatsoever (for example, the context of religious imagery, legal responsibility, and, to a certain extent, the context of the particular master's thesis in the particular institution in the particular field of inquiry). The life of *Ecce Homo*, and the life of *Ecce Mono* are separated from each other only through our agential (provisional) cut; together, they showcase the life which, following Radomska, is not something that is static, unchanging, and "contained within itself" (Ibid., p. 185), but life which is dynamic and processual, and which cannot be contained in the hu/man-made boxes. The life that deterritorializes itself through the intra-action with other parts of the various phenomena it is a part of, taking itself from the context of a church in the provincial Spanish town to the context of the internet meme.

This deterritorialization of the non/living life is a performance of the matter in the agential realist understanding of performativity (see 2.1); it is through deterritorialization matter comes to matter and becomes accessible to us, in one way or another.

### **3.3. The Queerness of *Ecce Mono***

In this sub-chapter, I attempt to combine the previous posthumanist analysis of *Ecce Mono* with insights from queer theory. First I discuss the concept of queerness and the way it intersects with posthumanist theories (3.3.1), and then make a detour into the historical representation of apes, which is crucial for the analysis of *Ecce Mono*, a fresco in which Jesus becomes a monkey, and



complexify the notion of divinity and the very figure of Jesus Christ (3.3.2). The following section (3.3.3) could be seen as the culminating part of the thesis, as it is the place where I connect the dots between what I have previously written, and arrive at **the queer posthumanist analysis of *Ecce Mono***.

### 3.3.1. The Non-Human Queer

A consensus of what the queer theory is about is impossible, precisely because the queer theory resists and eludes any fixed identity, attribution, labelling, and normativity (Mills, 2008, p. 116). More than that, there are multiple queer theories (Hall, 2003), and those are dynamic, always reconstructing and re-assembling each other. I personally favour the oft-cited idea laid out by David Halperin, who argues for the queer theory as “a horizon of possibility whose precise extent and heterogenous scope cannot in principle be delimited in advance”<sup>12</sup> (Halperin, 1997, p. 62), which denotes the instability and unforeseeability of queer theory (see also Giffney and Hird, 2008, pp. 4-6). In Halperin’s account, queer has no essence: it is “whatever [that] is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” (Halperin, 1997, p. 62), thus being fluid and always in the opposition; in other words, it is “not [...] a thing, but [...] a resistance to the norm” (Ibid., p. 66). One of the most fascinating parts of the queer theory is the ability to determine and fight against normativity in itself (Giffney, 2008, p. 57), and this chapter attempts to do precisely that. It has been argued (Cohen, 2003; Macaya and Gonzalez, 2013, p. 713) that queer theory remains for the larger part anthropocentric, and there are attempts from within queer theory to do away with its anthropocentrism.

Though this paper lacks space to present a full-blown literature review of the non-human queer literature, it should suffice to point out to the 2008 collection edited by Noreen Giffney and Myra Hird titled *Queering the Non/Human*, featuring, among others, a discussion of American attempts to render the US political

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<sup>12</sup> He talks about queerness as this horizon of possibility; I place his discussion of queerness to another context, that of queer theory.

enemies, Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, gay in/human Antichrists (Runions, 2008, pp. 79–110), an analysis of representations of werewolves and their queerness (Bernhardt-House, pp. 159–183), several discussions on nature’s queerness, including animal transsexuality (Hird, 2008, pp. 227–247), and the ways in which nanoengineering makes evident human dependency on inorganic (Parisi, 2008, pp. 283–309), and a reprint of Karl Grimes’ photography of a salamander.<sup>13</sup> In that volume, one also finds an article by Robert Mills that deals with the relations between divinity, humanity, and sexuality in Middle Ages, a project that raises many questions similar to my analysis. In this chapter, I present Karen Barad’s agential realist reading of queerness that allows us to think about queerness of nature, and, subsequently, about queerness of the non/living.

Barad discusses the queerness of atoms, arguing that they “queer queerness itself in their radically deconstructive ways of being” (Barad, 2012, p. 29). Here, Barad references to the normativity within the queer theory, and makes a case for a different reading of queerness. She follows the previous (“classic”) conceptualizations of queerness as something unfixated and evading positive definition, and radicalizes it by arguing for queerness as “a desiring radical openness, an edgy protean differentiating multiplicity, an agential dis/continuity, an enfolded reiteratively materializing promiscuously inventive spatiotemporality” (Ibid.). This particular definition might be rather difficult to grasp, so in my reworking of the term, queer – as a noun, an adjective, and a verb – would entail the performative breaking of existing boundaries, the radical questioning of everything stable and taken for granted, and would only exist in the opposition to the normativity. Queerness encompasses radical sexuality, allowing

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<sup>13</sup> The interpretation of the picture given by editors Giffney and Hird (2008) evokes the notion of a gaze, as the axolotl in question stares directly at us, in spite of being photographed dead, it “insists that we respond to it on its own terms” (p. 2), and through this gaze the axolotl evades categorizations, and challenges the notions of life and death, human and animal, and others. I agree with Giffney and Hird but would also add that the salamander strikes me as a clear reference to Karel Čapek’s masterpiece *War with the Salamanders* (Czech title *Válka s mloky*), which can be read as a powerful anti-speciesist statement from the times when the concept of speciesism have not existed yet.

to think in ways unforeseen before (such as a reading of Bin Laden as the gay Anti/Christ), thus reconfiguring sexuality and existence in an attempt to formulate the new ethics of/for/from/with the non/living.

### 3.3.2. The Monkey, the Divine, the Non/Human, and the Queer

I have discussed many features of *Ecce Mono*, but have not touched upon the animal that gives the fresco its newly acquired name, the monkey. The simians (monkeys and apes; the discussion focuses primarily on the species that look like humans and thus used to cast doubt over the very separation between humans and apes (see Agamben, 2002, pp. 23-33) play a significant role in Christian religious art and Western European literature and folklore, both analyzed in Janson's scrupulous study titled "Ape and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and Renaissance" (1952). Methodologically, his analysis follows the tradition laid out by Aby Warburg.

So, how does the monkey interfere with the divine, or vice versa? First of all, Janson claims, until the Gothic era, the prevalent view of ape is "the figura diaboli doctrine" (Ibid., p. 20). This interpretation of the ape as a sinister would later give way to the view of ape as the sinner, "the image of man [...] in the state of degeneracy" (p. 29). The ape is a quasi-human, a reminder to humans what would happen to them if they sin (see pp. 46—47). The origin of ape was thought, as pointed out by Janson, as alike to that of human, but on a different level in the hierarchy of those times: if the human is the degraded version of the divine, the ape is the degraded version of the human (pp. 94—95); the tales explaining the descent of the ape follow the logic that Janson calls "punitive transformation" (p. 97), all built upon human supremacy which renders anthropoid apes 'deviations' (p. 99). It is also important to note the consistency in the use of simians to represent the Evil, as in the scene in which the ape sits behind and to the left of God; in the same Bible illustration the ape even seems to eat an apple, a clear-cut reference to Adam's sin (p. 114). As Janson observes, there is an abundance of references to the Fall of Man (pp. 107—144), with the ape playing primarily

negative roles, such as the case in which it personifies Satan by tempting Adam (p. 123).

Janson's book also discussed the sexuality in the representations of apes. The primary examples form two divergent traditions: the usage of a simian figure as a metaphor for 1) prostituted women if the ape is a female, and 2) masculine sexual drive if the ape is a male (Ibid., p. 262). The ape is sometimes accompanied by the bear: their relationship is dichotomous and signifies the boundaries and oppositions between the sexes (pp. 262—267); apart from that, the male apes are pictured as rapists (pp. 267—268): this resonates with one of the most notorious insults directed against black people, and the representation of black men as rapists, reproducing the construction of the humankind as white and sexually pure. Another idea echoed by some contemporary beliefs is the cross-species representations of sex between a male simian and a female human is the depiction of women as desiring such activity (pp. 268—275): think about the “she was asking for it” culture.

One of the logics traced by Janson is the depiction of ape as “the equivalent of all those who are men in name only, having neglected the spirit for the flesh” (p. 199). It fits well into Robert Mills' account of the medieval queer sexualities. As argued by Mills in his analysis of medieval books, poems, religious images such as frescoes and reliefs, and wooden carvings of Christ, Christ's body is “a space in which gods and monsters, human and nonhuman, begin to lose their definitional distinctness” (Mills, 2008, p. 131). In the peculiar case of the wooden carving in England in the late Middle Ages, Christ is a hybrid that combines humanness, enacted by the empathy towards the body that has lived and suffered, with the “organic machine” with moving eyes and lips, set in motion by the strings of hair. Christ possesses a carnal body that is desired (Ibid., p. 128), and he is always cross-boundary, intermingled in his bodily, wooden, and machinistic queerness with the nonconformist sexualities of the monsters which usually represent the punishment for ‘sins against nature’ (pp. 117—125). The divinity of Christ is not

a simple transcendence of the human: it is a hybrid of the “all-too-human” and the non-human, and, as Mills argues, one cannot separate these three qualities in the context of the Middle Ages, with the boundaries of humanness being constantly re-negotiated. Mills goes on to offer a conceptualization of medieval bodies as cyborgs which “blur artifice with nature, organic with inorganic, divinity with humanity, sexuality with monstrosity and excess” (pp. 131—132). We need to extend Mills’ insight to the apes and their bodies, which, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, are always of hybrid nature, the mixtures of the divine, the human and the non-human. The non/humanness of apes is taken into account in Janson’s text when he discusses the Europeans’ encounter with the Khoikhoi people (called Hottentot in Janson) who were seen as “more bestial than human” (Janson, 1952, p. 336), and the question of difficulty of categorizing human is discussed in Agamben (2004, pp. 23—32), where he mentions Linnaeus’ insistence on the absence of biological marker distinguishing the human from the ape.

So both Christ and the ape are full of non-normative sexualities, insofar as we assume that medieval sexualities had strict and regulated norms, which is disputed by Mills (2008, pp. 131—132). No matter if his argument is valid or not, the context of the contemporary regulated sexuality does not allow us to think of the ape sexuality outside of the field of primatology and the popular science stories of libertine bonobos (De Waal, 2006) or wife-beating baboons (Osborne, 2017) which closely resemble the medieval ape lore flavored with evolutionary biology; neither does it facilitate thinking about the queer hybrids of the divine and the simian.

### 3.3.3. The Entanglements of the Non/Living and the Divine

Now we move to the culminating chapter of the whole paper. Here, I have to recall the earlier discussion on the deterritorialization of *Ecce Mono*. There is another moment in this deterritorialization that is pivotal for the project of this paper. In *Ecce Mono*, the queer picturings of the ape and the divine intermingle

with each other, producing the image of the Christ as the lousily painted monkey. This hybrid entanglement of the non/living restored fresco and the sexualized post-medieval divine is the subject matter of this chapter.

The deterritorialization of the fresco (from *Ecce Homo* to *Ecce Mono*) that I have discussed in 3.2.3 contains, among others, the transformation of Jesus into the monkey; the latter form also references the former, without fully erasing it, like an imago butterfly always relates to a caterpillar from which it has transformed. As I have shown above, both simians and Christ perform several important roles in the Western sexual and religious imageries, and in the phenomenon of the deterritorialization of the fresco, these potentialities and cultural signifiers enter a non-normative and subversive carnivalesque play in which the monkey becomes Jesus, and Jesus becomes monkey. In the case of the restored fresco, with the internet popularity and irreversibility of the restoration performed by Gimenez, the carnival has found a rather static form: *Ecce Mono*, and by *Ecce Mono* I mean the inseparability of the fresco in the Borja church and the internet meme.

In the restored fresco, Jesus refutes his divinity by developing into a monkey, the *figura diaboli*, and also subverts the theological hierarchical sequence that continues to be the backbone of our relationship with the world: the divine, the godly, the spirit is something of a higher order than the human, who in turn is still above the animalistic, the bestial, and the material. In *Ecce Mono*, Jesus is transformed into the animal normally seen as promiscuous and sexually desiring: the highest form becomes the lowest (a similar case of the repercussions of the Christ's medieval machinistic carnal sexuality is discussed in detail in Mills (2008)). This transformation happens within one non/living in/organic phenomena which gradually but endlessly transforms as it performs its non/living life, which traverses the boundaries of time (contemporary, medieval, 19<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>14</sup>, space (digital space of the internet, the church in Spain), and matter (digital picture,

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<sup>14</sup> Cohen (2003) provides a detailed discussion of different accounts that complicate and historicize the Western notion of time as a progression from the past to the future.

ready for being photoshopped, and the physical fresco). This breaking of boundaries is a carnivalesque performance that detaches Christ from the suffering human figure on the cross and renders it a sexually active promiscuous simian male.

This detachment is never complete: there is still Christ in *Ecce Mono*, along with his humanness and divinity (and that is why we find the restored fresco amusing). *Ecce Mono* is thus a hybrid, an anthroposimian who is simultaneously carnal and divine, and whose queerness is enacted in this process of deterritorialization which produces the temporal, material, and spatial dynamics of Jesus the Monkey. And this is not the point where Christ's naturecultural queer performativity stops: if we recall the depictions of apes as prostituted women and racialized male rapists, then Jesus of *Ecce Mono* is a non/living in/organic multiracial trans-species non-binary desiring sexuality which suffers both for our sins (at least, according to the Bible, see Cor 15:3) and for the dynamics of capitalism and patriarchy that render his/her body a sexualized commodity. Capitalism and patriarchy, speciesism and racism all intersect at the point which is the body of Jesus Christ, and its deterritorialization, an example of which is the restored fresco in Borja, is the starting point for the promise of emancipation that starts at a position which is seen as the most repressive.

Thus, the deterritorialization of *Ecce Mono* is a process of queering Jesus, a becoming-queer which produces multiple dynamic entanglements that break the boundaries set by speciesism, racism, patriarchy, capitalism, Christianity, and heteronormativity. Jesus Christ of *Ecce Mono* transgresses his/her own boundaries, goes beyond the limits of his/her own existence (as a human, a monkey, a discourse, a male, a painting), and in this inevitable dynamism of the never-complete flow of potentialities, s/he is not a mere passive surface over which the boundary-breaking queerness is inscribed: not only Christ of *Ecce Mono* is queered, but s/he is also a subject who queers everything s/he intra-acts with. This queerness is an inevitable part of Christ's non/living life; or, in other

words, when there is life, this intra-active dynamic deterritorializing performance of matter, there is queerness, queerness which is, so to say, much queerer than the normalized mainstream queerness that gets commercialized and institutionalized within the oppressive systems of today.

I have started this paper with the foreword, in which I have mentioned work by Paul Fryer. I hope that at this point it is clear that in both Fryer's works, the political effect is reached by deterritorialization of Jesus Christ, who is transformed into an electrocuted black male and an ape. It is the same process that happens with the Jesus Christ of *Ecce Mono*; Fryer's artwork could be a site of an analysis similar to the one presented in this paper. The Christs of *Ecce Mono*, *Black Pieta*, and *A Privilege of Dominion* share many similarities in the multiple and multidirectional ways in which they perform different, but always emancipatory political acts by the very fact of their dynamic deterritorialized existence, which is the way they live their in/organic non/living lives.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this part, I summarize the focal points of this paper, and then engage in trying to think about the political outcomes of the most important points I have made throughout this text. The summary is rather condensed and follows the main line of the argument of this paper, losing most if not all nuances and complexities found in the thesis. In the Coda, I offer some final statements that wrap up this thesis, briefly contemplating our today's predicament.

##### **4.1. Summary**

First I present the main points of the paper, in the chronological order.

1. I have diffractively read ("grated") Foucauldian, Baradian, and Agambenian notions of apparatus through each other in order to give my definition that would include valuable insights from all three theorists. The view of apparatus as something that produces knowledge by allowing for distinctions within what Barad calls ontological inseparability of the world



precipitates the concept of Cartesian apparatuses, which is born out of the concept of apparatus in Foucault, Barad, and Agamben, and Barad's concept of Cartesian cut. Cartesian apparatuses are a subset of apparatuses, whose peculiarity is that they create, enact, and/or reproduce the subject / object distinction and privilege humans as agentive subjects.

2. I have identified the Cartesian apparatuses and the mechanisms of enactment of the Cartesian cuts in media and scholarly discourse about *Ecce Mono*. They are presented in the table on the page 38.
3. I have attempted to disassemble the Cartesian cut by providing a different interpretation of *Ecce Mono*, one which tried to evade the anthropocentrism. In order to do that, I have reworked the notion of responsibility so it could include the non-living entities. The reworking, informed primarily by works by Derrida, Barad, and Latour, presents responsibility as a contextual phenomenon that does not exist as a human "trait" of being responsible. This is followed by the discussion on the binary of living and non-living, and introduces the concept of non/living, borrowed from Marietta Radomska, and attempts to deconstruct the subjectivity within the Cartesian apparatus of authorship. I then argue for the conceptualization of life as non/living.
4. In 3.2.3, I start with the posthumanist analysis of *Ecce Mono*. I use the concepts of non/living and deterritorialization (Radomska, Deleuze) in order to discuss the dynamics of *Ecce Mono* in a non-anthropocentric way, meditating on the non/living life of *Ecce Mono*.
5. I utilize the posthumanist queer theory, as well as studies on the medieval and classical representations of Jesus Christ and apes, in order to continue the analysis of *Ecce Mono*, this time pondering queerness of Jesus which becomes evident in the context of his transformation into a monkey in *Ecce Mono*. This transformation touches upon multiple oppressive systems: among others, racism, speciesism, and heteronormativity; I discuss how Jesus Christ evades the boundaries and distinctions set by

those systems, and how his trans-species, non/binary, divine and carnal nature proliferates, simultaneously queering time, space, matter, discourse, religion, and queerness itself.

I believe that the concept of Cartesian apparatuses, along with the exposition of their workings and an attempt to think beyond them, and the meditation on the queerness of Jesus Christ are the most important contributions to academia and left-wing and queer political movements of this paper. Now I turn to elaborating the political and theoretical potentialities of those ideas.

1. The concept of the Cartesian apparatuses could be used both in academic meditations on the human/animal, subject/object, nature/culture separations, and in animal rights and vegan activism. My attempt of providing an account of how the Cartesian cut gets enacted might as well enrich the understanding of how the line between humans and non-humans is drawn, and facilitate thinking about subversive and emancipatory non-anthropocentric politics. The idea of the Cartesian apparatuses, with some reworking and contextualizing, could be used in anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, and anti-heteronormative scholarship and political activism as a tool that facilitates understanding of the mechanics of repressive power systems. The concept in question might prove useful for some fields of inquiry of contemporary philosophy, including but not limited to research on bio-, thanato-, and necropolitics, postcolonial studies, and critical animal studies, as the idea of Cartesian apparatuses rings many of the same bells to the questions of exclusions of various groups of humans and non-humans from political agency, decision-making, and life itself.
2. My attempt to provide a critical non-anthropocentric account of art argues with the dominant default interpretations that privilege humans as authors, agents, and creative subjects, and might open a path for a wider analysis of art. An alternative and an opposition to the most influential way of conceiving art which is built upon the Cartesian apparatus of authorship,

my posthumanist account exemplified by the analysis presented above (3.2 and 3.3) offers a distinct interpretative strategy that, obviously far from being (and never intending to become) a polished set of rules, opens space for a non-orthodox view on art.

3. The most openly political section of this paper, subchapter 3.3, in which I discuss queerness of *Ecce Mono* and Jesus Christ, could be seen as a move within queer theory that tries to, following Karen Barad, Myra Hird, and many others, queer queerness itself. I believe that this move opens many new potentialities within queer theory and practice, as well as being a meditation on the dynamic nature of Jesus Christ and Christianity, both of which, as I argue, lose some of their repressiveness (which is often facilitated by our own misconceptions and background assumptions). In the context of *Ecce Homo* but also outside of it, as with the example of Paul Fryer's works, Jesus transgresses the narrow boundaries of the Christian doctrine while preserving his divinity. This prompts me to think of a political queer theology (see, for example, Althaus-Reid (2002)) as a possible direction of thought, though unfortunately, I have no place in this paper to develop it. This is, however, not the only outcome, as I tried to synthesize queer theory with the posthumanist approach, and I believe that this alliance has a long way to go, promising us some very interesting and, indeed, queer ways of thinking, relating to, and being in the world, which go far beyond the scope of this thesis.

#### **4.2. Coda: Under the Cobblestones**

The condition of Anthropocene / Capitalocene requires heterodox and imaginative ways of thinking and existing, and I hope that this thesis serves as an example of such thinking. I have tried to take a figure of Jesus, one of the most pervasive for our civilization, and re-think it in creative and queer ways, and I believe that Jesus could be reclaimed, in a manner similar to the words and concepts of queer and crip; or, if not reclaimed, then at least re-thought in a dissident, iconoclast way. In this paper, I did not queer Jesus, but tried to untie the blindfold of the multiple

Cartesian apparatuses that prevents us from being queered by Jesus. We have to remember that academia is among these apparatuses, as I have discussed in 3.1.

There are many ways we can move forward: in politics, art, and philosophy, and I have tried to offer and develop ideas and concepts that would help us envision the politics of times in which the very idea of time, the past, the now, and the future, becomes more complex than ever. In the context of politics entangled with history, and the future being inseparable from the past, every time we move and look forward, as I have tried in this thesis, we also move and look behind, up, and down. In this context, and also in the peaceful and rather conservative, well-fed, bourgeois atmosphere of the university that seems to be destined to the inability to become a birthplace of a revolution and a significant political change, one of the slogans of the events of May, 1968 in France that happened precisely 50 years ago as I'm writing these words, receives additional meaning that can, in a way, describe the urge for different politics, politics of imagination that would account for the complexity of human and non-human performative and dynamic existences on this planet. This slogan offers us a very palpable perspective of deterritorialization, simultaneously similar and different from the one I discussed in 3.2 and 3.3. The slogan, and I hope that the reader will attenuate to its subtle complexity, is **“Under the cobblestones, the beach”**, **“Sous les pavés, la plage”**.

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