Yearnings for Mattering Differently*

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with Agnes Eeg-Olofsson, Alixey Talstou, Anissa Tavara, Anya Troyan, Bardia Esmaeiloo, Burcu Yıldız, Catalina Gonzalez, Eythar Gubara, Flora Fee Mayrhofer, Jacopo Asam, Loerdy Wesely, Oskar Hansen, Pia Pospischil, Rico Mehler, Yuwen Huang

in the frame of the seminar and artistic research project "Non-knowledge, Laughter and the Moving Image" led by Annika Larsson. The project is founded by the Swedish Research Council and done in collaboration with The Royal Institute of Arts in Stockholm and the HFBK—Hochschule für Bildende Künste Hamburg.

* a borrowed title from Karen Barad & Daniela Gandorfer "Political Desirings: Y earnings for Mattering (,) Differently (2021)"
«I came into the world imbued with the will to find a meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain to the source of the world, and then I found that I was an object in the midst of other objects.»

Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks (1967)

«From such a position, the position of the object, the thing, the savage, there are a few possibilities — the racialized other can demand recognition by presenting himself as human in the terms proffered by white society, or they can refuse the category altogether and twist the terminology of otherness into a rebuke, use it to unmake the world of white mastery and make a virtue out of what Fred Moten calls 'the resistance of the object.'»

Jack Halberstam, Wild Things—The Disorder of Desire (2020)

«I remember my mother bringing me to a doctor in 1956 because she suspected I was queer. And he had this book on the shelf and looked at me and my mother told me later that he said 'I think your daughter has a hormonal imbalance, she might be indeed a member of the third sex because she has facial hair. Now it was on the bases of things like this that women were put in mental hospitals, were put into prisons, were put into marriages or sometimes lost their lives. Whenever society wants dehumanise a group the first thing they do is to show biological difference.»

Barbara Hammer, Nitrate Kisses (1992)

«You go to the doctors and judges and specialists who know the official answers to what's a man and what's a woman —- It's not about fun you learn and it isn't fun when they make you get naked, touch you, squeeze and measure your genitals —- for reference. What reference? —- They will analyse your DNA to find out what you really are. You learn not to say that you are what you are, but that you are what you are not. —- You'll learn to focus on the right significant moments of your model life, you'll learn to say the right things, have the right biography. You'll learn that there is only one biography, the biography of a tormented character that usually, at the very latest during the second act of the film, meets one of many tragic ends.»

Vika Kirchenbauer, LIKE RATS LEAVING A SINKING SHIP (2012)

«The entire universe cut in half and solely in half. Everything is heads or tails in this system of knowledge. We are human or animal. Man or woman. Living or dead. We are the colonizer or the colonized. Living organism or machine. We have been divided by the norm. Cut in half and forced to remain on one side or the other of the rift. What we call 'subjectivity' is only the scar that, over the multiplicity of all that we could have been, covers the wound of this fracture. It is over this scar that property, family and inheritance were founded. Over this scar names are written and sexual identities asserted.»

Paul Preciado, An Apartment on Uranus (2019)

«He was what some would consider a freak: a circus giant in American bloodlines and genealogies, the lumbering object of surprise and fear.»

David Wojnarowicz, Close to the Knives: A Memoir of Disintegration (1993)
«The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity—honed to perversity and male supremacy—to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power. The instruments of visualization in multinationalist, postmodernist culture have compounded and multiplied meaning in disembodiment.»  Donna Haraway, Situated knowledges (1988)

«N.O. Body» is a borrowed title. N.O. Body was the pseudonym of an author who published a book in 1907 entitled „Aus eines Mannes Maidenjahren“ (Memoirs of a Man’s Maiden Years). It is the autobiography of a person, born with ambiguous sex, who spent childhood and youth as a girl, and then altered his gender and led an adult life as a man. The first letter N. stands for the protagonist’s two first names, Nora and then Norbert. As such, N.O. Body is both a name and not a name. We like the fact that it marks the position of „the professor“, the large table, which introduces the object of interest, the blackboard, on which knowledge is recorded, and the listeners, sitting in tiered rows of seats facing the display of knowledge. But what happens in the production of normality and deviance... if the object of knowledge... assumes the position of the producer of knowledge and opens up the history of knowledge production once again? (...)

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Michelle Williams Gamaker, House of Women (2016)

»We are just going to shoot you... In close up. Do you why we say shoot when we take photographs? Well the language of photography developed at the same time as big game shoots. It was actually Susan Sontag who pointed out the overlapping vocabulary between photography and hunting: loading, stalking, aiming, cocking. Even a snapshot as all examples of this. And hunting prized animals where shot at, with the rifle and with the camera. Some majestic creatures were mounted on walls only to be mounted again in frames.«

Juan Downey, The Laughing Alligator (1979)

»What is the characteristic feature of life? ›When is a piece of matter said to be alive?‹ asks Schrödinger. His answer: When it goes on ›doing something,‹ moving, exchanging material with its environment, and so forth, and that for a much longer period than we would expect in an inanimate piece of matter to ›keep going‹ under similar circumstances. (…) The gun presents a ›cinematic‹ mode of government in the sense that it seeks to capture, manage, and regulate the movements and energies of the living. It is a biopolitical apparatus of capture in that it, quite simply, contributes to exposing, optimizing, and controlling the forces of life.«


«Instinctively I pointed the camera at my potential assassin as if it were a fire arm, with that aggressive gesture, that imaginary threat which we video artists use as a warning that the camera also is a dangerous weapon, as if bullets could come out of the lens.»

Isabelle Stengers, Another Look: Relearning to Laugh (2000)

»A conquering gaze from nowhere—the gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies, that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation.«

Michelle Williams Gamaker, House of Women (2016)

»The universal tends to contemplate the particulars from above, as in the way that Kant regarded the French Revolution, like a spectator considering a violent piece of theatre from the mezzanine. Universality is the view of a spectator, never that of an actor.«

Yuk Hui, Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics (2017)
a dictionary begins when it no longer gives the meaning of words, but their tasks. Thus formless is not only an adjective having a given meaning, but a term that serves to bring things down in the order to persuade. Since objects do not speak for themselves a person or a technology must mediate between the object and the form, to present it and tell its story. I US court the evidence. And only forensic anthropologists have the authority to speak for them, to tell their story. But for the Colombina Basis tribes the ancient one is an ancestor. His bones were unearthed from Indian Land so they speak for themselves. '

The museum functions as a trophy case to exhibit the settler colonial power's most prized possessions. Everything is turned into an object and displayed no matter what it is. No matter if it is a piece of the earth, an ivory tusk, a shell of a tortoise or human remains. The entire museums practice speaks of the terrible impulse of domination, a sort of indiscriminate Laura. Nothing escapes the collectors impulse, as if our entire linear and accumulative culture collapses if we cannot stock pile the past into plane ownership. 

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The digital is real. The digital is physical. The digital is a layer of linking, of web-weaving, of speculating and constructing. The digital is not the virtual. It is neither a parallel universe, nor is it a representation of anything, it is an n-dimensional part of an n-dimensional world. Accessing, navigating, exploring and making use of the digital; now that is a question of interfacing.

Jacopo Asam, string figures, (Hommage to Donna Haraway)

Forget for a moment about things happening around, at work or at home, just relax, take a deep breath in and slowly breathe out. Feel the air going into your nostrils and passing to the lungs and then going out the same way. Once again. In some time you can close your eyes. What if the whole story you just have heard can be placed to the screen of your phone? Like a videogame. Maybe you have played a game where is a forest or trees, or river, or lake, maybe mountains. Notice how the picture is rendering, how detailed the images and structures are. How realistic the effects seem? Do you feel the wind? Is it easy to breathe there? Don’t forget about your breathe.

Aliaxey Talstou, Inner meditative sit-in

There is no such thing as being, only constant becoming. Becoming with surroundings, experiences, ideas, each other, each other’s surroundings, each other’s experiences, each other’s ideas.

Jacopo Asam, string figures (Hommage to Donna Haraway)

I am an invisible man. No, I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids— and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. (...)

Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man (1952)

Existence is what cannot be reduced by any amount of processing power. The existential vibration escapes computation. Time, death, self-perception, fear, anxiety and pleasure: the incomputable is the excess in the process of cognitive automation.

Franco “Bifo” Berardi, Futurability

Code is a medium in the full sense of the word. As a medium, it channels the ghost that we imagine runs the machine— that we see as we don’t see— when we gaze at our screens’ ghostly images. (...)

Executability makes code not law, but rather every lawyer’s dream of what law should be, automatically enabling and disabling certain actions and functioning at the level of everyday practice.

Weddy Chan, On Guercino, or Code as Polis (2008)

Reality is neuter gender, and cannot be masculine. A binary system is vulnerable.

Rebecca Schiller, On ‘Sourcery’, or Code as Fetish (2008)

Many operational images show colored guidance lines, intended to portray the work of recognition. The lines tell us emphatically what is of main important in these images, and just as emphatically what is of no importance at all. Superficial reality is denied – a constant denial provoking opposition.

Harun Farocki
Karen Barad, What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity; Virtuality; Justice (2012)

"Human eyes see only the colours the sun emits most strongly, with retinas designed to perceive most abundant energies and nothing else. A person will be seen in the light that most structures her reality. Whatever light is most powerfully thrown upon her, she will likely also learn to see herself in that light. (\ldots)

"Infrared lies just after violet as humans see it, its waves slightly too long to be visually perceived, measurable but invisible. It makes atoms and molecules move, creating heat... It is constantly felt but never seen. (\ldots)

"Ultraviolet lies just after violet as humans see it, its waves slightly too short to be visually perceived. I imagine it like violet, but more radical. Animals perceptive of it can see the sky's true violet colour. Birds detect the glow of mouse urine in fields far below, the pee giving the mouse away. The mouse sits in the grass erect, certain of her invisibility to others. A preying bird will detect a mouse's weakness, in what she herself would never consider remarkable."


"Measurements, including practices such as zooming in or examining something with a probe, don't just happen (in the abstract) they require specific measurement apparatuses. Measurements are agential practices, which are not simply revelatory but performative: they help constitute and are a constitutive part of what is being measured. (\ldots) In other words, measurements are intra-actions."

Karen Barad, What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity; Virtuality; Justice (2012)

"knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing but rather from a direct material engagement with the world."


"It's the simple sense of turning slowly, feeling the breath of another body in a quiet room, the stillness shattered by the scraping of a fingernail against a cofar line. Turning is the motion that disrupts the vision of fine red and blue lines weaving through the western skies. It is the motion that sets into trembling the subtle water movements of shadows, like lines following the disappearance of a man beneath the surface of an abandoned lake."


"Testing, 1, 2... 1, 2, 3... Hello everyone, this is Yao Zhu, your favorite reporter from channel BBB country B.

Now behind us is the border between country A and country B. Let's give this Mr. Grass an interview, who has been living here for a long time.

Hello, Mr. Grass, Do you think you are a citizen of country B or country A?

Oh, Country A. Mr.Grass just told me he belongs to country A! (Surprise & doubt)

(But the grass sways to B in the wind)

Could you explain why you keep taking up so much space of your country B while thinking that you are a citizen of country A?

Can you please answer the question?

Hello?

Mr. Grass?"

Pauline Oliveros, Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)(1999)

"All living beings are oscillators. We vibrate. Amoeba or human, we pulse, move rhythmically; we keep time. (\ldots)

Being in sync—internally and with your environment—makes life easy. Getting out of sync is always uncomfortable or disastrous. (\ldots)"


"Nothingness. The void. An absence of matter. The blank page. Utter silence. Nothing, no thought, no awareness. Complete ontological insensibility. Shall we utter some words about nothingness? What is there to say? How to begin? How can anything be said about nothing without violating its very nature, perhaps even its conditions of possibility?

Isn't any utterance about nothingness always already a performative breach of that which one means to address? Have we not already said too much simply in pronouncing its name?

Perhaps we should let the emptiness speak for itself."

Karen Barad, What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity; Virtuality; Justice (2012)

"With a low-pitched sound the curtains start rolling down, covering the windows, leaving the room in complete darkness. We start hearing the sound of steps making their way through a room, opening a door, closing a door (violin playing), continuing the walk outside (lively voices passing), door opening, steps tuning out."

Karen Barad, What is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity; Virtuality; Justice (2012)

"Suppose we had a finely tuned, ultra-sensitive instrument that and tune in to the nuances and subtleties of nothingness. But what would it mean to zoom in on nothingness, to look and listen with ever-increasing sensitivity and acuity...?"

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The voice that trembles in me is the voice of the border. We understand the world better, Glissant writes, when we tremble with it, for the world trembles in every direction. - Paul B. Preciado, An Apartment on Uranus (2019)

"Listening to cacophony and noise tells us that there is a wild beyond to the structures we inhabit and that inhabit us... To listen to the noise we make and to refuse the offers we receive to shape that noise into music." - Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study

"The grin without a cat indicates laughmatter and/or anti-matter, not to mention the matter-of-laughter." - Robert Smithson, Entropy and the New Monuments (1966)

Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin, thought Alice; but a grin without a cat! It's only an old rattle - quite old and broken." - Yvonne Rainer, Journeys from Berlin (1960)

"Do you see that?, he said, in a voice choking with passion, and his eyes grew large and yellow all in a moment, as he pointed with a trembling finger at a small white thing lying under the tree. 'It's only a rattle,' Alice said, after a careful examination of the little white thing. 'Not a rattlesnake, you know,' she added hastily, thinking that he was frightened - only an old rattle - quite old and broken." - Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland (1886)

"A body, of whatever kind, is defined by Spinoza in two simultaneous ways. In the first place, a body, however small it may be, is composed of an infinite number of particles; it is the relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles, that define a body, the individuality of a body. Secondarily, a body affects other bodies, or is affected by other bodies; it is this capacity for affecting and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality." - Alex Delarge, Spinoza and Us (5/2019)

"The revolution is not only to bring down a tyrannical regime. The revolution to unite the humane people of different races and identities. The revolution of freedom, peace and justice is still going on for its third year, with the same strength and the strength of the Sudanese people, of which I am proud to be a part." - Vaclav Havel, From the Kiln-His On Fourth Dimension, SAVVY Contemporary (2017)

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"Form in its radical sense should address its formlessness, as it is ultimately referring to the processes of life and death. Affirming form is recognizing the important contribution of each vibrant life, as continually creative process... Letting form go is acknowledging our own mortality or the necessity to work with the limited of every incense of form." - Trinh Thi Minh-Ha, On Fourth Dimension, SAVVY Contemporary (2017)

"Virtuality is not a speedy return, a popping into and out of existence with great rapidity, but rather the indeterminacy of being/not-being, a ghostly non/existence (...) Virtual particles are not in the void but of the void. They are on the razor edge of non/existence, but rather the indeterminacy of being/not-being, a ghostly non/existence (…) On the one hand, virtual particles, in their nature, are virtual. They are not constituted by anything, neither subject nor object, neither form nor non-form. They are on the edge of being/not-being, the realm of the impossible, the realm of the indeterminable. Virtual particles are not in the void but of the void. They are on the razor edge of non/existence." - Karen Barad, What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice (2012)

"We are an entity hard to describe:

- Plenitude is a spool of thread who/that can run and laugh; this animate wood exercises logically multiple.
- Wooden and being affected that also defines a body in its individuality."

"The voice that trembles in me is the voice of the border. We understand the world better, Glissant writes, when we tremble with it, for the world trembles in every direction."

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"Our time refutes the charm of appearance and disappearance, just as it rejects the artifice and sacrifice which alone can guarantee their sovereignty. The entire order of production was established to make an order of the apparition of things impossible, to prevent them from coming into existence too suddenly, even before they have the right to exist or to have a meaning." - Jean Baudrillard, Fatal Strategies (1990)

"Well, what's your name?" you ask him. "Odradek," he says. "And where do you live?" No fixed abode, he says and laughs; but it is only the kind of laughter that has no lungs behind it. It sounds rather like the rustling of fallen leaves. And that is usually the end of the conversation. Even these answers are not always forthcoming, often he stays mute for a long time, as wooden as his appearance." - Franz Kafka, The Cares of a Family Man (1919)

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"Affect is above all a direct feeling of the virtual: the sensation of in, out, or in-out and out-in, the feeling that what happens that clashes with what has happened and what is about to happen." - Karen Barad, What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity, Virtuality, Justice (2012)

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»Matter is never a settled matter. It is always already radically open.«
Karen Barad, What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity; Virtuality; Justice (2012)

»One of the things that’s always on my mind whenever I’m in a public space is who and what is also present there. Maybe you can’t see it, maybe it’s something we would call absence now. And vice versa. That maybe would be on the with some sort of abyss or presence. The paradox is encountering the void. It’s sa. Whenever I’ve had experiences spectrum of a mystical encounter void or negative, like a negation of that it’s still a presence – I’m still there. It’s not not there.«
Johannes Helovis, The 99.5 of Dark Matter on the Other Side of the Universe (2020)

»Nothingness is not absence, but the infinite plentitude of openness.«
Karen Barad, What Is the Measure of Nothingness? Infinity; Virtuality; Justice (2012)

»In a sacred, ceremonial universe, things do not touch each other, and they never meet. Without fail, but without contact. Tact is precisely avoiding contact. Remark monial gestures, dress, and bodies roll, brush past each other, challenge one another, but without ever touching. No chance, that is, no slip that would hurl the bodies toward each other, no disorder that would suddenly allow the liber-. A very powerful force was required to break this magnetic distance where each body moves, as well as to produce this indifferent space where chance is able to put them in contact. Something of this refractory power remains in each of us.«
Jean Baudrillard, Field Strategies (1990)

»Theories are living and breathing reconfigurings of the world. The world theorizes as well as experiments with itself. Figuring, reconfiguring. Animate and (so-called) inanimate creatures do not merely embody mathematical theories; they do mathematics. But life, whether organic or inorganic, animate or inanimate, is not an unfolding algorithm. Electrons, molecules, brittlestars, jellyfish, coral reefs, dogs, rocks, icebergs, plants, asteroids, snowflakes, and bees stray from all calculable paths, making leaps here and there, or rather, making here and there from leaps, shifting familiarly patterned practices, testing the waters of what might yet be / have been / could still have been.«
Karen Barad, On Touching: The Inhuman that Therefore I Am (2012)

»...Every string of data is ambiguously promiscuous«
Rosa Menkman, Resolution studies and the Im / Possible Image, Artist Talk HFBK Hamburg (2021)

»A conclusion generated from all possible endings: Discontinuity is necessary for further continuations. Interruptions impede control. To be continued...«
Zbyněk Baladrán, Powerless Source of all Power (2018)