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**MATERIALIST PHILOSOPHIES GROUNDED IN THE HERE AND
NOW: CRITICAL NEW MATERIALIST CONSTELLATIONS &
INTERVENTIONS IN TIMES OF TERROR(ISM)**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

FEMINIST STUDIES
with an emphasis in HISTORY OF CONSCIOUSNESS

by

Evelien M. L. Geerts

December 2019

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ABSTRACT

Materialist Philosophies Grounded in the Here and Now: Critical New Materialist Constellations & Interventions in Times of Terror(ism)

Evelien M. L. Geerts

This dissertation, located at the crossroads of Continental political philosophy, feminist theory, critical theory, intellectual history, and cultural studies, provides a critical cartography of contemporary new materialist thought in its various constellations and assemblages, while using diffractive theorizing to examine two Continental terror(ist) events. It is argued that such a critical cartography is not only a novel but also much needed undertaking, as we, more than almost two decades after the Habermas-Derrida dialogues on terror(ism), are in need of a *Zeitgeist*-adjusted conceptual framework, and, thus, a revitalization of philosophizing as such, that could lead to an analysis of the complex ontological, epistemological, and eco-ethico-political entangled aspects of global crises, and, specifically, terrorist events, the actual terror they produce, and the bio-/necropolitical repercussions they often engender.

Using the new materialist methodologies of critical cartography and diffraction, this project's first part explores what it means to "theorize from the

ground up” in a feminist manner, while furthermore offering a situated critical cartography of new materialist thought. Within the contours of this Deleuzoguattarian mapping exercise, new materialist thought is shown to be grounded in foregoing materialist philosophies, transversal and trans(/)disciplinary, and, moreover, a revitalizing ever-evolving philosophical strand of thought with crisscrossing, transcontinental roots and a strong foundation in (post-)Foucauldian poststructuralist thought. Particular attention is paid to what in this project are called “critical” new materialisms, or those new materialist philosophies that take the necessity of critical power analyses seriously, and could be said to be “eco-ethico-political” in nature. This cartography is furthermore accompanied by a digital critical cartography that can be utilized for pedagogical means.

The second and final part of this dissertation, preceded by an excursus that accentuates the importance of Harawayan ecophilosophical thought for critical new materialist philosophies, consists of one chapter that puts the idea of diffractive theorizing into practice; subsequently exploring theorizing on terror(ism), the Habermas-Derrida dialogues with regard to 9/11, and the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 attacks as affect-inducing events of “feeling-thinking-through.” This chapter ends with a diffractive rereading of Habermas, Derrida, Benjamin, and also partially Levinas, on the subject of the contemporary democratic state, terrorism, and the legitimacy of lockdowns and emergency state declarations. By doing so, this final chapter anticipates on this dissertation’s epilogue, in which the need for an up-to-date critical new materialist eco-ethico-political model of justice and responsiveness-as-response-ability, is highlighted.

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I actually started assembling the thoughts and ideas for this piece of text on the 15th of January, 2018, way before one single word of the thesis had materialized itself, and kept rereading, rethinking, and rewriting these words until the 12th of December, 2019, right before handing in the completed manuscript. Even though my time as a graduate student at the University of California, Santa Cruz ended up being a lot harder than expected, and that for various reasons, I in the end persevered by creating my own “ethico-politics of endurance,” to put it in a Braidottian manner;

an ethico-politics in which the acceptance of pain and hardship, but also my hedonistic joy for life, teaching, and writing, and the values of authenticity, compassion, and loyalty, played key roles. In the end, I am pleased to say that I remained true to myself throughout all of this, while stubbornly sticking to my obsession with the topic of new materialisms—a philosophical strand of thought that I first encountered while being a research master student at Utrecht University in 2010, and that, in all honesty, had to grow on me because I, a former Irigarayan, was initially not at all interested in the neo-Deleuzian branch of difference philosophy. I nonetheless let this research “object-now-phenomenon” guide me from my harbor postindustrial hometown Merksem, Belgium, to Santa Cruz, USA in 2014, and—and funnily enough—back to Utrecht, the Netherlands, in 2017.

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#whathashtagcomboswillweinventnext?

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my favorite companion critters, often queer, often near but unfortunately mostly living their lives and afterlives far, far away.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary New Materialist Constellations: Being Haunted by—and Re-orientated Toward—What Matters

To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concepts of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only in a movement of exorcism.

—**Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx***

The way of the ghost is haunting, and haunting is a very particular way of knowing what has happened or is happening. Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition.

—**Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters***

In order to become orientated, you might suppose that we must first experience disorientation. When we are orientated, we might not even notice that we are orientated: we might not even think “to think” about this point. When we experience disorientation, we might notice orientation as something we do not have.

—**Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology***

This interdisciplinary or even trans(/)disciplinary dissertation on contemporary new materialist thought starts with the epistemological question of what it means to not just “pursue” one’s research topic or “object,” but to allow oneself to be actively “followed” or even “haunted” by it instead. This latter approach sets the stage for a radical troubling of the traditional tripartite epistemological relationship between the “all-mighty” knower who unravels all of the world’s well-kept “secrets,” the to-be-conquered research “object,” and the knowledge produced.¹ Accepting that one can be haunted by one’s research “object” necessarily affects the researcher—whether this “object” takes the form of a concept, a set of ideas, various theories, or even an event from the past that suddenly and eerily becomes present through its haunting, temporality-queering powers, as deconstructionist Jacques Derrida ([1993] 1994) would put it. Being haunted by one’s research “object” simultaneously disturbs, unnerves, and provokes. As sociologist Avery Gordon also emphasizes in this introduction’s epigraph, as such, being haunted requires one to submit to a whole array of affects—affects that are not always consciously understood, but certainly instantly and intensely felt. Such affects come to us as sudden, tiny refigurations of various *Aha-Erlebnisse*, or moments of sudden insight, that connect past events, lived experiences, and affects to the here and now.²

¹ I wish to thank my colleague and friend Delphi Carstens for our conversations on the topics of hauntology, contemporary crises and crisis modes, and potential Deleuzoguattarian responses to various contemporary crises. These conversations have inspired this introduction and the overall philosophical framework of this dissertation.

² Hauntology is Derrida’s play on the French pronunciation of ontology, or a philosophical way of constructing world views. Derrida criticizes modern Western ontology as, among others, represented by Heidegger’s ([1927] 2008) proto-existentialist philosophy, which has focused on the presence of Being for way too long, thus overprivileging what “is,” while disregarding the conditions for its coming into being. Derrida employs an hauntological analysis to correct this, looking toward that which breaks out of the oppositional logic of being/absence. In *Specters of Marx* (Derrida [1993] 1994) specifically, he addresses Marx’s intellectual legacy, together with the ghosts of those who have been treated unjustly in the past. Both Gordon’s *Ghostly Matters* ([2008] 1997) and queer

Going along with the haunting, seductive powers of a particular research “object” can be quite unsettling, not to mention risky, as one is demanded to let go of formerly learned structures, knowledge paradigms, and neatly boxed conceptual categories. Furthermore, the research “object” is necessarily transformed into a research “phenomenon,” as “objects” that haunt clearly have an agential force(fulness) of their own (see also Barad 2007; Bennet 2004; Blackman 2019; Haraway 1988, 1997a; van der Tuin 2018c). Any re-orientation necessarily entails moments of disorientation, as queer theorist Sara Ahmed also claims in the epigraph above. The thinker has to partly surrender epistemological-intellectual control and, in the words of feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway (1988), go along with this world-shattering “epistemological electroshock therapy” (578) and the re-orientation processes that accompany this potent therapeutic experience. My orientation as a researcher can best be described as a feminist philosopher who experiences herself as always already split into two, between knowledge production taking place on the European Continent on the one hand, and the United States on the other. From this split location, I face both Western philosophical canonical knowledges and politicized counter paradigms informed by feminist, queer, and critical race studies, aiming to bridge the still existing gaps between the theoretical and the practical.

theorist Carla Freccero’s (2006) *Queer/Early/Modern* have engaged with this Derridean method of hauntology. While Gordon ([1997] 2008) employs hauntology to focus on historical-political memory and the past to construct a type of sociology that highlights more than just the empirical, Freccero (2006) develops a Derridean ethical methodology of interpretation that takes past hauntings into account, and that is capable of examining “the possibilities of spectrality for the project of a queer historiography” (70). In summary, analyses that focus on the hauntological examine that which disrupts, disturbs, and undoes.

Such processes of re-orientation force us to leave the traditional description of the contents of this thesis aside for a moment, urging us to plunge into the field of epistemology instead. Epistemology is a philosophical subdiscipline that examines what it means to produce knowledge, knowledge claims, and paradigms, and how we, as human subjects, approach such praxes. While, feminist epistemology represents a subset of social epistemology, which is focused on effecting social transformation and analyzes how power relations, structures, narratives, and biases (for instance, related to gender, race/ethnicity, class, etc.) have impacted these processes of knowledge production. In their turn, feminist standpoint theories, as will be addressed in detail in Chapter 1, form a subdiscipline of feminist epistemology which, because of its ongoing relevance to critical new materialist thought, plays an important role throughout this dissertation.

The goals of feminist epistemology as a whole, and feminist standpoint theoretical thought in particular, closely resemble the shaking up of the traditional tripartite epistemological model as described above. Feminist epistemologists Kathleen Lennon and Margaret Whitford ([1994] 2002), whose work is examined in Chapter 1, frame the traditional epistemological—or what they call an “objectivist” (2)—tripartite model as follows:

Within that [i.e., objectivist] framework knowledge is referential—it is about something (the object) situated outside the knower. Knowledge is said to mirror an independently existing world, as that world really is. . . . Genuine knowledge [in this objectivist model] does not reflect the subject who produced it. (2)

In contrast, Lennon and Whitford argue, as subject, research “object,” and the knowledge engendered are conceived as intimately interconnected and mutually co-constitutive, feminist epistemology (in all of its different manifestations) takes the knowledge-producing subject and her or his lived experiences and situated positionality into account from the outset. Knowledge is seen as imprinted with “the marks of its producer” (2), and that imprinting process is regarded as factually inescapable, and should thus not be put between brackets or avoided. From a feminist epistemological perspective, knowledge always reflects the subject that produced it, as well as the power relations and environment of which that subject is part.

As we will see throughout this thesis, the Foucauldian understanding of power and knowledge, and their intertwinement in particular (see e.g., Foucault [1976] 1990, [1975] 1995), play an important role in various feminist epistemologies, poststructuralisms, and new materialisms. This feminist critique of the objectivist model of knowledge production requires a complete and total re-orientation. This brings us back to the topic addressed at the beginning of this introduction, namely, the shift from a supposed rigorously “apolitical” tripartite epistemological model that spotlights the “object”—and the related values of objectivity, neutrality, and impartiality—to a model that takes the subject’s embodied constitution and environment into account in relation, and as relating, to the “object” in question.

Accepting being haunted by one’s research “phenomenon” seems to take this re-orientation process, first theorized by social and feminist epistemologists, ever further, accentuating the role of the “object-as-phenomenon.” However, does

this necessarily imply a re-turning to more traditional, objectivist models—a turning away from the human subject and her or his positionality, or is there something else that unfolds itself when one accepts the possibility of being haunted by one’s research topic? Let me explain this re-orientation process in more detail by looking at the field of present-day new materialist thought—the main research “phenomenon” guiding and holding together the thoughts, reflections, and diffracted musings presented in this dissertation, together with the idea of crisis-inducing “terror(ist) times”—before providing the reader with a comprehensive overview of the thesis project itself.

This dissertation project concentrates on contemporary new materialist thought, here defined as post-poststructuralist, dualism-shattering philosophies that spotlight the powers of the material (see Chapter 1 and, more specifically, Chapter 2). In this context, such an examination—or perhaps more accurately, a political-epistemological *re-examination*—of the role of the human subject in knowledge production and the knowledge-producing subject’s affiliation with the research phenomenon in question, might seem contradictory, or even redundant. This is at least in part due to commonly held—and rather stereotypical—views regarding new materialisms, according to which such philosophies are portrayed as essentially posthumanist, and thus (supposedly) sidestepping everything that relates to human subjectivity, agency, and human-created power relations in favor of an ontological-epistemological analysis of non-human material objects. However, upon closer, more critical inspection, this narrative—that will be touched upon and unpacked in Chapter 2 of this dissertation—engenders and spurs myriad questions and reflections, especially when further reflecting upon the aforementioned issue of re-

orientation. Anno 2019, does taking into consideration our constantly changing *condition contemporaine*—characterized by a myriad of entanglements between accelerating forces of globalization, extraction-based neoliberal capitalism, and technoscientific advancements—necessarily imply that we have now fully entered the so-called posthumanist era? Can this era be considered fully “brandable” as an epoch in which “we” have moved beyond “the human” in all of its possible manifestations, as the temporal prefix of “post-” implies? If indeed this is the case, then who is this peculiar “we” that appears to be steering such questions? Considering the context of this dissertation project, what is the function of (feminist) epistemology within the field of new materialist thought, and within writing about and theorizing new materialisms? If “the human”—whatever meaning this category may (or may not) have received in the past—is said to be no longer of relevance, then how could world-transforming theory still be produced (and why should “we” even bother producing theory at all)? Are contemporary new materialisms really all about this unnuanced posthumanist “canceling out” of the human subject and actor that goes along with this alleged overfetishizing of the non-human “object”? If so, they would surely be considered subscribing to a form of what postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak ([1985] 1988) refers to as “epistemic violence” (76),³ disregarding the fact that many dehumanized others were never allowed to reach the status of “fully” human in the first place. It would seem that,

³ Spivak ([1985] 1988) primarily employs the notion of epistemic violence to criticize how non-Western ways of living and knowing have been deemed unscientific, and therefore have been either ignored or violently erased through epistemological-political imperialism and colonialism. Since its articulation, the term has been picked up by a variety of thinkers, ranging from epistemologists to postcolonial and decolonial scholars. See e.g., Dotson (2011), Fricker (2007), Kidd, Medina, and Pohlhaus (2017), Lugones (2010), Medina (2013), Mills (2013), and Sullivan and Tuana (2007).

in this post-poststructuralist era, “we” have undergone yet another Copernican Revolution, to put it in Kantian terms.⁴ Instead of accentuating the human subject “Man” in all of its glory and “his” intellectual capacities to theorize the world (as stressed in the first Copernican Revolution) perhaps we have come full circle, focusing instead on the other, often forgotten side of the pole—namely, the formerly objectified research “object.”

Even the most cursory glance at popular, so-called object-oriented philosophies would indeed confirm that such a complete re-orientation has taken place. As articulated in the critical cartography presented in Chapter 2, such object-oriented philosophies could be read as new materialist and posthumanist, and highlight the object as a thing of, and on, its own (see Bogost 2012; Harman 2010, 2016; Morton 2013, 2016). However, this would definitely not tell the full story. Although I am of course guilty of slightly overstating the situation for rhetorical and content-related purposes, the narrative presented here is in urgent need of scrutiny. Clearly, certain pitfalls and risks are inherent in new materialist philosophizing, as every intellectual enterprise has its limitations. Often, such issues manifest themselves most clearly when certain knowledge paradigms and oeuvres become canonized and institutionalized. However, within the diverse field that falls under the umbrella term of new materialisms, it seems that certain “cuts” need to

⁴ In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, German Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant ([1781] 1998) uses the analogy of the Copernican Revolution to explain how his own idealist philosophy spotlighted the human subject as knower, and thus reversed the subject/object relationship of the philosophies that came before. Whereas positivist knowledge paradigms centralize the object of knowledge—and can therefore be labeled as objectivist—and were eager to cancel out any influences of the knower, feminist epistemological critiques perform a radical re-orientation or Copernican Revolution 2.0., accentuating the embodied knowing subject. However, this approach is not necessarily Kantian in nature, as the relationality and reciprocal impact of subject and object are emphasized.

be made, as not all new materialist philosophies are “obsessed” with objects and their ontological-epistemological descriptions. For example, new materialist thinkers such Melinda Cooper (2008) and Rosi Braidotti (2013) describe how, within the all-encompassing framework of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, all human beings run the risk of being reduced to human capital and consumed as mere instrumentalized matter. Yet they do so without ignoring how certain subjects, because of their bodily characteristics, are disposed of more easily than others. Thus, rather than simply re-orienting themselves toward a monofocal analysis of objects or subjects, they are instead investigating the relationship between the two positions that were completely separated within the tripartite model. In this dissertation, I suggest these particular works have a strong “eco-ethico-political” undertone, arguing that a distinction must be made between those new materialist philosophies (speculative realisms, object-oriented philosophies, and object-oriented ontologies) that primarily focus on the domain of the ontological and objects on the one hand, and those I consider as more “critical” new materialisms on the other. Informed by feminist, queer, and critical race studies, such critical new materialisms are still guided by a posthumanist interpretation of the world, albeit this time a more critical one (see also Braidotti 2013, 2019). As such, they offer multilayered theories on, and of, the world that depict the realms of ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics as interconnected from the outset, while critically re-adjusting and updating their conceptualization of the human subject rather than cancelling it out.

Furthermore, this eco-ethico-political undertone demonstrates that contemporary philosophical models that are neither innately reductive nor defeatist

exist, and that rather wish to examine the world and the various contemporary crises with which it is currently confronted in all of their interlinked complexity. In contrast to such philosophies that take these myriad of crises seriously, we may consider political scientist Francis Fukuyama's (1992) philosophical model: A classic conservative Hegelian—and thus problematic difference-subsuming⁵—philosophy that consists of a “post-crisis” take on world history, the supposed final stand of Western liberalism in post-Cold War times, and the redundancy of back-then contemporary critical thought. Such a model—furthermore completely infused with American exceptionalism— does not take the idea of crisis as such seriously, and therefore cannot help us analyze the particularity and complexity of the problems that are currently being engendered by for example neoliberal extraction-based capitalism. Opposing this sort of monofocal, reductive view of the world, critical new materialisms do not deny, nor try to explain away present-day crises and ecological, economic, and political urgencies. Anticipating critical reflections on the state of critical theory and theory production today in Chapter 3, the above issues, together with the different manifestations of new materialist thought, are explored in a critical cartography as presented in Chapter 2. Furthermore, an accompanying digital map is introduced in Chapter 2 (see also [Appendix A: A Digital Critical Cartography of New Materialisms](#)), which can be used as a pedagogical tool in (but also outside) the academic classroom to explore the diverse field of new materialisms.

⁵ As one could argue that Hegel's philosophy ([1807] 1977) revolves around a modern Western identity/difference binary, in which all kinds of differences in the end are explained away through an ever-expanding dialectical model. This idea will be discussed and criticized throughout this dissertation, especially in contrast to more Deleuzoguattarian and critical new materialist models of difference.

The above “cut” between new materialisms and critical new materialisms, and the re-orientation that is required, both of the writer and the reader of this dissertation, to think with critical new materialist thought, brings us to a detailed overview of this thesis’s contents. Comprising two parts, this dissertation is the end result of accepting the challenge of being haunted by one’s research “phenomenon.” It focuses on contemporary new materialist thought in its various stellar constellations and interlinked assemblages—expressed here in astronomical terms in order to capture the field’s ongoing process of becoming and morphing, just like planets are continuously said to be moving. Driven by the will to unravel the aforementioned unnuanced narrative about new materialist thought, and intrigued by the potential of this heterogenous field, the first part of this dissertation, “MAPPING THE COMPLEX CONSTELLATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY AND (CRITICAL) NEW MATERIALIST THOUGHT,” consists of two chapters that simultaneously provide the reader with an overview of this dissertation’s theoretical, conceptual, and methodological building blocks. It reflects upon what it means to theorize from the ground up in a feminist manner (Chapter 1), as I will shortly explain, and offers a situated, critical (Braidottian) cartography of contemporary new materialist thought in its various constellations (Chapter 2).

Chapter 1, “(New) Materialist Methodologies: Acrobatics, Situated, Corporeal Knowledges, Critical Cartographies, and Diffractive Thinking,” first of all explores the Foucauldian theorization of power/knowledge and its feminist epistemological and Harawayan re-articulations. While explaining my position as a feminist philosopher intimately entangled with materialist theory-production, I set

the stage for a cartography of critical new materialist thought, as presented in Chapter 2. My analysis is focused on the politically informed fields of social and feminist epistemology, and its subset of feminist standpoint theories—expressed in the plural to reflect the field’s diversity. A genealogical revisiting of the feminist political epistemologies of Sandra Harding, Adrienne Rich, and Donna Haraway is undertaken—all thinkers that, in their own way, have criticized the aforementioned objectivist epistemological paradigm, focusing on embodied, situated, and accountable knowledge production instead. Proceeding, sections 1.2 and 1.3 respectively introduce two new materialist methodologies that form the backbone of this dissertation, namely, critical cartography and diffraction. Both critical cartographical and diffractive thinking support the idea of what I will call “philosophizing from the ground up,” or an explicit materialist way of doing philosophy that immediately thinks about and through worldly affairs and existing power relations, and points toward how the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethico-political are thought together in critical new materialist thought—a claim that runs throughout this dissertation.

Chapter 2, “New Materialisms as Events-in-becoming: A Critical Cartography of New Materialisms’ Moving Constellations,” forms the core of this dissertation. It is here that the idea of being haunted by—or, rather, the haunting potential of—new materialisms, as well as some of the (often overgeneralized) narratives and critiques levelled against them, become most apparent. Consequently, this leads to a presentation of a situated—and thus necessarily limited—critical cartography of present-day new materialist thinking. Haraway’s ecophilosophy makes a return here, not only setting the stage for critical new

materialist thought, but also as part of a critical mapping of materially grounded hope in the philosophies of critical theorists Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch in section 2.1., further demonstrating the potential linkages between contemporary new materialist and historical materialist thought. After section 2.1., contemporary new materialist thinking is conceptualized as a transversal, revitalizing undertaking with crisscrossing, transcontinental roots and a strong foundation in (post-)Foucauldian poststructuralist philosophies in 2.2. Further building upon my situated take on what it means to do feminist philosophy today, as explained in Chapter 1, this chapter then presents a critical cartography of various new materialist constellations and interlinked assemblages in 2.3. and 2.4. A clear emphasis is placed on the more critical, explicitly social justice-oriented new materialisms as a more eco-ethico-political subset of new materialist philosophy, and on new materialisms' stellar coordinates of transcontinentality, trans(/)disciplinary, and transversality. The critical cartography that is presented not only underwrites the claim that contemporary new materialist thought is pluralist and well-rooted, but also underlines the cut between new materialist and critical new materialist theories by focusing on how the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethico-political are thought together (or not). Via this critical cartography, I demonstrate that critical new materialisms are not only eco-ethico-political in nature, but also take seriously both the necessity of critical power analyses and the challenges that come with pressing contemporary issues and crises. These two aspects that make these particular philosophies relevant to the issues explored in Chapter 3.

The second part of this dissertation, “CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL NEW MATERIALIST INTERVENTIONS-IN-ACTUALIZATION,” is preceded by an excursus and consists of one final chapter that puts the idea of diffractive theorizing into practice, theorizing terror(ism), the Habermas-Derrida dialogues with regard to 9/11, and the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 attacks (Chapter 3). The preceding excursus is entitled “Diffractive Musings: Haraway’s Ecophilosophy as Critical New Materialist Avant la Lettre,” and provides the reader with an anticipatory diffractive reading of Haraway’s more “minoritarian” works. This reading further stresses the importance of Haraway’s situated knowledges to the development of the fields of feminist epistemology, feminist science studies, and critical new materialist thought.

Chapter 3, “Critical Theory Reinvigorated: Diffractive Philosophizing in Times of Terror(ism),” can be seen as the more practical, ethico-political chapter of the dissertation, in which the methodology of diffractive theorizing—seen as a form of “soil-rooted”⁶ philosophizing from the ground up—comes to full fruition. Actualizing several critical new materialist philosophies mapped in Chapter 2 and its accompanying digital critical cartography, Chapter 3, specifically section 3.1., first examines the double pull of the Enlightenment and the necessity of creating up-to-date, attentive critical theories, concepts, and stories—as also emphasized by Haraway. Looking at how terrorism has been positioned as a modern-day crisis, and mapping several key philosophical, critical theoretical, and de/anti/postcolonial reflections in 3.2., it is argued that the attack on the Twin Towers on 9/11 has

⁶ In this case meant as a wordplay on “well-grounded” (and thus materialist and rooted in actual, physical soil).

precipitated an upturn in philosophical theorizing on contemporary terrorism. After noting the importance of a mapping—and not tracing—strategy, accentuating the dangers of framing, and referring to some of the shared ideas and principles of critical cartography and diffractive thinking, the Habermas-Derrida dialogues (as featured in Borradori 2003) on terrorism and 9/11 are addressed. The final sections, 3.3. and particularly 3.4., then work through the claim that the Habermas-Derrida dialogues need to be brought back to the Continent, where there has been a recent increase in terrorist attacks. Instead of linearly rereading these dialogues, a diffractive, more fragmented, spacetime queering reading, theorizing, and writing strategy is used to critically elaborate on the reflections of Habermas and Derrida, simultaneously narrating my own situated experiences of “feeling-thinking-through” the Paris November 2015 and Brussels 2016 attacks. Diffracting the thoughts of Habermas and Derrida on 9/11 and its aftermath, as well as the problematic oppositional structure via which their philosophies have been interpreted, the digital-material space and applications via which these events reached me while I was living in Santa Cruz, the United States, are examined. I analyze artistic, hashtag- and meme-based tributes that were created to materially and, in some cases, digitally-materially, commemorate these events, combining these with a reading of various legal and political texts concerning the Constitutions of both France and Belgium. Last but not least, I bring in particular historical materialist and critical new materialist textual fragments and ideas, together constituting a different, more entangled, materially grounded way of philosophizing contemporary terrorism and the terror it produces. Diffractively rereading Habermas, Derrida, Benjamin, and also partially Levinas, through one another on

the subject of the contemporary democratic state, terrorism, and the legitimacy of lockdowns and emergency state declarations, this chapter ends with an anticipation of the epilogue.

In this short epilogue, entitled “Eco-Ethico-Political Re-orientations Toward a Different Kind of Justice: Making Space for Responsiveness-as-response-ability.” the need for an up-to-date critical new materialist eco-ethico-political model that no longer separates the political from the ethical is emphasized. Moreover, it reflects upon the potential combination of re-articulated ideas of justice and responsiveness-as-response-ability, and what such a combination could bring us.

PART I

MAPPING THE COMPLEX CONSTELLATIONS OF CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY AND (CRITICAL) NEW MATERIALIST THOUGHT

CHAPTER 1

(New) Materialist Methodologies: Acrobatics, Situated, Corporeal Knowledges, Critical Cartographies, and Diffractive Thinking

There is no longer any ultimate truth to establish: free at last from the encumbering pursuit of completion, synthesis, fullness, women as philosophers need to establish new balances, to invent new ways of thinking. For if Ariadne has fled from the labyrinth of the old, the only guiding thread for all of us now, women and men alike, is a tightrope stretched above the void.

—**Rosi Braidotti**, *Patterns of Dissonance*

The larger issue is, then, the incorporation of all forms of human being into a single homogenized descriptive statement that is based on the figure of the West's liberal monohumanist Man. . . . We therefore now need to initiate the exploration of the new reconceptualized form of knowledge that would be called for by Fanon's redefinition of being human as that of skins (phylogeny/ontogeny) and masks (sociogeny). Therefore bios and mythoi. And notice! One major implication here: humanness is no longer a noun. Being human is a praxis.

—**Sylvia Wynter in Wynter and McKittrick**, *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*

This first chapter, following my introduction of the enmeshed topics of knowledge production processes, new philosophical paradigms, and the passionate determination of following one's own research "object" while being haunted—and

thus also actively followed—by it, touches upon a particular set of theoretical concepts, ideas, and (new) materialist methodologies that form the building blocks of this project. While expanding on these building blocks, I situate and explain my own feminist political engagement with the tradition of Western (modern, poststructuralist, and contemporary) philosophy and its canonical, self-(de)legitimizing knowledge production processes which, as will be examined later, have important epistemological and ethico-political implications. Although this project is located at the crossroads of Continental political philosophy,⁷ contemporary feminist theory (with its foci in feminist poststructuralist thought, feminist science studies, and “critical,” i.e., feminist, queer, and critical race studies-inspired new materialisms),⁸ critical theory, intellectual history, and cultural studies, it also touches upon what it means to practice feminist philosophy in a contemporary context. Therefore, a detailed discussion of my own situated positionality as a feminist, queer, female-identified researcher trying to “philosophize from the ground up”—while hopefully not reproducing that which queer theorist Sara Ahmed (2006) in *Queer Phenomenology* has criticized as “the fantasy of a ‘paperless’ philosophy” (34)—has to be included. In *Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed—whose phenomenological analysis of orientations,

⁷ The notion of “Continental” is used in this dissertation to refer to the idea of the European continent and the Continental Western philosophical tradition. This tradition that is often placed in opposition to more Anglo-American analytic strands of philosophy. With this notion, I do not wish to underline the so-called split between analytic and Continental philosophy, but rather wish to better situate my own training and positionality (with)in and against the philosophical canon.

⁸ Chapter 2 will touch upon what this strand of thought brings to the philosophical table. For now, it suffices that the reader is aware of the fact that contemporary new materialist thought is a pluralist, post-poststructuralist undertaking, consisting of a new metaphysics that focuses on both material-semiotic and specifically somatic realities and beings, and includes a creative conceptual vocabulary, a methodology, and a political groundedness and stance as a means of providing answers to ecological, economic, and ethico-political entangled urgencies. Furthermore, in what I will label “critical new materialisms,” eco-ethico-political questions are considered to be of prime importance.

objects, and being-orientated-to was addressed in the introduction—explains how canonical Western philosophical knowledge has almost exclusively been regarded as effortlessly produced by white, upper-class, European men who not only considered themselves to be philosophy’s “universal” and “legitimate” knowledge producers, but also relied mostly on the factual, physical labor of others to reflect upon the world, thus covering up the materiality of their own knowledge production by creating this paperless, laborless delusion.⁹ In a materialist—and even new materialist-sounding—manner, Ahmed (2006) states:

The fantasy of a paperless philosophy can be understood as crucial not only to the gendered nature of the occupation of philosophy but also to the disappearance of political economy, of the “materials” of philosophy as well as its dependence on forms of labor, both domestic and otherwise. In other words, the labor of writing might disappear along with the paper. The paper here matters, both as the object upon which writing is written, but also as the condition of possibility for that work. (34)

As Ahmed demonstrates, philosophizing and, more broadly, essentially any type of mental labor, demands a certain amount of intellectual, emotional, and physical-

⁹ This is exactly why critical new materialist philosophies are so attractive: They tend to be materially anchored, situated, and self-reflective, and stand in stark contrast to these “paperless” philosophies. The micropolitical interference-based model present in some of these critical new materialist philosophies additionally demonstrates that they are capable of unravelling the complex interactions between social identity markers such as gender, race/ethnicity, and class. For more information about such a new materialist model in the context of intersectional thought, see Geerts and Van der Tuin (2013). This emphasis on the political—an idea that has been influenced by my reading of feminist political philosopher Tuija Pulkkinen’s ([1996] 2000) *The Postmodern and Political Agency*, in which (feminist) poststructuralist philosophy is interpreted as politically oriented because of its attentiveness to situatedness, criticism of universalism, and a reinterpretation of difference—will also be touched upon in Chapter 2.

material labor. Since theorizing never happens in a vacuum, gendered, racialized, and class-based divisions of labor, as well as other “weighty” socio-political realities and imaginaries, impact these processes of knowledge production and vice versa. The paper—albeit now mostly replaced by digital devices, frequently produced under poor and even hazardous working conditions—on and with which one writes, matters, as does the writing table; an element upon which Ahmed also elaborates in *Queer Phenomenology* (e.g., Ahmed 2006, 3). Pushing Ahmed’s viewpoint further, one could claim that the activity of philosophical theorizing is then equally about who has been granted a seat at the philosophical table (or not), and who has been recognized as having *actually* sat there.

As the institutionalized discipline and practice of Western philosophy has been founded upon “the antiphilosophical” (Derrida [1972] 1982, xii), and has done so by rebelling and defining itself in opposition to non-philosophical knowledge¹⁰—an idea with which many other poststructuralist thinkers, such as Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, and Rosi Braidotti, together with decolonial scholars Gloria Anzaldúa and Walter D Mignolo, seem to agree¹¹—it is imperative to

¹⁰ In *Margins of Philosophy*, Derrida ([1972] 1982) examines Western philosophy’s margins and limits, and its relation to alterity. For Derrida, philosophy is primarily about “thinking its other” (x) or “that which limits it” (x). By means of the poetic metaphor of the “tympanum” (xiii) or eardrum, Derrida points toward the liminal and the potential breaching of limits within philosophical discourse. Furthermore, Derrida here touches upon the Levinasian notion of “absolute alterity” (21)—an idea that is partially expressed by Derrida’s notion of “*différance*” (21) or the ultimate existential limit.

¹¹ See also Irigaray ([1974] 1985a) and Braidotti (1991, 1993) for their poststructuralist takes on the exclusivist nature of Western philosophical discourse. Anzaldúa and Mignolo start from a similar premise. However, because of their situated experiences, they theorize the ways in which Western modern philosophy practices gatekeeping differently than Irigaray and Braidotti: Anzaldúa and Mignolo analyze the entanglements between modernity, European colonialism, and knowledge production by means of the notion of colonial difference. As Mignolo (2002) writes when addressing the influence colonialism has had on philosophical thought and epistemology: “The world became unthinkable beyond European (and, later, North Atlantic) epistemology. The colonial difference marked the limits of thinking and theorizing, unless modern epistemology (philosophy, social sciences, natural sciences) was exported/imported to those places where thinking was impossible

think about what has *not* been regarded as legitimate knowledge in this field. In order to really philosophize from the ground up, it is crucial to reflect upon how processes of philosophical-epistemological gatekeeping operate. Epistemic dominance and violence are all around us, yet most often remain unarticulated because the appropriate vocabulary to articulate such undervalued, subjugated, or even wholly ignored knowledges and experiences is yet to be discovered and/or to be taken seriously. This phenomenon continues to have major ethico-political implications.

An emphasis on the strong connections between the epistemological and the ethico-political are one of the core elements of contemporary new materialist thought, especially when considering their feminist, queer, and critical race studies-inspired stellar constellations. A systematic exploration of what it means to engage with the tradition of Western philosophy from my own situated, critical-affirmative position—a position that furthermore emphasizes the cultivation of what I will call “grounded hope”¹²—therefore matters, not only because I hold non-innocent, accountable theorizing close to my heart and aim to be attentive to the potential recreation of violence, but also because such an exploration touches upon several principles that could be regarded as foundational for (critical) new materialist thought.

(because it was folklore, magic, wisdom, and the like)” (67). Both Anzaldúa—who in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) poetically illustrates her relational, embodied philosophy and hybrid mix of identities—and Mignolo (2002, 2011) additionally counter the canon through border thinking; a way of hybrid philosophizing that underlines that the theoretical always has a lived layer attached to it, and emphasizes the subjugated experiences and knowledges of the colonized.

¹² More details on my approach and, particularly, critical new materialisms’ theorization of hope, follow at the start of Chapter 2. In emphasizing the importance of hope within philosophical thought, I have been influenced by Richard Rorty’s (1999) pragmatic understanding of hope and how philosophy should be put to use in order to radically transform the world with respect for everyone’s wellbeing and their own conceptualizations of “the good life.”

For me, philosophizing from the ground up means taking all of the foregoing into account while cultivating political-theoretical accountability. This entails not overlooking the real-life materiality behind the fabrication of philosophical paradigms and theories, and being aware of the subjects and knowledges that have been pushed to the margins—or even completely out—of the canon, as the epigraphs by Rosi Braidotti and Sylvia Wynter remind us. Furthermore, material(ist) philosophizing implies remaining answerable to the place where one, as a knowledge producer, is coming from, while producing one’s own (counter-canonical) situated knowledges. Finally, it also necessitates continuously balancing oneself on the self-chosen tightropes spun between the canons of Continental philosophy and feminist theory—to echo Braidotti’s (1991) acrobatic metaphor in *Patterns of Dissonance*.

In the following section, I touch upon the notions and (new) materialist methodologies of the politics of location, situated knowledges, critical cartographies, and diffraction. In doing so, I hope to explore these general (and personal) feminist philosophical acrobatics in more detail, demonstrating why such acrobatics matter in relation to the project of mapping contemporary new materialist constellations. These balancing acts, the Foucauldian idea of power/knowledge, and the gravity of the production of situated, accountable knowledges form this chapter’s interwoven leitmotifs.

1.1. Feminist Philosophical Acrobatics: Corporeal Knowledges and Feminist Speculative Fabulations

For those trained in the traditional disciplines of philosophy, critical theory, and intellectual history, it might be surprising to read a dissertation that assertively positions itself at the crossroads of these fields, and then opens with a chapter on methodological notes and the somewhat peculiar ideas of (self-)positionality and situated knowledges. “Methodologies” and “methodological reflections” are indeed notions that, to many philosophers—and especially those trained in the Continental, more *bricolage*-oriented tradition of philosophy—sound simultaneously terrifying and fascinating. Anthropologists, psychologists, and sociologists have a multitude of well-delineated research methodologies at their disposal, such as ethnographical methods and a variety of interview techniques, as well as observational, cohort, and sample studies. These disciplines are generally characterized by their outward-looking perspectives—i.e., the idea that the world can at least be partially captured via a set of constructed apparatuses, data, instruments, and techniques. Conversely, philosophers do not adhere to one or more overarching methodologies, because there are apparently many ways via which to construct a philosophical system or a (supposedly) all-encompassing framework of knowledge. Even though engaging with philosophy has outward, worldly consequences—or at least that is what feminist and socio-political philosophers believe—philosophizing itself has long been considered a solipsistic act of analysis and argumentation or synthesis, depending on the tradition in which one works. This is an idea that has not only led to the undervaluation of philosophy as self-transforming (that is, as moving toward

the production of more self-reflective and critical ideas) and transformative (that is, impacting the world from theorizing *within* the world).

As a philosophical thinker, one is thought of as encountering a specific problem or issue in the social world, the economy, politics, or their related literature. One is then supposed to break said issue or problem down into smaller parts by creating a manageable set of corresponding problems and questions (the analysis approach often used in analytic philosophy), or to synthesize the issue by integrating it in larger, mostly worldly, structures (the synthesis approach often preferred in Continental philosophical undertakings). Finally, one is expected to develop a logical and practical set of arguments and solutions with which to tackle the issues at hand (see e.g., Prado 2003 for a similar overview). The philosopher then develops methodological questions, such as whether one is required to approach and understand the world in a purely rationalist or empiricist manner, or in a more Socrates-inspired, maieutic way. Proceeding, one comes up with a system of knowledge and what feminist anthropologist Maija Butters (2016) so aptly calls “metaphysical meaning-making” (97) in relation to one’s existential lifeworld. While constructing such epistemological-existential systems and frameworks, methodological questions regarding one’s own positionality (with)in the world tend to arise.

Yet, during my own training (mostly in ancient, modern, and poststructuralist Western philosophy at a formerly Jesuit Catholic university in Flanders, Belgium), issues and questions of self-reflexivity and positionality were never really addressed as such. If questions like these were touched upon at all, this happened only in the context of classes on epistemology (the particular subset of

philosophy that deals with knowledge production and the validation of theories of knowledge) and the philosophy of science. In contrast, during my education in gender and feminist studies at Utrecht University and the University of California, Santa Cruz, more space was created within which to reflect upon methodological-epistemological issues, as canonical frameworks and traditions were critically approached from the outset.

The aforementioned distinction between philosophical theorizing and epistemology has always startled me. Why are these two activities not seen as more connected to one another, and how come there seems to be a pressing need to leave out the ethical and the socio-political when addressing more epistemological issues? Furthermore, why has epistemology generally, or at least until the arrival of social epistemology in the 1980s (of which feminist epistemology and feminist standpoint theories are subsets) been such a solipsistic, individualist, and incorporeal endeavor? Are there not many pathways via which to practice philosophy differently—for example, as Ahmed (2006) also points toward, in a more grounded, material(ist), labor-focused manner—while thinking the praxis of Western philosophy with its odd sub-disciplinary divisions anew (without necessarily having to go back to Ancient Greek, more “holistic” forms of metaphysics)? Does this not have to do with the traditional hubris-laden role of philosophy (and in particular Aristotle’s influential conceptualization of philosophy-as-metaphysics as the queen of all sciences), touching upon all facets and issues of life, and therefore almost presenting itself as a pure “methodology” in its own right? Or is it rather that for centuries, philosophy rested upon a supposedly “neutral,” disembodied subject position that helped convince its practitioners that they were producing rational,

universally valid knowledge, thus partially taking away the need to further reflect upon their own positionalities as “fleshy”—and thus very much embodied—geopolitically situated subjects?¹³ While working with(in) and against the Continental philosophical canon in the past decade or so, I have learned that one cannot escape critical reflections concerning one’s own situated positionality and the methodological stakes of taking one’s situatedness into account from the outset. Working in the fields of feminist philosophy, poststructuralist feminist philosophy, feminist science studies, and critical new materialist thought—enterprises that adhere to the Foucauldian emphasis on the entanglement of knowledge (production) and power—reflections on one’s own geopolitical position are of utmost importance.

This Foucauldian accentuation of knowledge and power deserves to be explored in more detail, as it is this conceptual pairing that gave an extra impulse to the establishment of, not only the field of social epistemology, but also its subset of feminist epistemology—which is the central topic of this chapter. For French poststructuralist philosopher Michel Foucault, power webs, relations, forces, and expressions, as well as knowledge production, are never distinguishable from one another. Conceptualized as power/knowledge in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault [1975] 1995) and *The History of Sexuality. An Introduction: Volume 1* (Foucault [1976] 1990), he positions power as always exercised in the function of knowledge and discursive formations or practices, while knowledge,

¹³ For more detailed critiques with regard to this matter, phallogocentrism, the supposed masculinity of reason, and the selective “humanness” of the Western subject, see e.g., Bordo (1987), Braidotti (1991), Irigaray ([1974] 1985a), Lloyd (1984), Shildrick (1997), Wynter ([1992] 1994), and Wynter in Wynter and McKittrick (2015).

and thus truth, about the world are produced on the basis of power used to subjugate and control subjects. Knowledge and power are thus heterogeneous, forceful phenomena, but they nevertheless always come into being relationally. One could say that Foucault put power's epistemological intricacies on the map and fittingly theorized the productive, engendering potential of power or counterpower, which turned into a major theme in feminist philosophy both during and after the heyday of poststructuralism. For example, in *Knowing the Difference*, the aforementioned feminist epistemologists Lennon and Whitford ([1994] 2002) addressed Foucault's impact on feminist philosophy.¹⁴ For them, and for many other feminist theorists, the epistemological core of (post-)Foucauldian feminist philosophy concerns a

¹⁴ This idea, of the intertwining of knowledge and power, and consequentially, of science and politics, has been picked up by various poststructuralists, sociologists of science, and epistemologists. Bruno Latour's ([1984] 1988) *The Pasteurization of France*, Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer's (1985) *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, and Joseph Rouse's (1990) *Knowledge and Power*, for instance, can all be regarded as following in Foucault's footsteps while commenting on how scientific knowledge production processes have been influenced thoroughly by various socio-political forces and the environments in which scientists have found themselves in. Moreover, Foucault's relational conceptualization of power also influenced many feminist poststructuralists. Especially the idea that power could be viewed as a set of dynamic—sometimes restricting, sometimes productive and enabling—forces gave these thinkers the tools to more adequately theorize female subjects' agency, their positions in theory and society, and the disciplining and surveilling of female bodies. Foucault himself addressed the idea of counterpower as follows in an interview from the 1980s: "Power should not be understood as an oppressive system bearing down on individuals from above . . . Power is a set of relations. What does it mean to exercise power? It does not mean picking up this tape recorder and throwing it on the ground. I have the capacity to do so—materially, physically, sportively. But I would not be exercising power if I did that. However, if I take this tape recorder and throw it on the ground in order to make you mad, or so that you can't repeat what I've said, or to put pressure on you so that you'll behave in such and such a way, or to intimidate you—Well, what I've done, by shaping your behavior through certain means, that is power. Which is to say that power is a relation between two persons" (Foucault [1980] 1988, 2). For more on Foucault's take on power, see e.g., May (1993). For examples of feminist reconceptualizations of Foucault's notion of power, see e.g., Bartky (1990), Bordo (1993), Braidotti (1991, 2005) and Butler (1990, 1993). Braidotti particularly pays attention to what she, read through a Spinozist-Deleuzian lens, understands to be the *potestas* (restrictive, disciplining) and *potentia* (enabling, subversive, and productive) sides to Foucauldian power and subjectification processes. Butler (1997) and Mahmood (2001) also touch upon the Foucauldian double-sidedness of power, and the intricate connections between power, resistance, and agency. Whereas Butler rather loyally follows in the footsteps of Foucault by talking about the double process of becoming-subject through subjectification, Mahmood is more critical of Foucault's (and Butler's) conceptualization of agency as emancipatory and rearticulates agency in a more postcolonial manner.

“recognition that the legitimation of knowledge-claims is intimately tied to networks of domination and exclusion” (1). Power and knowledge can no longer be presented as disentangled, because they never actually present themselves as such in the world. Rather, power and knowledge are intertwined, and often forces and relations of power bring about forces of resistance. Furthermore, the authors argue that feminist epistemology demonstrates “a commitment to social change and links with other emancipatory struggles against oppression” (1), implying that this sub-discipline intends to bring about socio-political transformation. With this idea, Lennon and Whitford, together with many other (post-)Foucauldian feminists, not only successfully spotlight the materiality of power relations, but also anticipate the entangled nature of the epistemological and the political—a principle that, as we will soon discover, is also central to contemporary new materialist thought.

1.1.1. Heterogeneity, Contradictions, and Dissonances

It should thus come as no surprise that feminist theorists—and especially those working in and with (post-)Foucauldian philosophy—pay particular attention to socio-political power relations and forces, and to how the act of philosophizing itself has to be brought back to a locatable, situated subject caught up in intersubjective interactions and power webs. Defining the actual field of feminist philosophy, however, does not appear to be that simple, because it is both innately contradictory and incredibly heterogeneous.¹⁵

¹⁵ This section contains rewritten and edited passages taken from my field statement, which was part of my qualifying exams (see Geerts 2016b).

The first reason for this difficulty has to do with what feminist philosopher Emanuela Bianchi (1999) has called “the paradox of feminist philosophy” (x). According to Bianchi, feminist philosophy is eager to combine various orientations that do not necessarily go well together, namely, “concrete versus abstract, historical versus eternal, particular versus universal, situated rather than seeking a ‘view from nowhere’” (x). On the one hand, political feminism and feminist theories wish to draw attention to the here and now. Seen through a situated, contextualized, and power-focused perspective, they aim to actively transform the world for the better by means of what feminist science studies scholar Donna Haraway (2011) calls “speculative fabulation” (1).¹⁶ On the other hand, the Western philosophical canon is preoccupied with finding rational and universal answers to perennial philosophical questions through what Haraway (1988) has labeled “the god trick” (582); a supposedly neutral, disembodied, distancing, and universal perspective from above.

This paradoxical situation has also been underlined and confirmed by Braidotti (1991) in *Patterns of Dissonance*—one of the first works in Continental feminist philosophy that confronts the aftershock of the crisis of the rational subject that French philosophy was dealing with during the late 1980s and 1990s. The work additionally touches upon the issue of “women and/in philosophy” (10), articulating a new relation between the traditional Western philosophical canon and feminist

¹⁶ Speculative fabulation entails collectively producing and narrating world-making stories to actualize the until now virtual utopian. Haraway’s fabulation-creating praxis will be touched upon in more detail in the excursus and in Chapter 2. Notably, these feminist fabulations also play a role in the work of Braidotti. For example, in *Nomadic Subjects*, Braidotti ([1994] 2011) discusses various figurations of female subjectivity that were popular at the time, such as the Harawayan figure of the cyborg (11ff.). Speculation, and immanently grounded forms of speculation in particular, play an important role in many critical new materialisms (see also Moffat 2019).

reflections from those identifying as women working within the margins of this field. While injecting reflections about alterity, female specificity, and embodied subjectivity into the traditional somatophobic philosophical discourse, and taking seriously that we have all become “epistemological orphans” (2) since the death of “Man” or the modern universalist subject (e.g., Foucault [1966] 2002), Braidotti—like Bianchi, but then with a more materialist grounding—calls feminist philosophical reflections inevitably contradictory. Influenced by the difference philosophies of Irigaray and Gilles Deleuze, and the “new bodily materialism of the Foucauldian-Deleuzian tradition” (276), Braidotti describes her own nomadic project as engaging with the many dissonances that the clash between the traditional canon and feminist-oriented political reflections produce. These conflicts have a lot to do with the gendered rational/irrational split, and with how the philosophical masters have not exactly been keen on challenging the status quo. In fact, seen through philosophy’s phallogocentric, dehumanizing “humanist” perspective, Braidotti notes that women are mere “beggars at the philosophical banquet” (150). As a result of the interactions between their gender, race/ethnicity, and class, women were lucky even to be considered human at all, and indeed, not all women have been granted even that particular status. Rather, women have been seen as hysterical, non-thinking subordinates to the intellectual masters, reflecting the powers of the thinking subject: “Man” (see also Irigaray [1974] 1985a). This reveals how necessary feminist and other, more critique-oriented philosophical interventions truly are. These interventions remain essential to this day, exactly because of Western philosophy’s hierarchical “inherent disciplinary violence” (Braidotti 1991, 278), which has promoted a “specific image of the human subject

as a conscious, rational, self-transparent entity” (278). This is not to say that the whole discipline of Western philosophy is condemned to the eternal reproduction of violent exclusions. Steps toward a more open, inclusive, and self-reflective canon and philosophical praxis have already been taken, as we can deduce from the plethora of (feminist) poststructuralist, critical theoretical, anti/post/decolonial,¹⁷ ecofeminist, social epistemological, and many other existing critical perspectives. Yet the seductive dangers of a hierarchical taxonomy rooted in the modern Enlightenment still very much lurk around the corner (see also e.g., Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 1997; Bowker and Star 1999), and even continue to haunt the praxis of feminist philosophy itself.

This is precisely why such a feminist critique of the Western philosophical canon’s epistemological-political violence could be best accompanied by more critical theoretical, critical race studies-oriented, and post/decolonial viewpoints, such as those of critical theorist Susan Buck-Morss (2009), postcolonial thinker David Scott (2004), philosopher-sociologist Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007), feminist philosopher María Lugones (2010), and the aforementioned Wynter ([1992] 1994, 2003). All of these thinkers accentuate the investigation of the violent role the Western Enlightenment and its philosophical ideologies have played globally through colonialism and imperialism, and how we have to take the epistemological, the geopolitical, and their entanglement together in order to better frame and comprehend said violence.

¹⁷ I am intentionally grouping these three strands of thought and political praxes of resistance together in this dissertation for the sake of logical argumentation. I am however of course aware of the fact that all three paradigms have their own specific situated, geopolitical context, and therefore also at times strongly differ from one another. When labeling these specific three groups of thinkers, I tend to use the label they either use themselves or have received in academic literature.

Buck-Morss and Scott therefore advocate a differently rooted conceptualization of Western Enlightenment and modernity. Buck-Morss (2009) does so by showing how there has always been a plurality of historical models available in addition to the so-called “universal” historical model, which is in fact very provincial and Eurocentric. She argues that the German Enlightenment philosopher Hegel was inspired by the Haitian revolution when conceptualizing his troubling, racist take on world history, freedom, and the so-called master/slave dialectic. In a similar manner, Scott (2004) unmasks the situated particularity of the Western Enlightenment tradition by arguing for a retheorization of the colonial past from *within* the (now former) colonies. He emphasizes the notion of tragedy rather than nostalgic romance, so as not to project a postcolonial story that merely focuses on how the colonial past has supposedly been transcended, resulting in a still Western modern conceptualization of progress, time, and temporality. The traditional Western understanding of the relationship between the (alleged) center and the peripheries is turned on its head here.

Da Silva and Lugones also tackle these topics but do so by concentrating instead on the racial/ethnic question in relation to gender, epistemic violence, and Western modernity. Whereas Lugones (2010) is preoccupied with examining the imperialistic epistemological features of modernity and the Western philosophical tradition through a decolonial feminism that accentuates coalitional politics and formerly subjugated knowledges, Da Silva (2007) deconstructs the system of modern Western philosophical representation as a whole. By criticizing modern Western representational processes, she unpacks how the racial was produced as a category of pure negativity.

Wynter's feminist, Fanonian—and thus anticolonial—philosophy (e.g., Wynter [1992] 1994, 2003) unites the constructive and deconstructive aspects of the foregoing projects by drawing attention to the way in which modern Western philosophy created a limited phallogocentric system of intelligibility and representation. She argues that this system put forward the human subject as Man1 (the rational, political, conquering European subject) and Man2 (the economic, self-proclaimed, racially superior European subject), leaving no room for any other potential subject positions—something that Wynter, with her different conceptualization of humanity, wishes to correct.¹⁸

We will come back to this “dark side,” or what I will later refer to as the “double pull,” of Western Enlightenment in Chapter 3.¹⁹ For now, it suffices to underscore that this difference-erasing brutality that lies at the heart of Western modern philosophy has prevented the coming into being of other epistemological-existential ways of being human—or even simply “being”—from flourishing. Furthermore, it has also led to lethal purification processes outside the domain of thought, expelling many other types of legitimate knowledge production, thinking subjects, and perspectives. Braidotti (1991) has summarized this dire situation as follows, reminding us of Derrida's thoughts about the antiphilosophical, and (Western) modern philosophy's gatekeeping praxes:

¹⁸ Wynter's Fanonian heritage can be brought back to her double focus on the necessity of decolonization and the creation of what French West-Indian psychoanalyst and philosopher Frantz Fanon ([1961] 1963) called “a new humanity” (36). This leitmotiv runs throughout Wynter's work.
¹⁹ This focus on the “dark side” of the Enlightenment is not to be confused with the neo-reactionary project of the Dark Enlightenment. While these neo-reactionaries—often finding their inspiration in libertarian philosophies and transhumanism—are also critical of what the Enlightenment has brought us, they wish to implement a system that is anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian. This strand of thought has inspired many contemporary alt-right and neofascist thinkers (for a more detailed description, see Land 2012).

Philosophy while playing a juridico-normative role, both disguises the power it exercises and makes it omnipresent. . . . It has also fuelled so many real and symbolic disqualifications and murders of the many “others” of reason, the memory of which is mixed with the origins of our “rational” culture. (278)

It is only with the arrival of poststructuralist, difference, and feminist philosophies, together with anti/post/decolonial thought, that the phallogocentric, factually dehumanizing “humanist” rules of the philosophical game were thoroughly interrogated, revealing Western philosophy’s own complicity.

However, this dissonance-packed situation can also be judged as having a surprisingly positive outcome. This is because political feminism in general investigates different types of exclusions and omissions, and aims to make silenced voices heard from a situated and self-reflective viewpoint. In this way, feminist philosophies and theories could force the Western philosophical tradition to critically examine itself, to detect how “it contains historically locatable, concrete interests, which are put into play in the very act of disavowal” (Bianchi 1999, xvii). Or, in Haraway’s (1988) words: The god trick is *but* a magic trick, and the “neutral,” “objective,” and “universal” Western philosophical processes of knowledge production are in fact always already immanently locatable and located, even when the subjects behind these knowledge-producing acts are masked as disembodied, with neither specific backgrounds, nor positions. Feminist philosophical reflections can help to unmask and expose this false universalism, together with the problematic idea of the knowledge producer as an innocent, self-distancing bystander—an idea so central to Western thought and science.

A second major reason why an overarching definition of how to practice feminist philosophy is not readily available, has to do with the incredible heterogeneity of the field. Feminist philosophy is as diverse as both the traditional Western philosophical canon and the many varieties of political-activist feminism that exist—praxes that have continuously informed one another. Furthermore, the field itself technically comprises *all* of the possible critical feminist counter-canonical responses—its multitude of subdomains, key research topics, and questions. In addition to the idea that feminist philosophy is both paradoxical (i.e., bringing together oppositional orientations) and critical of the marginalizing mechanisms of the Western canon from the outset, there is another leitmotiv that is said to unite all of these various feminist philosophies, namely, the exclusion of women—and everyone else who does not fit within the mold of phallogocentric subjectivity—from philosophical thinking, both as a discipline and institutionally. Especially earlier configurations of feminist philosophy had a tendency to accentuate this particular aspect of exclusion and thus brought in gender as an analytical category (or the often contested notion of sexual difference, if one uses the French thinkers of *écriture féminine* as one’s starting point instead)²⁰ while

²⁰ The concept of sexual difference has been put forward by Irigaray, whose philosophy, together with the works of two other so-called “French feminists,” Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous, has been received as the emblem of the French *écriture féminine* movement (for a full overview, see Grosz 1989). Focusing on the idea that both Western philosophy and psychoanalysis have repressed the principle (and matter) of the maternal-feminine, in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Irigaray [1974] 1985a) and *This Sex Which Is Not One* (Irigaray [1977] 1985b), she deconstructs the phallogocentric logic underpinning these discourses. Arguing that Western philosophy from Plato onwards has turned “Woman” into a negative, reflective mirror image of the speaking subject “Man,” Irigaray wishes to reveal the ongoing repression of sexual difference and create a new imaginary through bodily/embodied writing that would allow “Woman” to take up a position of speech and subjectivity. By sticking to sexual difference (rather than gender, denoting socially constructed gender roles and norms), while coming up with a psychoanalysis-infused counter-fable of what she calls “the two lips,” Irigaray has been criticized for promoting biological essentialism (e.g., Moi 1985; Plaza 1980). This misreading of Irigaray’s work has since been rectified by Butler (1993), but it is mainly Braidotti who has incorporated Irigaray’s deconstructive work, transforming

highlighting a gendered, and thus more embodied, perspective on philosophical issues and themes.

In an essay on the history and contemporary value of feminist philosophy, feminist philosopher Nancy Tuana (2007) explains that in feminist philosophy, “gender is a crucial lens for philosophical analysis that transforms both the content and at times even the methods of philosophical research” (21). Further, she describes how feminist philosophical reflections take as their starting point “the lives of women and women’s aspirations for freedom” (21), and more recent takes on feminist philosophical scholarship now understand gender to be a critical analytical category, intertwined with “other often intersecting locations, including economic status, ability, race/ethnicity, and sexuality” (21).

This accentuation of gender as a critical tool of analysis closely mirrors feminist historian Joan Scott’s (1986) undertakings in “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.” Similar to many feminist philosophers’ aspirations in the late 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, Scott describes the necessity of bringing gender into the scholarly vocabulary of the discipline of history, in addition to the critical concepts of class and race. She does so with the intention to better grasp how power relations between subjects operate in past and present societies, while highlighting how the insertion of gender as a critical conceptual tool could shine a new light on the history of women and the enterprise of historiography itself.²¹ In a similar way

the restrictive idea of sexual difference into a relational difference. For Braidotti (1993), sexual difference consists of three layers: sexual difference as the difference between men and women; the differences among women; and the differences within each woman. Braidotti’s more Deleuzian-inspired nomadic rereading of Irigaray highlights the aspect of differences-in-becoming or differing.²¹ Such a critical conceptual tool focuses on the following aspects: gender as a social construct that reveals the supposed differences between the sexes, and gender as something that tells us more about how power relations operate in society (see Scott 1986, 1067ff.). The second part of Scott’s definition reveals a Foucauldian influence, and is touched upon in more detail by Butler (1990,

to both queer theorist Judith Butler and Braidotti, Scott accentuates a more Foucauldian approach to power.²²

As someone whose work is located on the intersection of Continental political philosophy and feminist theory, has a passion for epistemology and political philosophy, and who additionally feels more genealogically affiliated with the Deleuzian-Braidottian take on the idea of sexual difference—sexual difference as *differing* (see e.g., Braidotti [1994] 2011; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012)—I can only partially agree with the aforementioned characterization of feminist philosophy presented by Tuana. Feminist philosophy might indeed have come into existence in direct response to the marginalization of women’s issues and women-as-subjects in philosophy. However, if contemporary feminist philosophy is serious about not wanting to repeat certain forms of epistemic violence, it should be equally informed by the process of thinking with other crucial social identity categories and the intersectional articulation of these onto-epistemologically co-constituting categories. In line with the black feminist tradition of intersectional thought, such an approach extends the limits of both gender and sexual difference.

Intersectionality has been informed and empowered by black feminist activism (e.g., the Combahee River Collective [1977] 1982) and intellectual academic work (e.g., Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Hill Collins [1990] 2009; Wekker 2004). Intersectional thought often occurs in combination with the, at first sight,

1993), who uses gender as a critical category of analysis in the field of philosophy to unravel the latter’s heteronormative system of intelligibility, the social construction of gender, the discursive naturalization of sex, and the abjection of non-normative bodies.

²² In Scott 2010, Scott reviews her 1986 article and nuances its radical social constructivism, which overaccentuates the cultural aspect of the gender/sex distinction. Additionally, she warns critical thinkers against contemporary conservative political appropriations of the idea of gender—i.e., as something essentialist and binary. In her 2010 piece, Scott again underlines the importance of Foucauldian philosophy to her work.

contestational (i.e., undoing) but very necessary critical queering of these entangled identity categories and the various representationalisms attached to these categories—an important aspect that Tuana does not spotlight.²³ As demonstrated in works produced by queer theoretical scholars and philosophers such as Lauren Berlant (1997), Butler (1990, 1993), Carla Freccero (2006, 2007), and Teresa De Lauretis (1984), the critical queering of these categories and of the phallogocentric, heteronormative system of intelligibility that links specific normative views on sex, gender, sexuality, and desire together is equally important to the feminist philosophical tradition, and to feminist poststructuralism in particular.

The immense variety of feminist philosophies—whether they are rooted in Marxism, poststructuralism, or queer theory—is thus united by more than simply a one-dimensional focus on gender (or on sexual difference/differing, depending on the strand of thought), a combination of underrepresented identity categories and identities, or the queering of the latter. Rather, feminist philosophies are bound together by their political feminist roots and subversive, defiant attitude, as one cannot be engaged in feminist philosophy without criticizing the current status quo in a contextualized and situated manner. There thus seems to be a tendency in feminist philosophy “to make a fuss” (Stengers and Despret [2011] 2014, 16) by taking up “the baton” (47). As feminist science studies scholars Isabelle Stengers and Vinciane Despret ([2011] 2014) explain in their Virginia Woolf-inspired

²³ This critique of representationalism (particularly in relation to identity politics) is central to many feminist epistemological and onto-epistemological undertakings, such as the projects of philosopher Naomi Zack (2007) and black studies scholar Jennifer C. Nash (2008). Both highlight the epistemological shortcomings of intersectional theory and politics—that is, the relativism that is said to be attached to intersectional politics and the monolithization of black women as intersectional subjects. In her 2019 book, Nash continues this project of reimagining intersectionality in the context of the American university system and women’s studies programs (Nash 2019; for a critical realist take on intersectionality and representationalism, see also Martinez, Martin, and Marlow 2014).

pamphlet *Women Who Make a Fuss*, the baton could potentially be seen as the feminist version of the Nietzschean hammer. This hammer is not only used to destroy the phallogocentric structure that is so central to the Western philosophical tradition and discourse, but also to build something new upon the ruins of the old—preferably with a critical self-awareness of one’s own epistemological-political positionality. This does not mean that the potential dissonances and theoretical disagreements between the philosophical canon and its feminist counter voices will disappear once such a mission has been undertaken. Rather, as also suggested by Bianchi (1999) and Braidotti (1991), the tensions and internal contradictions of the feminist philosophical project will most likely remain, and it is the feminist philosopher’s task to continuously acknowledge both the deconstructive and (re)constructive orientations of contemporary feminist philosophies.

Thinking with paradoxes, dissonances, and tensions (e.g., Braidotti 1991; Scott 1996) and affirmatively following the perpetual dissonances between the philosophical canon and feminist reflections are thus crucial for the vitality and critical contents of the discipline of feminist philosophy. As Braidotti (1991) suggests: “Like the acrobats we [i.e., feminist philosophers] have had to become, may we jump long and jump high, and still land on our two feet” (284). Ahmed (2006), whose comments on philosophy as a material(ist) activity have guided us throughout this chapter thus far, connects this aspect of receiving-resisting (i.e., following and subverting the canon) to finding and getting a “place of one’s own” at the writing table:

Of course, the woman philosopher still has to arrive, to get near enough to take to the writing table. It takes time, this arrival into the “scene” of writing, just as it takes time and work to keep one’s attention on the writing table. Such an arrival is dependent on contact with others, and even access to the “occupation of writing,” which in itself is shaped by political economies as well as personal biographies. And yet, she arrives. Having arrived, she might do a different kind of work given that she may not put these other attachments “behind” her. (62)

Furthermore, it is vital to note here that the feminist philosophical gymnast, seeking a place at the writing table and the philosopher’s banquet, will surely lose both her balance and her ability to speak if she does not take her own situated positionality into account—an important aspect that will be expanded upon now.

1.1.2. Feminist Standpoint Theories and Situated, Corporeal Knowledges

The aforementioned idea of locating and situating oneself—*de facto* materially grounded actions—has been central to feminist activism and theorizing from the outset, and to the fields of feminist epistemology and feminist standpoint theories in particular. In what follows, I provide an overview of how feminist standpoint theories came about, looked at from the perspective of my own dissonance-centered philosophical training. The genealogies of these feminist standpoint theories matter and have to be included in this thesis, not only as examples of situated and accountable thinking, but also because they have partially laid the groundwork for contemporary new materialist thought. It is true that some of the classic feminist standpoint theories are now often regarded as outdated, and that the focus in contemporary feminist epistemology lies with broader social epistemological

topics, such as epistemic authority, testimony, biases, and intersecting identity axes, rather than on subjugated knowledges and epistemic advantage. However, this does not constitute the historical importance of these theories. Rather, their explicitly political angle and emphasis on how one has to be accountable for the production of one's knowledge claims provided incredibly rich stimuli for the development of feminist philosophical thought since its beginnings, or more aptly put, the academic institutionalization thereof, in the 1970s.²⁴

If one tried to define feminist standpoint theoretical thought as a field, it should be best seen as forming a feminist, Marxist, and antiracist subbranch of social epistemology; a particular subcategory of epistemology that accentuates the interactions and relations between knowledge-producing subjects, and thus takes the influence of the social into account when reflecting upon (theories of) knowledge production.²⁵ Epistemologist Lorraine Code (2010)—also known for

²⁴ For more information about the present-day value of feminist standpoint theories, see also e.g., Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2009) and Wylie (2012).

²⁵ Although the socio-political dimensions, characteristics, and significance of knowledge creation and dissemination have been discussed throughout the history of Western philosophy, the subdiscipline of social epistemology only really started to flourish in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly under the influence of Foucault and philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn (1962). Starting from the idea that scientific claims and “objective” truths are influenced by the social domain—or, put differently, are regarded as at least partially socially and intersubjectively constructed—social epistemologists and philosophers of science focus on rethinking the more traditional individualistic and allegedly less power-laden foundations of the field of epistemology (e.g., Gilbert 1989; Latour and Woolgar 1979). For more information, see e.g., Fuller ([1988] 2002) and Goldman (2010). Haddock, Millar, and Pritchard (2010) additionally offer an up-to-date overview of the different varieties of social epistemology and the field's preferred topics, such as the value of testimony and who gets to be believed in certain contexts, the role of biases and identity categories in knowledge production, and many other topics. Accentuating the role of the social environment and intersubjective relationality—and thus stepping outside of the more traditional egocentric views of philosophy—it is no surprise that many feminist epistemologists have contributed to this field by taking the influence of gender (relations, norms, expectations, etc.) on the social into account. Feminist social epistemologists are said to be interested in the influence of gender, but also in how other types of marginalization operate and impact the production of (scientific) knowledge; how knowing subjects are never just individual knowers, but are always part of a certain situated context and milieu; epistemic gendered, racialized, and class-based biases; and many more topics. For a detailed overview of the popular feminist critiques of science at that time, see Rose (1983). For more information on the field of feminist (social) epistemology and feminist standpoint theories, see Grasswick (2011, 2018).

her feminist standpoint theoretical work—describes the motivations behind social epistemology as follows:

social epistemologists return to and reclaim the world, both human and other-than-human, with its incoherence and messiness, its contradictions and specificities, to engage constructively and critically, descriptively and normatively, with real epistemic interactions and negotiations. . . . Social epistemology generates a range of issues that, for traditional epistemologists, counted merely as *hors de question*, many of which blur the dividing lines that have separated epistemological enquiry from ethical and political debate and influences. (30)

The crucial point for Code and fellow social epistemologists relates to how the social milieu, consisting of various power networks and relations, impacts us as knowers and knowledge producers, and furthermore demonstrates that the cut between the epistemological and the ethico-political—or “the normative”—in traditional epistemology needs to be interrogated. This is what spurred feminist social epistemological and feminist standpoint theoretical reflections. By diving into feminist standpoint theories, a more contextualized understanding of the projects of the politics of location (Rich ([1984] 1986) and situated knowledges (Haraway 1988) should arise—two projects that matter because they are central to my own feminist philosophical praxis, and can be regarded as materialist methods that laid the groundwork for new materialist methodologies, such as critical cartography (e.g., Braidotti [1994] 2011) and diffraction (Barad 2007; Haraway 1997a).

1.1.2.1. *The valuing of epistemic differences*

As a subset of feminist epistemology, feminist standpoint theoretical thought has a long and complex history—exactly because of the different viewpoints that have been articulated within this subdiscipline. It follows the standard feminist epistemological concerns articulated in the aforementioned edited volume *Knowing the Difference* as “arising out of feminist projects, which prompt reflection on the nature of knowledge and our methods for attaining it” (Lennon and Whitford [1994] 2002, 13). Many feminist standpoint theorists, however, have gone a step further. It is hard to say who first theorized feminist standpoint theory as a political epistemological movement. Feminist sociologists Dorothy Smith (1974) and Patricia Hill Collins ([1990] 2009), as well as feminist philosophers Sandra Harding (1986b, 1987, 1991), Nancy Hartsock (1987), and Code (1991), have all been associated with the emergence and subsequent application of the term. Leaving aside the question of the term’s origins, this multidisciplinary subdiscipline began during the second feminist wave and focuses on the following core ideas and claims.

The first claim could be associated (although not fully equated) with the Foucauldian emphasis on the intertwinement of knowledge/power, as knowledge production is always a situated, locatable process, impacted by events and power structures in the real world. Feminist standpoint theories should therefore be distinguished from what Harding (1986b) and others have labeled feminist empiricism.²⁶ It also differs from a feminist take on positivist science—which is

²⁶ It is clear, however, that Harding’s feminist standpoint theory has shifted more toward feminist postmodernism over the years, as will be addressed in the main text shortly. Harding’s earlier work was more preoccupied with making the tensions between feminist standpoint theory, feminist empiricism, and feminist postmodernism visible. For a detailed discussion of this matter, see Van der Tuin (2008b).

similarly preoccupied with the lack of diversity in science, but rather wants to adhere to stricter scientific norms—as well as from feminist postmodernism, which is skeptical about scientific progress and truth in general.²⁷

Second, feminist standpoint theorists argue that differences between subjects matter and should be taken into account in the praxis of epistemology. Different epistemological standpoints are being produced, depending on the different locations and material, embodied lived experiences of knowing subjects in society.²⁸ Paying attention to those different standpoints or consciousnesses (and their limits) provides us with a more holistic view on knowledge, on how society operates, and on how Western scientific practices and knowledge paradigms have been used to conquer, colonize, and eradicate other(ed) knowledges, ideas, and even peoples.

Third, under the influence of Marxist materialist theories, special attention is paid to marginalized groups in society—their daily lives, lived experiences, and their labor activities. The aim is to open up epistemology to formerly unheard/repressed voices and viewpoints, as these particular marginalized standpoints can teach us some crucial lessons about how power relations, knowledge production processes, and the mechanics of oppression all work in tandem. The lived experiences and standpoints of women and people of color need special focus, given their marginalization, the unfair division of labor they tend to

²⁷ For this taxonomy, see e.g., Harding (1986b) and Intemann (2010). For a classification that tries to break out of the empiricism/standpoint/postmodernism scheme, see Van der Tuin (2015a).

²⁸ The idea that we—as activists, feminist philosophers, historians, and others—are able to easily tap into the lived experiences of others has since been problematized. See e.g., Scott 1991.

be confronted with, and the undervaluation of their reproductive and care labor.²⁹

Feminist standpoint thinkers thus regard knowledge production and the legitimization of certain knowledges as social justice issues: It matters who gets to turn their viewpoints into dominant knowledge paradigms, and who does not. Early feminist standpoint theories in particular (e.g., Harding 1986b, 1987, 1991; Hartsock 1987; Smith 1974) were part of a normative political undertaking, accentuating and prioritizing the epistemic viewpoints of the non-privileged to bring about concrete change. These underprivileged subjects were seen as potentially having access to dual or doubled vision (see Kelly 1979), namely, a perspective on what it means to be underprivileged *and* privileged, as they were witnessing exploitation by the privileged firsthand and were part of both worlds. This emphasis on the structures of marginalization also explains the close theoretical and political affinity between feminist standpoint theories and the intersectional theories of black feminist scholars such as Hill Collins and Crenshaw. Bringing in the specific perspectives of double- and triple-marginalized black women, and the intersections of gender, race, and class demonstrates how various institutionalized axes and acts of oppression and privilege work hand in hand. This is precisely where feminist standpoint theoretical thought can be put to good use.

²⁹ See also feminist historian and standpoint theorist Bettina Aptheker's (1989) *Tapestries of Life*, in which she gives an illustration of how theory and knowledge production radically change when the perspectives and lived experiences of different kinds of women—and specifically their shared experiences of subjugation, care labor, their daily lives, and their cultural artefacts—are perceived as finally mattering, while arguing for a more materialist-based, coalitional feminist politics of difference. Feminist theorist Nina Lykke's (2010) *Feminist Studies* also aptly underlines the importance of acknowledging situated knowledge production from a woman's and feminist perspective. The book additionally takes stock of the state of contemporary feminist theory and gender studies—disciplines that Lykke regards as multidisciplinary.

However, this is not to say that feminist standpoint and intersectional thought have always been close allies. The supposed essentialism (“the” feminist/woman’s standpoint) and universalism (“all” women) of earlier feminist standpoint theories, such as that of Hartsock (1987), have been criticized by intersectional and poststructuralist scholars for ignoring or even flattening out the many existing differences among women.³⁰ Although earlier versions of standpoint theoretical thought indeed had universalizing tendencies, one could also argue that the idea of different lived experiences, leading to different perspectives and knowledges, has always been emphasized in this philosophy. This has made feminist standpoint theoretical thought into a valuable epistemological feminist tool of lasting relevance (see also Harding 1986a, 1991; Hirschmarm 1998).

In the following, I revisit the oeuvres of Harding, feminist poet Adrienne Rich, and Haraway in greater detail, underscoring the ongoing influence of feminist standpoint theories on the field of feminist philosophy and Haraway’s anticipating gesture when it comes to the field of new materialisms. This almost genealogical diagramming matters, as many of the highlighted principles in these oeuvres have found their way into contemporary new materialist thought.

³⁰ For example, feminist postcolonial scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s (1992) critique of universal sisterhood points toward the presumed “‘universality’ of gendered oppression and struggles” (75) as present in earlier articulations of feminist (standpoint theoretical) thought. For a critique of various feminist standpoint theories and feminist epistemology, see also Halberg (1989). Halberg points toward what she sees as the contradictions inherent in the two fields, namely, the tensions between objectivity and relativism, the meaning of difference, and the social dimensions that underpin the thinking of both men and women.

1.1.2.2. Revisiting feminist political epistemologies

1.1.2.2.1. Strong objectivity and strong reflexivity

Harding's philosophy is particularly influential in the context of the politics of location and situated knowledges, which will be explored shortly. In her first book, *The Science Question in Feminism*, Harding (1986b) does not seem to fully endorse feminist standpoint theoretical thought, nor feminist postmodernism. However, in the introduction to *Feminism and Methodology* (Harding 1987), she already appears more sympathetic, opening the debate on the contemporary value of feminist standpoint theoretical thought by reflecting upon the question of whether there exists a "distinctive method of feminist inquiry" (1) in science studies. As Harding argues, not only does scientific research in general need to become more directed toward the interests of women and other marginalized groups, but their plural lived experiences should also be considered in order to engage in more socially just processes of knowledge production. She writes:

Women should have an equal say in the design and administration of the institutions where knowledge is produced and distributed for reasons of social justice: it is not fair to exclude women from gaining the benefits of participating in these enterprises that men get. But they should also share in these projects because only partial and distorted understandings of ourselves and the world around us can be produced in a culture which systematically silences and devalues the voices of women. (Harding 1987, 7)

Spotlighting women's epistemic advantages as an oppressed social group,³¹ Harding claims that knowledge production is always entangled with the socio-political environment that engenders it. Every knowledge production process is situated, and so is every claim to knowledge, as knowledge-producing agents are always operating from within a specific context. This, she argues, is something crucial that every thinker and scientist—and feminists in particular—should pay attention to when engaging in research:

The best feminist analysis goes beyond these innovations in subject matter in a crucial way: it insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint. . . . Thus the

³¹ The idea of epistemic advantage has often been contested, especially by feminist empiricists and postmodernist thinkers. Postmodernist feminist theorist Susan Hekman (1997), for instance, has criticized Hartsock and Harding for claiming that *all women at all times* are to be regarded as automatically having epistemic advantages for belonging to an oppressed group, and therefore describes feminist standpoint theoretical thought as a “quaint relic of feminism’s less sophisticated past” (341). Nonetheless appreciative of the overall motivations of feminist standpoint theoretical thought, Hekman maps out the development of various feminist standpoint theories and demonstrates how these theories have helped lay the foundations of feminist epistemology. Although Hekman is at times overstating the issue—as both Hartsock and Harding have touched upon the intersecting differences between women—she spotlights an interesting tension between feminist standpoint theoretical thought’s more Marxist origins on the one hand, and its later Foucauldian engagement on the other. By striving to maintain the epistemic advantage thesis—a Marxist and classic identity-focused political endeavor—feminist standpoint theorists cannot completely follow in Foucault’s footsteps and claim that *all* knowledge and truth claims are constructed and perspectivist, because this would undermine the aforementioned thesis. This is why, in her later work, Harding (see 1991 and following) combines aspects of feminist standpoint thought and postmodernism to try and escape this conundrum, blurring her former taxonomy of feminist epistemology. Notably, both Hartsock and Harding have responded to Hekman’s comments, mainly disagreeing with Hekman’s critique of their supposed essentialism (see Hartsock 1997) and Hekman’s engagement with knowledge and power (see Harding 1997).

researcher does not appear to us as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority.

(Harding 1987, 9)

This is a thought-provoking claim, not only suggesting that researchers need to be aware of the fact that their social, cultural, and political surroundings, makeup, and upbringing play an important role in knowledge production—cancelling out who and what you are as a knowledge-producing agent seems impossible—but also pointing toward the strong political orientation of feminist epistemology and feminist standpoint theoretical thought. If all knowledge production depends on situated and material standpoints, then are feminist standpoint theories not going against the Western philosophical and scientific ideal of “pure,” impartial, neutral, and objective knowledge? This ideal is based upon the conviction that researchers need to distance themselves from the world and their research objects in order to form a theory of knowledge that represents the world “as it is,” and approach the world as bias-free as possible so as to not “taint” their research outcomes. Representationalist philosophical realism is thus at least partially undermined by the idea that knowledge is situationally produced and obtained. However, this does not mean that objectivity as such has lost its meaning completely. The world as such is still accessible (and representable), however, rather than a single, “universal,” neutral entry point, there are now multiple entryways into reality that each depend on the positionality of the observer or theorizer.

In *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, Harding (1991) further emphasizes this multitude of possible perspectives, as she also does in a later piece from 1995, in which she combines elements of traditional feminist standpoint theory and

feminist postmodernism.³² Untangling and deconstructing the equivocal meaning of objectivity as explained above, Harding shows that the ideal of objectivity consists of a multitude of assumptions about how to practice Western science “correctly.” She argues that scientific knowledge practices, norms, and standards are always influenced by those who construct and participate in them, and therefore calls for a focus on the notion of “strong objectivity” (Harding 1995, 334). Viewed from this perspective, “true” objectivity is always already “tainted,” as the biases, socio-cultural presumptions and beliefs, as well as the researcher’s own corporeal positionality, can never be cancelled out. Or, in Harding’s words: “All human thought necessarily can be only partial; it is always limited by the fact of having only a particular historical location—of not being able to be everywhere and see everything” (Harding 1995, 341). Her project of strong objectivity is centered upon the idea that the knowledge produced from the situated standpoints of the marginalized will ultimately cover a larger variety of previously underrepresented perspectives. Because it shows more of the world, it is thus considered more “objective”—a project Harding pits against what she labels the “weak objectivity” practiced in supposedly neutral research, which, for instance, neglects the social location of the researcher.

Harding thus nuances the ideal of objective knowledge production, taking the maximization of a different, more feminist version of objectivity as her goal.

³² In *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*, Harding (1991) defines her own position as a “postmodernist standpoint approach that is nevertheless committed to rethinking and revising some important notions from conventional metatheories of science” (49). This postmodernist self-labeling concurs with Harding’s later work (see 1991 and following), which moves away from epistemological foundationalism. This more postmodernist position is subsequently addressed in an interview (see Hirsh, Olson, and Harding 1995).

The aim is to develop stronger—i.e., more socially just—scientific standards and norms.³³ For Harding (1991), this operation has to be accompanied by a fully revised understanding of reflexivity-as-reflection.³⁴ Harding’s (1991, 163) notion of “strong reflexivity” disrupts the dualist conceptualization of the “active” researching subject who is doing the reflecting, and the “passive” to-be-researched object. It does so by accentuating how both researchers and the researched are embedded in their own contexts and take their socio-cultural contexts into account when engaging in a specific research relation.

What strikes me most in Harding’s epistemological-political project is precisely this combination of situated, locatable knowledge production on the one hand, and a feminist, deconstructive approach to objectivity on the other.³⁵ Both of these aspects are underlined by two thinkers who have, together with Harding, significantly influenced my feminist philosophical praxis, namely, Rich and Haraway, whose feminist version of objectivity and situated knowledges will be examined shortly. Haraway’s binary-destabilizing philosophy requires careful explication in order to fully grasp the so-called new materialist turn—as the follow

³³ Furthermore, Harding (1995) addresses the main characteristics of her now more postmodernist feminist standpoint theoretical project, which I paraphrase here. Feminist standpoint theories are no longer just about gaining a deeper understanding of the lives of the marginalized. Rather, in order to paint a broader picture of the world and its power relations, they must also focus on reconstructing knowledge systems. Moreover, while Harding’s project departs from these and other marginalized standpoints, she does not exclusively engage women’s lives and experiences: “Standpoint theory is not calling for phenomenologies of women’s world, or for ethnocentric (gynocentric) accounts. Nor is it arguing that only women can generate feminist knowledge; it is not an ‘identity politics’ project. Men, too, can learn to start their thought from women’s lives, as many have done” (343). Nor is it about promoting a biological essentialism of some sort, as neither “women” nor “men” are homogenous groups. Finally, Harding also describes her project as “a philosophy of knowledge, a philosophy of science, a sociology of knowledge, and a proposed research method” (345).

³⁴ While Harding uses the notion of reflexivity as such, I would like to immediately underline the distancing aspect attached to this type of scientific reflexivity. Hence the notion of reflexivity-as-reflection.

³⁵ For the views of other feminist thinkers on the highly contested ideal of objectivity, such as Harding and philosopher of science Helen Longino, see Haely (2008).

up to the preceding so-called cultural turn³⁶—in which we are said now to be. However, it is to Rich’s politics of location that I first turn.

1.1.2.2.2. The (corporeal) politics of location

In “Notes toward a Politics of Location,” Rich ([1984] 1986) puts the core principles of Harding’s conceptualization of feminist standpoint theoretical thought into poetic-political practice.³⁷In this essay, first delivered as a speech in the Dutch city of Utrecht, Rich clearly describes her embodied positionality, together with the limitations of her own concrete embodiment. As a white, Jewish, lesbian writer and radical feminist, Rich carves out her own specific place and positionality as a way to frame her political ideas and feminist praxis while being accountable for who she is and what she stands for, both existentially and politically. She puts her embodied self on the map: “Begin, though, not with a continent or a country or a house, but with the geography closest in—the body” (212). It is a geopolitical map that helps her sketch out her own standpoint amid a variety of different yet also shifting power structures in the United States and in Europe. Realizing the importance of black feminist intersectional activism and thought (“The politics of location. Even to begin with my body I have to say that from the outset that body had more than one identity” [215]) and paying tribute to the Combahee River Collective activists and

³⁶ Throughout this dissertation, I have chosen to use the notion of the cultural turn to refer to what is often also called the linguistic turn. The cultural turn can be seen as a permeation of the linguistic turn, the former focusing on society and its cultural production as a whole, and the latter on meaning-making through language. The cultural turn is said to overlap with those philosophies that, seen from a new materialist perspective, supposedly overaccentuate the power of social constructivism, thus at least partially neglecting the power of the natural while fortifying the nature/culture split. For a commentary on the cultural turn in the context of new materialist philosophy, see Bonnell and Hunt (1999), as well as Coole and Frost (2010).

³⁷ All quoted material in this subsection is derived from Rich ([1984] 1986).

other celebrated black feminists of the time, Rich shows her readers that embodied subjects come in many different forms and shapes, and are characterized by a multitude of intersecting identity categories and labels—both attributed and self-defined. For Rich, bodies are visibly located at the crossroads of the private and the public. The body is very much a socio-political battleground, even though she also describes it in its most organic and sexed state (“vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts” [215]), breaking through the binary opposition of nature versus culture.

Importantly, Rich does not essentialize her multiple identities; they do not seem to be fixed in any particular time or place, and are instead portrayed as fluctuating, depending on the interplay between the socio-political environment and institutional power structures. This becomes clear when she mentions her Jewish roots and addresses the fact that her life could have gone very differently had she been born in Nazi-occupied Europe instead of in the United States (“I need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which as a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist I am created and trying to create” [212]). The intersections between her gender, sexuality, whiteness—the latter clearly being portrayed as a formerly unmarked and now marked category—and her Jewishness make Rich sympathize with those who are even more marginalized and oppressed, inspiring her to adopt a politics of location that accounts for the other as fully—and positively—other.

Being fully aware of the differences that are branded onto her body and sketching out a map of location that is both material and political, Rich is clearly trying to raise consciousness about how important it is for other thinkers and activists to do the same. Harding’s philosophical call for strong reflexivity comes

to life in Rich's writings and is translated into Rich's own politics of location as a feminist political praxis that demonstrates self-awareness, not only of her own marginalization, but also of her privileges. Moreover, the politics of location articulates a sharp critique of various structural systems of oppressions, such as organized religion, patriarchy, often alienating abstract philosophical theories, and even white feminist discourse, which has excluded specific groups of women because of their physical-material embodiment.

In a style reminiscent of *écriture féminine* ("To write 'my body,' plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurements, discolorations, damages, losses, as well as what pleases me" [215]), Rich founds her feminist politics of location on the carnal, "fleshy" materiality of her body and the ever-changing place it occupies in society. By doing so, she adamantly breaks with centuries of Western philosophical somatophobia and false universalism. Yet her aim is

[n]ot to transcend this body, but to reclaim it. To reconnect our thinking and speaking with the body of this particular living human individual, a woman. Begin, we said, with the material, with matter, *mma*, *madre*, *mutter*, *moeder*, *modder*, etc., etc. Begin with the material. And pick up again the long struggle against lofty and privileged abstraction. (213)

By spotlighting the particularity of an embodied perspective, Rich is inscribing herself into a Marxist, materialist feminist genealogy, as well as one of feminist

standpoint theoretical thought.³⁸ In a style similar to Harding and Haraway, Rich emphasizes the importance for theories, as well as writing and activist praxes and philosophies, to be grounded in tangible, material soil. If theory is not well-rooted and its origins are not clearly accounted for, theoretical ideas become disconnected from their origins and run the risk of reproducing the alienating “grand” philosophical and scientific theories of the past, which have often oppressed rather than liberated. Rich writes:

Theory—the seeing of patterns, showing the forest as well as the trees—theory can be a dew that rises from the earth and collects in the rain cloud and returns to earth over and over. But if it doesn’t smell of the earth, it isn’t good for the earth.
(213–14)

Whether one is a thinker, scientist, activist, or poet—or a combination of the foregoing—with an interest in social justice and hope for the future, one must realize that one’s own socio-political, cultural, and economic location matters. The positionality of the innocent bystander, lauded for centuries in Western science and idealist philosophy, is no longer desirable or even accessible. It is this emphasis on

³⁸ Rich’s project has a lot in common with the aforementioned *écriture féminine* thinker Irigaray. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray ([1974] 1985a) also placed situatedness and feminist subversion at the center of her philosophy. All of Irigaray’s works focus on the rebellious, “fleshy” (i.e., in all her embodied specificity) female subject that challenges the problematic assumptions and patterns of exclusion in Western philosophy. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, she argues that Plato, with his cave metaphor and rationalistic metaphysics, is guilty of having committed the first symbolic matricide, or the exploitative covering up of what she in her later work calls “the maternal-feminine” (Irigaray [1984] 2004, 11). Irigaray highlights how women have been reduced to muted non-subjects in philosophy. Furthermore, she demonstrates how sexual indifference, together with the construction of a phallogocentric system of sameness and symmetry, has been Western philosophy’s focal point ever since. Rich and Irigaray thus share an emphasis on embodied subjectivity, the maternal, the material, and a politicized poetics.

non-innocence that leads us to Haraway's critical interventions in the fields of feminist epistemology and science studies.

1.1.2.2.3. Feminist objectivity and situated knowledges

When it comes to the topic of feminist epistemology and Haraway's response to the undertaking of feminist standpoint thought, three early essays are of particular interest, namely, "In the Beginning Was the Word" (1981), "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985), and "Situated Knowledges" (1988). The first essay revolves around the dissonances Haraway experienced when examining Western scientific praxis through a critical feminist lens, reminding us of the acrobatic tricks that feminist philosophers often have to perform when working with(in) the canon. Science, and the field of biology in particular, are overtly patriarchal. This claim engenders further reflections on much needed feminist critiques of science on the one hand, and the creation of new "feminist standards of knowledge" (Haraway 1981, 470) that would highlight the problematic subject/object distinction, the relation between power and knowledge, and other issues, on the other.

In "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," Haraway (1985) combines "feminism, socialism, and materialism" (65), breaking through binaries, and thinking the natural, cultural, and the engineered together by means of the anti-Oedipal and queer kinship-promoting figure of the cyborg. It is only here that Haraway starts to reveal her opinion of feminist standpoint theories. Although this piece only mentions Hartsock, Harding, and other feminist standpoint thinkers in the footnotes, it can be read as Haraway's own critical take on feminist standpoint theories and the notion of "'women's experience'" (65). Influenced by various women of color

thinkers of that time, Haraway argues that the idea of such a shared experience is a constructed fiction, and she is thus critical of the universalism behind a potentially shared female “we” associated with earlier articulations of feminist standpoint theories:

None of “us” have any longer the symbolic or material capability of dictating the shape of reality to any of “them.” Or at least “we” cannot claim innocence from practicing such dominations. White women, including socialist feminists, discovered (i.e., were forced kicking and screaming to notice) the non-innocence of the category “woman.” . . . Cyborg feminists have to argue that “we” do not want any more natural matrix of unity and that no construction is whole. (75)

Still apprehensive of the possibility of an overarching, all determining “[s]ingle vision” (72)—a central characteristic of Haraway’s philosophy—Haraway is discontented with feminist standpoint theory’s attachment to Marxist theory, as it adheres to a now outdated form of elitist humanism—a critique that is repeated in “Situated Knowledges.”

Haraway’s most direct confrontation with the field of feminist standpoint theory is articulated in “Situated Knowledges” (1988), a poetic-political manifesto with an ecofeminist touch,³⁹ written in the age of “scientific and technological, late-industrial, militarized, racist, and male-dominant societies, that is, here, in the belly

³⁹ Haraway’s ecofeminism or feminist take on environmentalism (see e.g., Alaimo 1994) is central to her oeuvre as a whole, and is particularly noticeable when she writes about disrupting the subject/object and nature/culture distinctions in favor of a more relational understanding of the world: nature is not a Garden of Eden—something to be objectified and cultivated—but rather a dynamic entity of which all beings are a part, and upon which all beings rely.

of the monster, in the United States in the late 1980s” (581). Haraway takes up the objectivity debate as addressed by Harding, in addition to the two polarized positions that have been taken up in this debate, namely, the positions occupied by the “masculinist scientists and philosophers” (575) on the one hand, and that of “the embodied others, who are not allowed *not* to have a body, a finite point of view” (575), or the feminist critics of Western science, on the other. Affirmatively yet critically commenting on feminist standpoint theoretical thought in general, and the philosophy of Harding in particular,⁴⁰ Haraway maps out a framework for her own feminist take on objectivity and the production of knowledge by following the more Foucauldian power/knowledge route. She does so, however, while never fully letting go of the philosophical theory of realism, or the idea that there is an independently existing reality “out there” that we, as human beings, can observe and produce knowledge about. Haraway thus seems to be looking for a more nuanced option; a middle ground between radical constructionists who believe that truth and knowledge claims are fully dependent on socio-political power relations, and pure rhetoric, thus bordering on complete relativism. Wanting to move beyond the claims that Western science is sexist and biased, while opposing relativism (as she believes in particular feminist principles), Haraway applies “epistemological

⁴⁰ Although Haraway (1988) does not completely agree with Harding’s position, she still approaches the tradition of feminist standpoint theoretical thought in an affirmative manner: “We are also bound to seek perspective from those points of view, which can never be known in advance, that promise something quite extraordinary, that is, knowledge potent for constructing worlds less organized by axes of domination. From such a viewpoint, the unmarked category would really disappear—quite a difference from simply repeating a disappearing act. [...] I think Harding’s plea for a successor science and for postmodernist sensibilities must be read as an argument for the idea that the fantastic element of hope for transformative knowledge and the severe check and stimulus of sustained critical inquiry are jointly the ground of any believable claim to objectivity or rationality not riddled with breathtaking denials and repressions” (585). This critical yet appreciative engagement with Harding’s philosophy is continued in Haraway’s (1997a) *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*.

electroshock therapy” (578) to the canon—a process that ultimately does not differ that much from the feminist deconstruction of phallogocentrism (i.e., a symbolic system of thought that has been founded exclusively upon the difference-erasing powers of reflection and negative projection) by Irigaray and Braidotti—looking for a “feminist version of objectivity” (578).

Haraway (1988) writes the following about her personal quest for feminist objectivity:

Feminists don't need a doctrine of objectivity that promises transcendence

We don't want a theory of innocent powers to represent the world, where language and bodies both fall into the bliss of organic symbiosis We need the power of modern critical theories of how meanings and bodies get made, not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to build meanings and bodies that have a chance for life. (579–80)

Such a material(ist), social justice-oriented, and down-to-earth epistemological project of feminist objectivity predominates in “*situated knowledges*” (581): an “embodied objectivity” (581) that emphasizes the fact that the material body and the environment of the researcher influence the knowledge that is being produced and vice versa. This means that *all* perspectives and standpoints are forever partial and incomplete, as the idealist, overarching, and supposedly innocent “god trick” (582) has now been revealed to be a mere illusion. The epistemic advantage thesis that was once so cherished by various feminist standpoint thinkers, has thus become untenable.

Haraway works through and beyond Harding's philosophy and feminist standpoint theoretical thought. The epistemological critique of the standpoint theorists versus the tradition of Western science and philosophy is still at the core of Haraway's project of situated knowledges, as is her emphasis on the entanglement of the epistemological and the political. However, because of a double-edged scientific and feminist attachment to a type of philosophical realism on the one hand, and to power/knowledge on the other—an attachment that could be argued limits and equalizes *all* perspectives, whether marginalized or privileged—even the prioritization of marginalized standpoints has to be relinquished. Haraway (1988) explains this idea as follows:

Many currents in feminism attempt to theorize grounds for trusting especially the vantage points of the subjugated; there is good reason to believe vision is better from below the brilliant space platforms of the powerful. . . . But here there also lies a serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the vision of the less powerful while claiming to see from their positions. To see from below is neither easily learned nor unproblematic, even if “we” “naturally” inhabit the great underground terrain of subjugated knowledges. . . . The standpoints of the subjugated are not “innocent” positions. (583–84)

This passage makes it clear that Haraway is not rejecting feminist standpoint theoretical thought. In fact, she continues to emphasize the crucial importance of scientific accountability, strong objectivity, and (self-)reflexivity—three values that have been underscored by various feminist standpoint theorists. However, Haraway is equally critical of privileging the standpoints of the marginalized, as practiced in

many standpoint theories. This is not because such a perspective would not provide us with vital knowledge, but rather because all perspectives are necessarily partial and limited, and therefore should not be uncritically privileged. Moreover, such marginalized perspectives are at risk of being re-exploited through what Haraway calls processes of romanticization and political recuperation, and could thus end up transforming into problematic totalizing “god tricks” of their own. Rather, she focuses on the multiplicity of subject positions and perspectives, and the ideas of non-innocence and accountability. We need a multitude of situated perspectives if we are to arrive at a deeper understanding of our complex, multifold reality. Moreover, every vantage and entry point into the production of canonical knowledge is about the “question of the power to see” (585). Vision, as Haraway, inspired by Foucault, teaches us, is never innocent, as it is (alas) often accompanied by violence that instrumentalizes and objectifies.

Haraway (1988) conceptualizes her project of situated knowledges along four entangled axes: ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics. These ontological and epistemological axes are quite clear from the outset: Haraway argues against the classic Western ontological worldview, which is based on dualisms in its modern Cartesian articulation. “Feminist objectivity” (583), she writes, “is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object” (583). Furthermore,

[s]ituated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the

master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of “objective” knowledge. (592)

Through the concept of situated knowledges, Haraway gives agency back to objects of knowledge, as the world consists of nothing but agential phenomena. Moreover, she deconstructs the top-down hierarchical epistemological model that is so common in the traditions of modern Western science and philosophy. Hence, overglorified subject/object and nature/culture splits have to make way for “partial, locatable, critical knowledges” (584), in which those formerly labeled as the “objects” of scientific inquiry are now valued in relation to the knower, and are hence perceived as “actor[s] and agent[s]” (592) in their own right.⁴¹ However, Haraway’s situated knowledges is more than just a corrective project; it is also strongly visionary, aiming to transform scientific processes of knowledge production with the hope of engendering more socially just ways of engaging with, and doing, science in an embodied, corporeal manner. Here, the ethico-political underpinnings of her project are revealed:

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and

⁴¹ This critique of the subject/object split, and of that which could be considered the imposed “culture of objectivity” within academia, in which theorizing from a non-situated, totalizing perspective seems to be a common standpoint from which to produce “objective” knowledge, has since been critically elaborated upon by many feminist thinkers, and feminist new materialists in particular. Feminist epistemologist Iris van der Tuin (2018c), for instance, touched upon this split in her inaugural lecture, connecting it to a new materialist reimagining of objectivity, subjectivity, and identity as interrelated events in flux.

structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.

Only the god trick is forbidden. (589)

The feminist politics of situated knowledges, or the realization that every process of knowledge production is situated and can—and should—be brought back to a specifically embodied subject, is thus also an ethico-political, ecofeminist intervention. Haraway aims to unravel the oppressive, instrumentalizing, and dehumanizing ways in which the power of vision has been used in Western scientific knowledge production to deagentialize and objectify the marginalized and nature; to universalize non-inclusive perspectives; and to practice knowledge production in a non-reflexive, non-accountable, yet supposedly innocent and often exploitative and enslaving manner. Learning to see the world and all of its beings anew, as active, interrelating, and full of agency, is a feminist ethico-political undertaking that opens up different ways of producing knowledge and different, more wide-ranging possibilities for how bodies are constructed to matter.⁴² The philosophy of situated knowledges is ethico-political in nature, aiming to create a feminist coalitional politics in which differences (e.g., different voices, lived experiences and perspectives, differently embodied subjects, and different ways of being) are centered, as *all* perspectives matter.

⁴² This point is also underlined in Haraway's later work. Think for instance of the following passage, taken from *How Like a Leaf*: "We are always inside a fleshy world, but we are never a brain in the vat. . . . And so my fundamental epistemological starting points are from this enmeshment where the categorical separation of nature and culture is already a kind of violence, an inherited violence anyway. That's why my philosophical sources are always those that emphasize a kind of worldly practice and a semiotic quality of that worldly practice" (Haraway 2000, 107). Thinking nature and culture, and subject and object, together (again) has major ethico-political implications for Haraway.

Since its articulation, the epistemology and politics of situated knowledges has been very influential in the fields of feminist epistemology, feminist science studies, and feminist new materialisms and it has, in tandem with Harding's understanding of strong objectivity and reflexivity, and Rich's focus on the politics of location, inspired my own feminist philosophical work.⁴³ The concept of situated knowledges influences my focus on feminist epistemology and feminist standpoint theories in this chapter, and informs the necessity to make visible the materialist, situated underpinnings of the latter as a form of resistance against the idealist, supposedly paperless and laborless philosophies of the past. It informs an attentiveness to an inclusive and contextualized politics of citation throughout this dissertation and my writing in general, as well as my engagement with two particular new materialist methodologies, namely, critical cartography and

⁴³ While sketching out the complete reception history of Haraway's situated knowledges would lead us too far astray, it is important to note that Haraway's philosophy has had a major impact on the aforementioned fields, and critical new materialist thought in particular. The latter aspect will be developed in more detail when sketching out the constellations of contemporary new materialist philosophy in Chapter 2. For now, three examples suffice: Native American science studies scholar Kim TallBear has taken up situated knowledges in *Native American DNA* (2013) and "Standing with and Speaking as Faith" (2014), pushing the notion toward what she understands to be a more relational research and knowledge production praxis from a specifically feminist indigenous perspective. Another feminist indigenous reworking of situated knowledges is presented in Native American feminist theorist Joanna Barker's (2017) volume *Critically Sovereign*, in which political and cultural sovereignty, as well as the right to tell indigenous stories seen through indigenous perspectives, are advocated. Sociologist Peta Hinton and Van der Tuin have also returned to situated knowledges to fuel their new materialist philosophies. Hinton (2014) has revisited Haraway to construct what she calls an "annunciative politics" (102) that could take both positioning and displacement into account when thinking about identity and subjectivity. Van der Tuin (2015a) reflects upon situated knowledges when framing new materialist epistemologies and what she calls the problematic process of "classifixation" (21). Van der Tuin starts her analysis from the idea that categories and processes of classification have material consequences, as they affect the lives of those embodied beings (and feminist/philosophical oeuvres) that are being categorized. Pointing to the dangers of "classifixation," and how many feminist oeuvres from the past have been reread from the perspective of either/or, Haraway's philosophy deconstructs binary oppositions, and is an apt example of moving beyond dualist rereadings that are founded upon rejection and fixate meanings. An example of this methodology is how Haraway's situated knowledges project works *with*, rather than *against*, Harding's feminist standpoint philosophy.

diffractive reading.⁴⁴ These two methodologies—and their feminist, critical-affirmative powers—will be examined in detail in their respective proceeding subsections.

1.2. Untangling Webs of Power: The Methodological Potential of Critical Cartography

New materialist thought requires a different approach than the more “traditional” chronological or genealogical approaches, because of its immense genealogical complexity, innate diversity, and liveliness, as well as its transcontinental, transdisciplinary roots. Chronology-based historical accounts would not do justice to the temporal complexity of the (dis)continuous evolution of new materialist philosophy, as it would run the risk of overlooking the relationality between new materialist philosophy and the turns that preceded the so-called new materialist turn. Similarly, a Foucauldian genealogical overview, with its main focus on the conditions of the coming into being of a specific discourse and/or praxis, would not provide us with enough tools to fully capture the “advent” and continuous evolution of new materialist philosophy.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The reader might also be interested in various other recent new materialist (philosophical) methodologies, such as Braidotti’s (2006b) tracking transpositions and Van der Tuin’s (2015a) transpositions-inspired methodology of jumping generations. Both methodologies can be considered new materialist because of their emphasis on a transversal return to previous philosophical and feminist work. For other examples of new materialist methodologies, see Tiainen, Kontturi, and Hongisto (2015) for new materialist methodological metamodellings of framing, following, and middling—methodologies to think-with and practice artistic interventions. Another, more pedagogical example is Ulmer’s (2015) so-called methodology of plasticity; a new materialist take on philosopher Catherine Malabou’s notion of plasticity, here reconfigured as a plastic—i.e., more fluid—reading of educational policy documents that are regarded as continuously evolving.

⁴⁵ For Foucault’s commentary on Nietzschean genealogy, see Foucault ([1971] 1977). For a concrete application thereof, see Foucault ([1975] 1995).

To achieve a detailed overview of the current constellations of new materialist thought—something that will be developed in detail in Chapter 2—a different mapping methodology is needed. Thus, before we start evaluating the theoretical and socio-political reception, impact, and relevance of contemporary new materialist thought, this dissertation will make use of the strategies of both critical cartography (e.g., Braidotti 1991, 2000b, 2005, [1994] 2011),⁴⁶ and diffraction (e.g., Barad 2007; Haraway 1997a). This, however, does not mean that the methodology of genealogy as such is completely dismissed. In the section that follows, the links between genealogy and critical cartography will be unraveled.

1.2.1. Foucauldian Power/Knowledge and the Praxis of Genealogy

For Braidotti, the epistemological and the political cannot, and should not, be separated. In *Patterns of Dissonances*, Braidotti (1991) critically yet affirmatively engages with the Western philosophical canon from a very particular standpoint, namely that of the feminist and female philosopher working on the margins of said tradition.⁴⁷ Just as is the case for Haraway, for Braidotti, there are no innocent, “pure” positionalities. Therefore, as a feminist thinker, one needs to put the ideas of situated knowledges and strong reflexivity into practice, holding oneself accountable for the inherent political orientation of the theories one is producing. There are thus clear links between Braidotti and the aforementioned politics of location and situated knowledges.

⁴⁶ Whereas these publications explicate the Braidottian version of the critical cartographic approach, Van der Tuin (2015) and Sifaki (2018) demonstrate more recent applications of such a critical cartographical methodology.

⁴⁷ The necessity of taking the epistemological and the political together is underlined by Braidotti (1991, 6ff.) in *Patterns of Dissonance*.

Braidotti's Foucauldian roots also come into play while theorizing her cartographical method. This methodology builds on Foucauldian archaeological and genealogical methods, as it touches upon finding the conditions of *why* something has come into existence while focusing on how knowledge production and power relations (or power/knowledge) are entangled.⁴⁸ Such a critical cartographical methodology is rooted, at least partially, in Foucauldian genealogy, as it is "operat[ing] on a field of entangled and confused parchments, on documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times" (Foucault [1971] 1977, 139). Furthermore, as Foucault ([1971] 1977) also emphasized, it does not revolve around "the search for 'origins'" (139), nor is it about the creation of "indefinite teleologies" (139) or recovering the "unbroken continuity" (146) of history. Map drawing is meant to happen slowly and with an eye for detail—a methodology that, again, overlaps with Foucauldian genealogy, as it conceptualizes the rise of a given discourse by looking at the institutions and regimes that co-engendered it.⁴⁹ However, simultaneously, a critical cartography demands more from us as knowledge producers than merely creating a history of the present through genealogies. There also needs to be a certain openness toward the future—to not paralyze the object of interest—as well as a clear, accountable engagement with the mapmaker's geopolitical situatedness.

⁴⁸ See for instance Braidotti's discussion of power as *potestas* and *potentia* (e.g., Braidotti 1991, 2005).

⁴⁹ It has to be noted here that Deleuze—whose philosophy, together with Guattari, has inspired Braidotti's critical cartography—specifically underlined the connection between Foucauldian genealogy and cartographical mapping. Deleuze (1986) labels Foucault as a new cartographer ("*un nouvel cartographe*", which is the title of the second subsection of the first chapter) because he conceptualizes power, not as having "an essence" (Deleuze 1986, 35), but as consisting of relational forces that can be best depicted via a "diagram" (42). Such a diagram—a "map" (42), or even "cartography" (42)—Deleuze suggests, is "a display of the relations between the forces that constitute power" (44). The quotations in this footnote from the original French are my own.

1.2.1.1. *The politics of power/knowledge and of location*

This is precisely where the politics of location re-enters the scene. In *Patterns of Dissonance*, Braidotti (1991) explicitly re-reads the oeuvres of Rich, Harding, and Haraway to create what she labels “an-other materialism” (263). She works with Rich’s politics of location, which presents a more self-aware reevaluation of femininity, the philosophies of difference (as represented by Irigaray), and Haraway’s anti-cannibalistic, non-objectifying situated knowledges. Via this rereading, Braidotti not only maps the contours of her philosophical model, but also develops her own critical cartographic method, combining affirmative critique, creativity, and a politics of location that is characterized by both geopolitical awareness, and self-reflexivity. Later, in *Nomadic Subjects*, Braidotti ([1994] 2011) unfolds her critical cartographical methodology in relation to her nomadic philosophy:

In other words, the point is finding adequate representations for the sort of subjects we are in the process of becoming. This cartographic project was raised to new heights by the poststructuralist generation: it results neither in a retreat into self-referential textuality nor in apolitical resignation. Nonlinearity and a nonunitary vision of the subject do not necessarily result in either cognitive or moral relativism, let alone in social anarchy. . . . The ultimate purpose is to compose significant sites for reconfiguring modes of belonging and political practice. (11)

A complex, critical cartographical methodology is needed in these post-poststructuralist times—one in which subjects are conceptualized as differently

situated and embodied in a constantly evolving manner; genetically manipulatable by capitalist, technoscientific practices; and potentially also disposable and expendable. These times are characterized by new grand (albeit fragmented) narratives such as the self-disciplining logic of neoliberalism, which has slowly but surely mutated into a multilayered form of governmental reason.⁵⁰ Moreover, these are times in which a polarizing, “us versus them” form of glocalizing politics, packed with microfascisms, is at play, and can only be analyzed through a complex conceptual and methodological lens. These points will be touched upon again in the following two chapters, in which the need to create a *Zeitgeist*-adjusted critical vocabulary is addressed.

1.2.2. Toward a Critical Geography and a Geopolitically Aware Critical Cartography

A critical cartographical methodology is rooted in both the Continental, Western European tradition, and minoritarian philosophies, such as those of Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Deleuze and Guattari. Explicitly founded upon the aforementioned

⁵⁰ For a detailed analysis of neoliberalism as a type of governmental reason that invades almost all existential domains, see the work of political theorist Wendy Brown (2015). Within this neoliberal, extractionist capitalist scheme and reason, every domain of life (e.g., health, education, and relationships) becomes strictly managerialized. See also Melinda Cooper (2008) for more information on how this governmentality biopolitically monetizes and preys on every tiny bit of matter, turning all life into surplus value; sociologist Sarah Bracke (2016), for an analysis of how neoliberal governmentality promotes a self-disciplining, ever resilient subjectivity; anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli (2016), for an examination of what she calls late liberal colonial power, and how that specific power controls the distinction between life and non-life; feminist pedagogue Aggeliki Sifaki (2016), for the managerialization of higher education and feminism itself; and philosopher Laurent de Sutter (2018), for how the neoliberal managerialization of our lives has led to narcocapitalism, or the drug-focused managing of the neoliberal subject’s affects and emotions. All these analyses are related to Braidotti’s take on neoliberal capitalism (as also explored and conceptualized by many other critical new materialists) as one of the key narratives of this age. In addition to Brown’s analysis, see also Fisher (2009) for a more existentialist take on neoliberal capitalism.

philosophies, Braidotti's cartographical methodology is an excellent tool via which to focus on the socio-political issues that are at stake in contemporary Western European globalized societies. Furthermore, this methodology does not neglect the existing global power imbalances and Eurocentrism that are often at play in the field and canon of Western philosophy—such as the marginalization of the aforementioned non-dualist, materialist philosophies, which do not fit well with the Cartesian, rationalist tradition. The standpoint that this Braidottian critical cartography has been founded upon, thus departs from the standpoint of modern philosophy's disembodied, rational "Man."⁵¹

In addition to acknowledging the roots of critical cartography—in both the Foucauldian tradition and the politics of location—it is also important to address the Deleuzoguattarian philosophy behind this methodology, especially as for Deleuze and fellow philosopher Félix Guattari, processes of mapping and diagramming differ greatly from what they call "tracing." This becomes clear when looking at Deleuze and Guattari's ([1980] 2005) conceptualization of the tree and the rhizome in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*. Working toward a more relational way of thinking that has no fixed "points or positions" (8), the symbol of the tree, firmly anchored by its roots and central stem, is a symbol of structure, fixity, and a particular binary logic of representationalism. Because of the tree's orderly, vertical shape, according to such a tree logic, the world is divided into binary structures, with the world as such on the one hand, and representationalist symbols on the other. For Deleuze and Guattari, "tree logic is a logic of tracing and

⁵¹ This is not to say that this specific take on critical cartography has not been criticized. See e.g., Walby (2000) for Braidotti's supposed overinvestment in the politics of location.

reproduction” (12) that is hierarchical in nature, as tree roots grow vertically. They describe this representationalist-reproductive arborescent thinking as follows:

The tree and root inspire a sad image of thought that is forever imitating the multiple on the basis of a centered or segmented higher unity. If we consider the set, branches-roots, the trunk plays the role of *opposed segment* for one of the subsets running from bottom to top Even if the links themselves proliferate, as in the radicle system, one can never get beyond the One-Two, and fake multiplicities. . . . Arborescent systems are hierarchical systems central automata like organized memories. (16)

In contrast, the rhizome stands for a more open, non-hierarchical, non-phallogocentric logic, as rhizomatous plants have root systems that are completely entangled with one another and possess nodes that enable the horizontal growth of even more roots. The rhizome is “altogether different, a map and not a tracing” (12); “it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (12) and has “multiple entryways” (12).

Rhizomatic thought is thus not confined within a fixating, sedentary structure, but rather embodies nomadism, relationality, creative, and unpredictable growth, and therefore can be seen as the driving force behind critical cartographical mapping. Whereas tracing is all about trying to fixate certain objects by means of a neatly organized structure, mapping is rhizomatic in nature, as a map is “open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification” (Deleuze and Guattari’s [1980] 2005, 12). Rhizomatic thought and critical cartography thus revolve around relational connections

sprouting up everywhere; they are about differences, multiplicities, and creativity. In contrast to reproductive tracings, cartographies are lively assemblages; networks with a multiplicity of nodes that bring new, formerly unseen connections and flows into being.

Braidotti's methodology of critical cartography can be described as Deleuzoguattarian in nature, as it explicitly focuses on such flowing processes of mapping. In summary, in Braidotti's ([1994] 2011) terms, a critical cartographical method is "a theoretically based and politically informed reading of the present" that presents us with "both analytic and exegetical tools for critical thought and also creative theoretical alternatives" (4). Starting from the here and now, such a critical and creative cartographic method not only takes the situatedness of knowledge production—and hence the positionality of each specific researcher or knowledge producer—into account, but also moves beyond the realm of negative critique, providing us with the opportunity to map the relations between past, present, and that which is still to actualize itself.

1.2.2.1. Critical geography and cartography as poststructuralist praxes

Because it is rooted in the politics of location, critical cartography's links to the real-life praxis of mapmaking must be considered. The art and science of cartography, together with travel writing and narratives of exploration (e.g., Pratt 1992), were part of, and contributed to, Western imperialism and colonialism. Especially since modernity, maps have been used as representational-explorative tools and, consequently, have often misrepresented the world to glorify certain colonial powers, and divide the world among them. Representing the world through

the visual-geographical concept of space, maps literally “map out” land and territories, as well as the specific resources, peoples, and other important features of these territories. The process of delineating that is inherent in mapping, has a controlling function: to map, mark, and delineate space means controlling and owning it—theoretically, epistemologically, and politically.

This is precisely why, during the peak of academic poststructuralism and deconstructivism, the discipline of critical cartography was established as a geographical subdiscipline with which to criticize the field of traditional cartography. Rather than conceiving maps as flat representational objects, untouched by either power relations or socio-political reality, critical geographers such as John Brian Harley and Denis Cosgrove conceptualized maps as “form[s] of power-knowledge” (Harley 1989, 3), used by modern states to legitimize their colonial conquests and the construction of empires.⁵² Seen through this critical geographical perspective, mapmakers are thus not only invested in designing maps to show the world as it is, but are equally invested in a larger, power-laden project of onto-epistemological world-making. Maps do not simply reflect the world as it is—or what those in charge of these visualization tools think it is—but also demonstrate specific ways of looking at the world. Rather than mere visual-symbolic objects, maps are lively material-historical screens onto which geopolitical power relations and discourses, memories and rememberings (a notion that will be investigated in Chapter 3), ways of thinking, seeing and world-making, are projected, and with which they are co-constituted. In more Deleuzoguattarian

⁵² Today, in the fields of geography, and critical cartography in particular, there are movements that focus on decolonization processes and the decolonization of maps (e.g., Akerman 2017) and on creating more inclusive cartographies (e.g., Wilmott 2019).

and Braidottian terms, maps are onto-epistemological relational cartographies that spring from a constantly unfolding world.

Precisely these ideas of onto-epistemological knowledge production and world-making through maps—and via the disciplines of, for instance, Western philosophy and anthropology—have also been rightfully criticized by the philosopher Enrique Dussel ([1980] 1985) and Mignolo (2002). The concrete spaces in which knowledges come into being, are constructed, and potentially marginalized, matter tremendously, as do maps, canons, theoretical traditions, and the materializations of that which Dussel and Mignolo refer to as the geopolitics of knowledge.⁵³ Because of its geopolitical, onto-epistemological character, and its emphasis on the politics of location, critical cartographical methodology cannot but be self-critical toward the arrogant, self-proclaimed epistemic-political dominance and, consequentially, the violence, of the West.

Concluding, maps can thus be conceptualized, not as inert objects, but as lively, relational cartographies. Yet why is the methodology of critical cartographical, rooted in this more relational understanding of maps, so beneficial to a dissertation project that wishes to paint some of the constellations of contemporary new materialist thought? Why not, for instance, focus only on a Foucauldian genealogy? First, Braidotti's critical cartographical methodology conceptualizes the map as a knowledge- and power-laden construct—that is, as a

⁵³ This aspect is also underlined in postcolonial scholar Chandra Talpade Mohanty's (2003) *Feminism without Borders*, in which this critique is combined with the development of a transnational feminist cartography that focuses on the lived experiences of Third World subjects, outside and within the so-called "center". Gender studies scholar Katherine McKittrick (2006) builds on this particular take on cartography in *Demonic Grounds*, where she explores black women's geographies as sites of potential political resistance. Also see e.g. McKittrick 2015 for a cartographical take on Wynter's philosophy. The conceptualization of situated cartographies is thus present in various critical theoretical enterprises that have been influenced by poststructuralism.

lively cartography, always in the process of unfolding itself. Additionally, it focuses on the material embeddedness of knowledge production, and the entanglements between the philosophical mapmaker, the socio-political environment or phenomenon that is being mapped out, and the mapmaking process itself. Here, mapmakers are not seen as assuming positions of purity, innocence, or maintaining “safe” distances; rather, they are geopolitically situated, necessitating reflection upon their own positions. Second, in a cartographical method, power relations are never seen as merely limiting, but are also conceptualized as potentially empowering. A third and final aspect of the praxis of critical cartography is that it remains open-ended. As Braidotti ([1994] 2011) writes, “cartographies mutate and change, going with the flow while staying grounded” (13). Such cartographies follow the movements of forever shifting constellations—movements that, as we will see in Chapter 2, corresponds to the evolution of new materialist thought. Moreover, they are self-adjustable and fluid, meaning that the archives, texts, concepts or even traditions that are examined through such a critical cartographical lens are not rigidly classified, but are regarded as possessing their own agency. This critical cartographical methodology is thus ideal for a project that wishes to concentrate on a philosophy that is still growing and evolving, while not losing sight of the feminist philosophical principles of situatedness and accountability.

1.3. The Affirmative Powers of the Methodology of Thinking, Reading, and Writing Diffractively

Whereas a Braidottian critical cartographical methodology will mainly be used to map the field of new materialist thought as it is today, viewed from my own,

situated, and thus non-totalizing perspective, the second main methodology employed in this project supports my critical new materialist interventions in the subsequent chapters. In the following, I therefore briefly clarify the conceptual-political genealogy and current new materialist usage of the notion of diffraction before expanding on the methodological details.

1.3.1. Non-segregational Difference, Strong Reflexivity, and Diffraction

The methodology of diffraction has a very specific conceptual-political context and genealogy, which is interwoven with the aforementioned project of situated knowledges.⁵⁴ Diffraction is a physical phenomenon that takes place when waves encounter either a specific, material object/obstacle or an opening, forcing them to bend, thus causing diffraction patterns to emerge. This principle holds true for any wave, although light and water waves are focused on most frequently when examples of diffraction are given. To illustrate, when sunrays hit the surface of a CD-ROM, or one throws two pebbles into a still pond, colorful intertwined diffraction patterns and concentric overlapping ripples are produced respectively. In the case of the pond, when the falling stones meet the water's surface, they push away the water before them, forcing the water particles to form concentric circles. Contemporary, quantum physics-based experimental analyses reveal that all matter is inherently capable of engendering these playful, overlapping diffraction patterns. In present-day feminist theory and philosophy, however, the optical phenomenon of diffraction is used metaphorically, pointing toward alternative, often anti-phallogocentric, and surprisingly new ways of thinking.

⁵⁴ For a similar genealogical overview, see Geerts and Van der Tuin (2016a).

1.3.1.1. *Diffraction as a feminist visual metaphor*

The metaphorical use of diffraction is not at all uncommon: feminist literature is packed with reclaimed visual metaphors, figurations, and fabulations. Various feminist thinkers have deployed specific optical metaphors in their work. For example, in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray ([1974] 1985a) critically engages with the overinvestment of Western philosophical and psychoanalytical discourses in the repressive power of seeing, the visual, and optical technologies. Conversely, she uses the phallic gynecological instrument of the speculum against both traditions, revealing how female subjects have been visually misrepresented as objects of inherent lack, only granted the ability to reflect the greatness of the subject “Man.” This becomes clear especially when she uses the speculum as a burning mirror against Plato’s anti-materialist metaphysics of the Forms, and his accompanying, idealism-based epistemology—an epistemology that is based upon, and functions only because of, the repression of materiality, symbolic femininity, and motherhood. Irigaray thus takes up a medical instrument that in her regard is meant to desubjectify women, reappropriating it for a feminist cause.⁵⁵

In “The Oppositional Gaze,” black feminist thinker bell hooks ([1992] 2003) deploys a similar tactic, but from a different vantage point. She argues that the oppressive dynamics of looking, and not being allowed to look (and speak) back, has left long-lasting and even interiorized marks on the bodies and spirits of African

⁵⁵ I come back to Irigaray’s reappropriation of the speculum in the excursus when thinking through Haraway’s take on the speculum. Here, it is important to note that Irigaray, writing from within the context of 1970s Continental feminism, clearly labels the speculum as a phallogocentric tool (used to examine and then objectify women, as this instrument confirms their “non-being” in comparison to male subjects) and then reappropriates it as a feminist instrument of female self-examination and a tool with which to destroy the phallogocentric system (see Irigaray [1974] 1985a, [1977] 1985b).

American women. In this essay, hooks unravels the relations between optical and visualization tools, racialization strategies, and systems of dominance and power. The strict control of “the right to gaze” (94), hooks argues, engendered a desire for an “oppositional gaze” (94)—a reclaimed stare—in those that were, and continue to be, marginalized by institutionalized racism and sexism, and, more specifically, their intersections. Influenced by Foucauldian philosophy, this reappropriated gaze expresses how oppression and resistance are always entangled, and mutually co-constitutive. For hooks, power structures always leave “gaps” (94) for agential resistance, and for critically reappropriating the formerly dominating gaze as one way of undoing the process of deagentialization.

These critiques and critical feminist reappropriations of seeing and the visual, bring us back to Haraway’s “Situated Knowledges” and later works, such as *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991), *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (1997a), and *How Like a Leaf* (2000). Haraway summarizes her main claims as follows:

The eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity—honed to perfection in the history of science tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy—to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power The visualizing technologies are without apparent limit Vision in this technological feast becomes unregulated gluttony; all seems not just mythically about the god trick of seeing everything from nowhere, but to have put the myth into ordinary practice. And like the god trick, this eye fucks the world to make techno-monsters. (Haraway 1988, 581)

Visual metaphors are quite interesting. I am not about to give them up anymore than I am about to give up democracy, sovereignty, and agency and all such polluted inheritances. I think the way I work is to take my own polluted inheritance—cyborg is one of them—and try to rework it. Similarly with optical metaphors, I take the tropic systems that I have inherited and try to do something with them against the grain. (Haraway 2000, 103)

Haraway does not want to do away with the philosophical and scientific investment in seeing, but does wish to develop a different, less oppressive alternative—one that is not about self-distancing and deagentializing “visualizing tricks” (Haraway 1988, 582), but about embodied, “stereoscopic vision” (582). Therefore, Haraway also wishes to hold on to valuable optical metaphors, and reconceptualizes eyes as supporting the idea of situated, multi-perspectival seeing and knowledge production, leading to different, more grounded, and thus wholesome ways of seeing and thinking.

1.3.1.2. Diffraction: Haraway—revisiting Minh-ha

It is this more grounded, wholesome way of seeing and thinking that is underlined in Haraway’s engagement with the phenomenon of diffraction. Her exploration begins with a dialogue with literary theorist and postcolonial filmmaker Trinh Minh-ha in “The Promises of Monsters” (Haraway [1992] 2004). Haraway refers to Minh-ha’s inappropriate/d others—a term that Minh-ha uses to show how subjects are always in “deconstructive relationality, in a diffracting rather than reflecting (ratio)nality” (Haraway [1992] 2004, 69). Inappropriate/d others

symbolize a type of otherness that resists appropriation, the essentialization of identities, and fixation, and that “is constantly changing with the specific circumstances of each person, event or struggle” (Minh-ha and Grzanic 2012, n. p.). Both Minh-ha and Haraway thus point toward a different, more relational take on the very restricted modern identity/difference paradigm.

In Minh-ha’s case, this reconceptualization can be regarded as proto-diffractive. Talking about refugee crises, border wars, and statelessness (see Minh-ha 1996), and the necessary hybridity of identity and political models based on identity and recognition (see Minh-ha [1988] 1997), Minh-ha explains her take on difference by radically moving beyond the modern Western identity/difference paradigm, which is based upon the Hegelian struggle between self and other, and centers an apartheid-focused conceptualization of difference-as-wholly-other, creating a subject position that negatively relates to the now objectified other. Alterity as such should be approached differently: otherness does not need to be downplayed, fixed in a dualist model, completely assimilated, erased, or eradicated. To transcend such a segregational and ultimately harmful take on difference, reappropriating acts of refusal could be one possible way to reclaim agency—and it is this novel take on difference/identity that could be seen as proto-diffractive:

From one category, one label to another, the only way to survive is to refuse. Refuse to become an Integra table element. Refuse to allow names arrived at transitionally to become stabilized. In other words, refuse to take for granted the naming process. (Minh-ha 1996, 48)

Minh-ha thus refuses categories and labels that are rooted in strictly delineated dualisms, arguing instead for a more relational philosophy of difference in which social identity categories, markers, and labels are allowed to interfere with, and co-construct, one another while always being in flux and in becoming.

This more critical, binary-disrupting understanding of identity and difference also lies at the heart of Haraway's philosophy, which accentuates the flux/becoming aspect even more. In agreement with Minh-ha, and building upon the latter's proto-diffractive, non-segregational take on difference, Haraway uses the metaphor of diffraction, not only for this more nuanced understanding of differences-that-are-always-in-becoming during intersubjective encounters, like ripples that arise in a pond, but also to enable a "more subtle vision" (Haraway [1992] 2004, 70) than the traditional reflective scientific forms of optics, consciousness, and thinking would allow for. This diffractive vision is able to spotlight "where the effects of difference appear" (Haraway [1992] 2004, 70). Differences are not only allowed to flourish in such a diffractive, non-segregational model, but the ways in which encounters between subjects create novel understandings of difference, as well as the embodied differences that become clearer when meeting others, are also given a place here.

That diffractive thinking enables differences to blossom as they are, is again underlined by Haraway in both *How Like a Leaf* (2000) and *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (1997a)—a book that presents Haraway's critical engagement with technoscience,⁵⁶ or the melting together of contemporary

⁵⁶ Feminist technoscience studies is now regarded as a subfield of philosophy of science and feminist science studies, as it tends to focus on a critical investigation of technoscientific practices, socially just science, and the entanglement of identity categories, bodily markers, and technoscientific

technological (often digital technologies of surveillance and control) and scientific praxes. Haraway critiques the idea of the innocent, modest witness⁵⁷ that is associated with modernity and modern science by employing the tropes of OncoMouse™ and FemaleMan©—one a female human clone, the other a genetically-engineered lab mouse—as two identity-troubling figures that represent how science, culture, and politics are intertwined.

This move again demonstrates an engagement with Harding’s notion of strong objectivity, as Haraway (1997a) advocates a “still gestating, feminist

apparatuses and praxes. For more information on feminist technoscience studies, see Åsberg and Lykke (2010). For various examples of Northern European technoscientific research projects that combine feminist science studies, technoscience, and new materialist/posthumanist influences, see The Posthumanities Hub (2019).

⁵⁷ The idea of the modest witness is crucial to understanding Haraway’s engagement with what she calls technoscience. Collapsing traditional boundaries, this notion deconstructs “the distinction between science and technology as well as those between nature and society, subjects and objects, and the natural and the artifactual that structured the imaginary time called modernity” (Haraway 1997a, 3). Engaging with Shapin and Schaffer’s aforementioned book on modern science (see Shapin and Schaffer 1985), Haraway addresses their description of Boyle’s philosophy. Shapin and Schaffer (1985) describe Boyle’s own idea of the scientist as modestly witnessing science as follows: “A disengagement between experimental narrative and the authority of systematists served to dramatize the author’s lack of preconceived expectations and, especially, of theoretical investments in the outcome of experiments. For example, Boyle several times insisted that he was an innocent of the great theoretical systems of the seventeenth century. In order to reinforce the primacy of experimental findings, ‘I had purposely refrained from acquainting myself thoroughly with the intire system of either the Atomical, or the Cartesian, or any other whether new or received philosophy.’ . . . Boyle’s ‘naked way of writing,’ his professions and displays of humility, and his exhibition of theoretical innocence all complemented each other in the establishment and the protection of matters of fact. They served to portray the author as a disinterested observer and his accounts as unclouded and undistorted mirrors of nature. Such an author gave the signs of a man whose testimony was reliable” (68–69). In the time of Boyle and Hobbes, the male scientist was merely a witness who had to record what was going on in nature. It is precisely this ideal of the “innocent” witness of reality that Shapin and Schaffer, as well as Haraway, tackle. For all three thinkers, there are no innocent witnesses, as scientific communities are part of society, and are thus always influenced by socio-political forces. This is underlined by Haraway (1997a): “This (modesty) is the virtue that guarantees that the modest witness is the legitimate and authorized ventriloquist for the object world, adding nothing for his biasing embodiment. . . . He bears witness; he is objective; he guarantees the clarity and purity of objects. His subjectivity is his objectivity” (24). Seeing this positionality as another god trick, Haraway conceptualizes a modest witness position that she takes on when practicing and writing about technoscience in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium*, and thus alters the meaning of scientific witnessing as such. Or, in Haraway’s (1997a) words: “A child of antiracist, feminist, multicultural, and radical science movements, I want a mutated modest witness to live in worlds of technoscience, to yearn for knowledge, freedom, and justice in the world of consequential facts” (267). Braidotti (2006b, 181) also refers to this idea of the modest witness.

antiracist, mutated modest witness” (191)—“a self-aware, accountable, anti-racist FemaleMan” (36). This more engaged positionality is linked to the powers of diffractive thinking, which she describes as an “an optical metaphor” (16) that troubles reflection and reflexivity:

[R]eflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up the worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real. Reflexivity is a bad trope for escaping the false choice between realism and relativism in thinking about strong objectivity and situated knowledges in technoscientific knowledges. What we need is to make a difference in material-semiotic apparatuses, to diffract the rays of technoscience so that we get more promising interference patterns on the recording films of our lives and bodies.

(16)

Echoing the Deleuzoguattarian critique of a tree logic that is focused on reproduction, reflection and reflexivity must be problematized as scientific and academic praxes, as they each uphold representationalism, solipsistic, and reductionist thinking patterns, and (re)create dichotomized binaries.

In Haraway’s (1997a) work, the optical metaphor of diffraction evokes images of overlapping, crisscrossing, colorful patterns of light, and is therefore about keeping track of “the interference patterns on the recording films of our lives and bodies” (16). Diffraction, or “the production of difference patterns” (34), is conceptualized as a more “critical consciousness” (273), as it accentuates embodied, situated knowledge production, takes into account how differences materialize in the world, and what effects these differences have on knowers and

their practices of knowledge production. Diffractive practices are not about reflecting the world in a supposedly “pure” manner. Rather, they co-produce the world. They are moreover practices in which differences are understood in a more affirmative manner; not as representing lack, but as pure potential. This more responsible and self-accountable, diffractive way of thinking has influenced fellow feminist science studies scholar Karen Barad, whose agential realist philosophy can be seen as a continuation of Haraway’s project.⁵⁸

1.3.2. From a Diffractive Optics to a Diffraction-Based Methodology

It is exactly this self-accountable aspect of diffraction that Barad (2007) elaborates in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, via an engagement with classical physics, quantum physics, and agential realist philosophy. This philosophical model takes the relationality between phenomena that are in, of, and with, the world, seriously. Barad’s agential realist philosophy—which has often been considered a type of critical new materialism—will be explored further in Chapter 2. Of interest to us here, however, is Barad’s own Harawayan-based engagement with diffraction, which she understands as a multifocal, complex lens via which to examine texts, philosophies, and ideas.

1.3.2.1. Diffraction: Barad—revisiting Haraway—revisiting Minh-ha

For Barad, diffraction is more than just a physical phenomenon and trope. Rather, it is a methodological approach that enables us to spotlight the materialization of

⁵⁸ This is in fact confirmed by Haraway who, for example, refers to Barad’s agential realism as an example of situated knowledge production (see e.g., Haraway 1997a, 268).

embodied differences, the processes of (de-)humanization that accompany it, and the coming together of matter (the material) and meaning (the semiotic). Thinking diffractively—or *thinking differently*—by transcending the difference-erasing mechanisms of reflection and reflexivity, is intimately related to how we, as scientists, philosophers of science, feminist epistemologists, and thinkers generally, approach our canons, conceptual genealogies, and material-semiotic praxes. In Barad’s work, diffraction also has pedagogical connotations, because thinking diffractively is linked to agential literacy—that is, the idea that knowledge-producing agents, the processes of knowledge production, technoscience, and research phenomena and their environments, are all interconnected, and therefore necessarily transform pedagogical praxes into those of accountability and responsibility (e.g., Barad 2000, 2001). However, diffraction is mainly employed as an innovative reading strategy; as a feminist interpretative tool.

Practicing diffractive reading and rereading is all about the respecting and producing of situated, accountable knowledges. It departs from a more hierarchical methodology, in which texts or philosophical ideas are pitted against one another, focusing on recreating certain hierarchies between strands of thought, or producing an intellectual critique that simply rejects everything that has come before. Instead, diffractive reading entails a more productive, affirmative, and—most importantly—*self-accountable* material-semiotic engagement. Historical-intellectual contextualization also matters in this diffractive type of feminist interpretation: Ideas and notions are not merely compared or contrasted with one another, but are put back into their historical contexts, and judged on the basis of their past, present, and future value. Texts, oeuvres, and intellectual traditions are dialogically and

respectfully read “through one another” (Barad 2007, 93), so that surprising results—together with potential cracks and formerly invisible gaps in the canon—might emerge.⁵⁹

Notably, diffractive reading is characterized by a similar kind of openness and creative open-endedness as critical cartography. As Barad (2007) also points out, diffraction itself

does not fix what is the object and subject in advance, and so, unlike methods of reading one text or set of ideas against one another where one set serves as a fixed frame of reference, diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge. (30)

Diffraction “attends to the relational nature of difference” (72), in contrast to reflection, which merely reproduces and reflects that which is already there. In a way, the researcher loses her/his philosophical and anthropocentric mastery when enmeshed in a diffractive reading journey, as s/he is drawn into this reading process with both mind and body. With its meticulous attention to detail, diffractive reading disturbs the patterns of more traditional, “bodiless” reading methods and praxes. The reader-researcher is as much part of the interpretative diffractive process that is being undertaken as the phenomenon that is studied. This, again, means that the situated positionality of the reader-researcher needs to be clarified from the outset, so as to take responsibility for the boundaries that are drawn and generated within,

⁵⁹ For examples of diffractive readings of feminist works that leave space for formerly unnoticed gaps and cracks in the canon, see Van der Tuin (2015a, 2018a). For a diffractive rereading of the supposedly antagonistic feminist philosophies of Simone de Beauvoir and Irigaray, see Geerts and Van der Tuin (2016b).

and by, the praxis of diffraction. The knower is not thinking in isolation, but rather in relation to, and with, the research phenomenon at hand.

Reading diffractively thus appears to be an affirmative, generous, and generative praxis. This last point is also underlined by Barad (2012a) in an interview on the origins of new materialist thought, in which she argues that “critique is over-rated, over-emphasized, and over-utilized, to the detriment of feminism” (49). In contrast, diffractive readings “bring inventive provocations; they are good to think with. They are respectful, detailed, ethical engagements” (Barad 2012a, 49–50; see also Barad in Juelskjær and Schwennesen 2012, 12–13). Barad here follows in the footsteps of the philosopher of science Bruno Latour. In his article “Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam,” which will also be discussed in Chapter 3, Latour (2004) argues that intellectual critique is no longer practiced correctly. The act of critique is being politically exploited to either argue for, or against something; to polarize, to the point of arriving at critiques that have no capacity for positive or transformative action. In contrast, diffractive reading and thinking consist of attentive, critical, and generative gestures. This idea of generating something new by means of a more attentive, detailed, and accountable reading praxis urges the diffractive reader/interpreter to intimately merge with the text and the potentially new understandings/concepts/theories/etc. that materialize via this relational encounter. Rather than being polarizing and destructive, diffractive reading and critique, because of the intimate connection they presuppose, focus on an almost embodied encounter with the other—a text, a philosophical oeuvre, a thinker, or certain ideas.

Furthermore, this generative capacity also relates to how scholarly disciplines themselves are being re-envisioned through the praxis of diffraction. According to Barad (2007), diffractive reading is also a boundary-crossing, trans/disciplinary methodology, as it brings about “respectful engagements with different disciplinary practices” (93).⁶⁰ In this sense, diffractive reading as a trans/disciplinary methodology builds upon a multidisciplinary engagement, but then with more attention to detail concerning the questions of how disciplines come to differ, and why it is that boundaries between various disciplines have been put in place while producing specialized disciplinary knowledges.

This trans/disciplinary diffractive engagement was already articulated in Haraway’s affirmative dialogue with Harding’s feminist standpoint theory; a dialogue that did not lead to the rejection of Harding’s philosophy as a whole, but toward the affirmative “tweaking” of strong objectivity. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad (2007) follows in Haraway’s footsteps, building her own agential realist philosophy on top of Haraway’s critical-affirmative take on technoscience, contemporary feminist theory, quantum physics, and the poststructuralist theories of Foucault and Butler. Rather than discarding those materialization processes that are accentuated in Foucault’s and Butler’s thinking—processes that, for Barad, remain too passive—she diffractively brings together the ideas of these two authors regarding embodiment, power, and subjectivity, reading these notions through the lenses of quantum physics and agential realism, and vice versa. The end result of

⁶⁰ For Barad, trans/disciplinarity reveals questions of accountability and responsibility, as scholars need to be accountable for the disciplinary cuts or boundaries that are established while working with different disciplines—here conceptualized via a forward slash. We will come back to this idea of trans/disciplinarity in Chapter 2 in section 2.3.2.

this affirmative, diffractive reading process is a feminist agential realist philosophy that is aware, not only of the limitations of social constructivist thought in relation to embodied subjectivity, but also of its own limitations.

It is precisely this kind of generative, and also generous, diffractive (re)reading methodology that interests me, and with which I experiment in the proceeding chapters. Such a methodology has many advantages for a dissertation project that focuses on new materialist theory (and potential critical new materialist interventions), for it entails a methodological, interpretive engagement that affirmatively builds on what has come before and, like many feminist philosophers, working from within, and on top of, the ruins of phallogocentrism. Moreover, a diffractive methodology is also a thought-provoking experimental tool via which to discover how new materialist philosophy operates and is embedded in the world, as it is an approach that is not pre-determined, but rather, creative, open-ended, and with a focus on the virtual. Finally, it will also help me to intervene, both in Haraway's extensive yet surprisingly canonized oeuvre,⁶¹ and in the Habermas-Derrida dialogues addressed in Chapter 3. Diffractively rereading these debates and the intellectual traditions of critical theory and deconstructionism will allow me to constructively carve out a space for contemporary new materialist interventions that are inspired by critical theory.⁶²

⁶¹ Notably, Haraway's extensive oeuvre has been turned into a feminist philosophical canon of its own, including the epistemological restrictions and gatekeeping processes that accompany canonization. There appear to be "majoritarian" texts, such as "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1985), "Situated Knowledges" (1988), and *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (1997a), and "minoritarian" texts, which are barely given attention. Therefore, in the excursus following Chapter 2, I will engage with three of Haraway's lesser known essays.

⁶² My belief in the potentiality of such a new materialist revisiting of these dialogues (and the two intellectual-political positions that are central to this debate) is influenced by both Barad's (2010) hauntological rereading of Derrida, and religious studies scholar Clayton Crockett's (2018) recent new materialist affirmation of Derrida's philosophy.

1.4. New Materialist Methodologies: Thinking Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethico-politics Together

It is important to note that the critical cartographical and diffractive methodologies described above are not merely theoretical-philosophical tools and research paradigms, employed to critically and creatively analyze certain phenomena. Rather, I argue that, in their materially grounded and new materialist (con)figurations, they are significantly more than that.⁶³ From Braidotti's post-Foucauldian and Deleuzian perspective, critical cartography emphasizes the situatedness of the entanglements between knowledge production and power relations, as well as a radically immanent ontology. Barad's (Harawayan) diffractive approach places a similar emphasis on situatedness, the existence of patterns of difference, and differently marked embodied subjects. Therefore, critical cartography and diffractive reading are just as epistemological in nature as they are ontological. They represent a certain immanent theoretical-conceptual take on the world, while simultaneously being of—and co-engendered with—our life worlds. Hence, they concur with my own praxis of theorizing from the ground up, as articulated at the beginning of this chapter. In the following, I clarify this statement, before closing this chapter with some remarks on the new materialist idea of the entanglement between the ontological, epistemological, and the (ethico-)political.

⁶³ When finalizing the dissertation, I came across a special issue of the journal *MAI: Feminism & Visual Culture*, entitled "Feminist New Materialist Practice: The Mattering of Methods" and published in the Spring of 2019. In the introduction to this special issue, the editors note that new materialisms are not just a theoretical strand, but also are methodological and praxis-oriented in nature. This is precisely what I aim to demonstrate in this dissertation as a whole, and in relation to the new materialist methodologies of critical cartography and diffraction in particular. One could argue that these new materialist methodologies are entangled with their research phenomena, and are engendered through these entanglements, and furthermore perform new materialist thought (see Coleman, Page, and Palmer 2019).

1.4.1. New Materialist Theorizing and Methodologizing: Part of—and with—the World

The idea that the ontological, epistemological, and the ethical cannot but be thought together stems from Barad's agential realist philosophy. As we have seen in this chapter, this philosophy also underpins the praxes of diffractive thinking and reading, and is founded upon Haraway's ecofeminist philosophy of situated knowledges. Barad's agential realism is a posthumanist, relational philosophy that departs neither from a crude form of realism, nor from a radical form of social constructivism, but rather starts by taking seriously Haraway's idea of the material-semiotic (see Haraway 1991, 1997a). It is founded on the idea that the nature/matter versus culture/discourse dichotomy needs to be deconstructed once and for all, and that matter and systems of meaning-making need to be analyzed together—especially because these representationalist systems have been given too much prominence in poststructuralist and deconstructionist philosophies in the course of the cultural turn. Within such an agential realist framework, the world itself is seen as a material actor, with the power to “kick back.” It is within this framework—one that does not want to objectify and conceptualize matter and non-human actors as passive and pliable, and explicitly takes into account the ways in which power relations and networks come into being—that the neologism of “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” (Barad 2007, 90) arises. If agency is de-anthropomorphized, and the world and its various inhabitants are seen as dynamically engaging with one another on a daily basis, then praxes and processes of thinking and theorizing are also part of that world.

Radicalizing Haraway's critique of the god trick, Barad's ethico-onto-epistemology again emphasizes that we, as thinkers/teachers/activists/practitioners/etc., are so entangled with the world in its ongoing becoming that it is impossible to produce innocent or value-free knowledge. While this illusion had already been demystified by Foucault's power/knowledge axiom and its feminist standpoint theoretical interpretation, Barad's (2007) focus on "knowing in being" (185) and her emphasis on the ethical in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, as well as in some of her later work (e.g., Barad 2010, 2011, 2012b), are novel. Barad's (2011) Levinasian-Derridean "ethics of entanglement" (150) is fundamentally based on the realization that, because of theory's concrete "worldliness," accountability and responsibility for one's knowledge claims should be at the core of any research praxis. Moreover, there is also an ethical debt toward every other sentient—now agential—being that is interwoven into the compositionality of the world itself.

This agential realist notion of knowing in being is similar to how other critical new materialist thinkers conceptualize acts/praxes of theorizing in relation to the world and the "worldly matter" in which it is fundamentally rooted and blossoms from. Here one may also think of Haraway's (2016) idea of "*sympoiesis*" (96) or being-with and thinking-with the world in all of its manifestations and embodied inhabitants. Another good example of this same idea is the Deleuzoguattarian idea of political philosophers Erin Manning and Brian Massumi (2014), namely, that of "thought in action" or "thought, in the act" (viii). This idea highlights how theory and praxis are always already entangled, and how thought itself is always in flux: "Every practice is a mode of thought, already in the act. To

dance: a thinking in movement. To paint: a thinking through color. To perceive in the everyday: a thinking of the world's varied ways of affording itself" (Manning and Massumi 2014, vii). Knowing in being, *sympoiesis*, and thought/thinking in the act all express the same sentiment, namely that philosophizing always already takes place *within* the world, and that there is thus a relational entanglement between the material, the idealistic, and the environmental. Thought itself, and its practitioners in particular, should be carefully attuned to, and in tune with, these worldly connections. As Haraway would claim, denying such connections can only lead to the production of dangerously totalizing perspectives and ideas.

Seen from Barad's (2007) agential realist perspective, philosophizing is a "material engagement with the world" (55). It is a physically grounded praxis—one that has to be well-rooted in its soil, and thus connected to the world, as Rich, whose embodied knowledge praxis we discussed earlier in this chapter, also put it. Echoing the latter's important words, in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Barad (2007) describes the entanglement of the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethical, and the honoring of this complex material web, as follows: "To theorize is not to leave the material world behind and enter the domain of pure ideas where the lofty space of the mind makes objective reflection possible. Theorizing, like experimenting, is a material practice" (55).

If thinking and producing knowledge about the world can, and should, happen from *within* the world only, then where exactly does this leave the realm of politics? Because of its clear links to Foucauldian philosophy on the one hand, and the enterprises of political—and explicitly politicizing—feminist epistemology and science studies on the other, I read Barad's comments on the entanglement between

the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethical as applying to the political as well. Knowledge production that is rooted in earthly soil should be about measuring what is going well and what is not, and consequently, about politically transforming the world for the better.

1.4.2. New Materialist Theorizing and Methodologizing: Praxes from the Ground Up

Returning to the methodologies of critical cartography and diffractive thinking, reading, and writing, it becomes clear that these methodologies embody all of the foregoing. Both the critical mapmaker and the diffractive thinker clearly and continuously demonstrate their attempts to be in tune with the world, and with the phenomena surrounding them, as they are thinking “from the ground up” and entangled with what matters. I have intentionally “individualized” the subjects that are behind these methodologies here, as I will be the one wearing these two particular methodological masks in the chapters that follow. However, at the same time, it is clear that such new materialist methodologies are trying to push us to the limits of the traditional epistemological tripartite structure of the research subject, the researched phenomenon, and the knowledge produced. Knowing in being—with all of its ethico-political connotations—quite literally means that these methodologies are taking us, the presumed almighty researchers, on an eventful ride. They force us to realize that the phenomena surrounding us are not just “out there,” waiting to be discovered, but are in fact already speaking to us, entangled in lively matters of their own. Both critical cartographical and diffractive thinking entail a corporeal co-engendering: thinking becomes a process of mutual co-

constitution, in which the researcher in all of her/his being is completely enmeshed in the phenomena that are being researched. These research phenomena themselves seemingly call for immediate accountability while being examined, forcing the researcher to reflect on her/his own positionality. This thorough reshuffling of the regular onto-epistemological subject/object structure has three other important implications that demonstrate the importance of thinking the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethico-political together.

First, both critical cartography and diffractive reading sidestep epistemological individualism. While there are of course subjects-as-researchers at work behind these methodologies, it is their entanglement with the social milieu, in addition to their geopolitical situated awareness (and theorizing thereof), that really counts and is being accentuated. This in contrast to more traditional modern variations of epistemology, which presented us with rather distorted pictures of how knowledge production supposedly takes place in an ahistorical vacuum. The epistemological framework behind these new materialist methodologies is onto-epistemological in nature and highlights how knowing is produced *while* and *in* being. This means that the ethico-political influences, considerations, and implications relating to one's research, can no longer be left out.

A second, thought-provoking implication of this reshuffling is that critical cartographical, and especially diffractive, thinking could be regarded as gesturing toward a praxis of "slow thinking."⁶⁴ Whereas more traditional modes of reflective

⁶⁴ Slow science and slow thinking are part of the so-called slow movement. These modes of thinking and doing science respond to the neoliberal corporatization of higher education and philosophy, in which everything revolves around instrumentalized reason, quick practical outcomes, and publication pressure. Many critical new materialists are interested in engendering slow thinking. Isabelle Stengers ([2013] 2018) takes up this matter in her book *Another Science is Possible*,

thinking and research are oriented toward the fast-paced (re)production of profitable results, both methodologies seem to encourage us to take a step back from such a neoliberal, capitalist, extractionist research model, by respecting the agential qualities of research phenomena, the relationality between researcher and research phenomena, and the world they are part of.

A final implication, to conclude this section and chapter, brings us back to the introduction of this dissertation and the beginning of this specific chapter. As stated previously, both critical cartographical and diffractive thinking disturb the epistemological tripartite framework and the traditional researcher/researched relationship. Starting from the idea of wanting to philosophize from the ground up—which is already a materialist project in its own right—as a researcher, I have not only been orientated toward my research “object-now-phenomenon” to refer back to Ahmed, but I have also been haunted and seduced by it, demonstrating that it has quite some agential power of its own. Critical cartographical and diffractive thinking are thus suitable methodologies for tracing a phenomenon as lively and complex as the field of contemporary new materialisms. The disruptive potential of the latter, taken together with the fact that both methodologies do not dictate a priori where the researcher has to go next, make them ideal methodologies for a project that does not want to dominate its research subject—in this case, an incredibly lively and still evolving philosophical phenomenon—nor tame it, nor, quite literally,

establishing a dialogue between her own understanding of scientific knowledge production as a plurality of different sciences on the one hand, and the public value of knowledge on the other. Van der Tuin (2015b) reflects upon the idea of making space in academia for slow thought by means of the philosophies of Arendt, Bergson, and Metzger. In Belgium, the academic platform Slow Science in Belgium (2019) has been founded. In my diffractive musings, presented in the excursus of this dissertation, I attempt to put this idea of slow thinking into practice.

“objectify” it. What such critical cartographical mapmaking looks like in practice, will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

1.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological building blocks of this dissertation project have been presented. Guided by the interwoven leitmotifs of the ever so tricky feminist philosophical balancing acts, I have explored the Foucauldian conceptualization of power/knowledge, as well as how that notion has been further developed, first by social and feminist epistemology, and subsequently by situated, accountable knowledges. Via this exploration, a methodological—yet also open-ended and trial-based—framework for contemporary new materialist thought has been sketched out. Additionally, I have informed the reader in detail about my own situated positionality and academic trajectory as a feminist philosopher-to-be who is interested in practicing feminist philosophy from the ground up. All aforementioned concepts and principles are key to contemporary new materialisms, and thus had to be spotlighted first before moving toward a detailed exploration of this particular strand of thought.

Seen from my own particular viewpoint, which has been co-engendered by the various institutional academic environments that I have inhabited, and additionally, through the new materialist statement that knowledge production always happens from *within*, and together *with*, the world, the project of materially and genealogically grounding new materialist thought matters. While preparing the reader for such a grounding of contemporary new materialist thought by means of a critical cartographical strategy, special attention has been paid in this stage-setting

chapter to the politically informed fields of social and feminist epistemology, and its subset of feminist standpoint theories in particular. A genealogical revisiting—observed by someone with an interest in the field of (critical) new materialisms—of the feminist political epistemologies of Sandra Harding, Adrienne Rich, and Donna Haraway had to be included, not only to lay the foundations of contemporary manifestations of new materialist thought, but also to better understand the strong emphasis placed on embodied, situated, and accountable knowledge production in such philosophies. This type of knowledge production furthermore accentuates power/knowledge entanglements through the notion of knowing in being, meaning that the environment in which theories arise, and in which they necessarily always co-engender one another, should be taken into account. Moreover, the foregoing feminist thinkers put forward the idea that feminist philosophical knowledge producers should do everything they can to avoid mimicking the phallogocentric enterprise of producing overarching, totalizing viewpoints.

The second and third sections of this chapter then addressed two new materialist methodologies, namely, critical cartography, and diffractive thinking and reading. Situated, conceptual genealogies of these two methodologies were provided in order to demonstrate how, in contrast to a Foucauldian genealogical methodology, these methodologies are produced while entangled with the world and the situated location of the researcher who employs them. The key concepts of situatedness, feminist objectivity, affirmative critique, and a positive reconceptualization of difference were put forward here. Both critical cartographical and diffractive thinking support the idea of philosophizing from the ground up, and point toward how the ontological, the epistemological, and the

ethico-political in new materialist thought are thought together—a point that was touched upon in the final section of this chapter.

In Chapter 2, I continue my investigation of new materialist thought, and what I refer to as critical new materialisms in particular, with an anticipatory, critical cartographical reading of the conceptualizations of materially grounded hope in the philosophies of critical theorists Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, and Donna Haraway. As will be shown in the next chapter, this forms part of a grounding process that, in contrast to pervasive critical arguments, is inherently part of new materialist philosophy, and that is required to further my own situated and thus necessarily open-ended mapping of new materialist philosophy in all of its different constellations and assemblages.

CHAPTER 2

New Materialisms as Events-in-becoming: A Critical Cartography of New Materialisms' Moving Constellations

Our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places. In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.

—Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*

There is no better way to open a chapter on the ever moving constellations of (critical) new materialist thought than with this quotation by Haraway. Emphasizing the crucial need to concentrate on the situated here and now to counter overtly optimistic and apocalyptic narratives about the imminent future, Haraway's plea for a well-grounded and self-accountable "staying with the trouble" surely resonates with contemporary new materialist scholarship. Earlier, this dissertation's introduction and first chapter touched upon the topics of epistemic violence and how to be mindful of potential relapses into supposedly paperless philosophical

processes or the self-legitimizing Western philosophical tradition, and the counter-canonization of philosophical knowledge via explicitly feminist, situated theorizing from the ground up. Moreover, as a feminist philosopher with a keen interest in the epistemological, the pedagogical, and the ethico-political, I argued it is key to always take the tensions and dissonances between the canon of Western philosophy and one's feminist political inclinations into account. Gentle gymnastics are the way to go, if one wishes to avoid reifying phallogocentric marginalizations, exclusions, and eradications. Following-while-being-followed by my agential research phenomenon in this chapter—which surpasses the one-directionality of merely being orientated toward one's research topic—I continue my multilayered exploration of engaging oneself with contemporary feminist philosophy by cartographically mapping the intriguing phenomenon of the now popular new materialist turn. In doing so, I touch upon some of its philosophical forerunners, current stellar constellations, and correlated assemblages. Additionally, I address the field's young reception history as well as several critiques. Employing a Braidottian critical cartographical strategy, I ensure that I do not treat new materialisms as an “object-to-be-objectified,” but rather, as an agential phenomenon that transcends the traditional unidirectional relationship between researcher and research object.

Finally, this chapter is not meant to be read as an uncritical apology for contemporary new materialist thought. As my self-created cut between “new” and “critical new” materialist philosophies will reveal, there are surely many limitations to new materialist thought. However, it must be stressed that many stereotypical, non-situated takes on this strand of thinking are currently circulating. As new

materialisms exist in a state of ongoing becoming and growth, they are characterized by an astounding heterogeneity, trans(/)disciplinarity, transcontinental roots, and transversal engenderings. Additionally, as I will argue here, (critical) new materialisms, particularly in their more critical manifestations, have a distinct *eco-ethico-political* investment in the immanent here and now. Therefore, it is essential, not simply to provide a genealogical overview of this phenomenon, but to cartographically sketch out new materialisms as open-ended events-in-becoming. This allows us to make space for what is still in the process of actualizing itself, as well as for the numerous other situated mappings of new materialisms that are possible—clearly, there are as many different mappings of new materialist thought out there as there are differently positioned mapmakers, standpoints, and new materialist constellations.

This switch to critical cartography also impacts my writing style in the following sections. Moving from a descriptive, genealogical—and perhaps even pedagogical—writing style as employed in the preceding sections, I adopt a critical cartographical style that further accentuates the situated positionality of the writer. This will culminate in a diffractive excursus that announces the second part of this dissertation, in which the critical cartography of new materialisms will be put to the task of establishing a critical-affirmative, diffraction-based intervention in the now often overlooked Habermas-Derrida dialogues (as unfolded in Borradori 2003) concerning terror(ism), the ambiguous—even self-contradictory—heritage of the European Enlightenment, and the values of autonomy, democracy, and justice.

Of course, this kind of critical cartographical sketching has been done before: Three other works addressing new materialist philosophy's reception

history are: *Material Feminisms* (2008), edited by feminist science studies scholar Stacy Alaimo and feminist epistemologist Susan Hekman; *New Materialisms* (2010), put together by political theorists Diana Coole and Samantha Frost; and philosophers Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin's *New Materialism* (2012), a book both *on* and *of* new materialist philosophy that engenders a rhizomatic, flowing way of theorizing via dialogues and philosophical vignettes.

In the spirit of these (and other) contributions, I will present and emphasize the following claims in this second chapter: (1) New materialist philosophy should not be depicted as a fixed object or a turn that will fade away once its supposed “newness” has waned, and thus, a critical cartographical methodology is needed to adequately map its many constellations and assemblages. (2) As exemplified by various scholars (Alaimo and Hekman 2008; Braidotti 2012; Coole and Frost 2010; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012), new materialist thought consists of heterogeneous post-poststructuralist and often post-anthropocentric undertakings, and can be best seen as a transcontinental, trans(/)disciplinary, and transversal metaphysics, a methodology, and a political stand. (3) Present-day feminist, queer, and critical race studies perspectives on new materialisms—labeled “critical new materialisms” in the context of this dissertation, as also explained in the introduction—are political in nature, accentuating that which I will call “grounded hope,” as well as an explicit “eco-ethico-political orientation.”

2.1. Grounded Hope: Thinking-with(in) the Material Present

Before exploring these claims, I would like to return to Haraway's (2016) new materialist-sounding idea of “staying with the trouble.” This call to remain in the

here and now not only hints at what the orientation of new materialist thought is, but also helps to ground it in related materialist traditions, including: Marxist and related materialist feminisms (see Davis 1981; Delphy 1976, 1977; Federici 1975, 2004; Hennessy [1993] 2013; Vogel 1983); many of the feminist standpoint theories that were touched upon in Chapter 1 and partially overlap with the aforementioned feminisms; and those historical materialist thinkers who are associated with the Frankfurt School (see Adorno [1966] 1973; Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 1997; Benjamin [1927–1940] 1999; Bloch [1954–1959] 1986; Fromm [1941] 1969; Habermas [1981] 1984; Marcuse [1955] 1966; Reich [1933] 1946).⁶⁵ Therefore, in the next section, I will highlight some of the promising materialist linkages between Haraway's thought and the historical materialist tradition as co-developed by the critical theorists Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch, who were affiliated with the Frankfurt School. I do so in order to underscore the many complex continuities between contemporary new materialisms and the so-called materialisms of the past, which are still resonating with the present.

⁶⁵ The theoretical-political linkages with other materialist philosophies, such as those named above, still require more research. Indeed, there appear to be tensions between the more Marxist and poststructuralist takes on materialist thought. Political theorists Daniela Tepe-Belfrage and Jill Steans (2016), for example, reject the poststructuralist variant of new materialist thought, as it supposedly lacks an analysis of austerity and other finance-related issues; issues that are centered in more Marxist materialist theories. Political theorist Simon Choat (2018) also touches upon the potential similarities between new materialisms and historical materialisms, arguing that new materialisms could benefit from a power analysis that is more firmly rooted in historical materialism. Wolfe (2017) provides another interesting analysis concerning the historical differences between older forms of materialist philosophy and new materialisms. Conversely, in the section that follows, I demonstrate that there are clear links between critical new, and historical, materialisms.

2.1.1. Attentiveness to the Here and Now in Critical New Materialisms

First, I would like to comment on the idea of critical new materialisms, as this is a crucial part of my own situated, non-totalizing critical cartography of new materialist philosophy. Zooming in on Haraway's thought, and her ideas about the present and the future, is crucial to gaining an understanding of what critical new materialist thought is all about.

Via her attentive focus on the here and now, together with her emphasis on “[s]ympoiesis” (Haraway 2016, 58)—translatable as intimately “making-with” and denoting a relational ontology or worldview—Haraway expresses the thought that modern metaphysical individualism (i.e., the idea that the world consists of atomistic, individually acting beings) and human exceptionalism (i.e., the idea that only rational, human beings matter) are illusions, fabricated to counter the impermanence that we as mortal humans feel upon realizing we are in a relation of living-with all other material beings. This idea is not just central to *Staying with the Trouble* (Haraway 2016); many of Haraway's earlier works also touch upon the need to intervene and invest in, and think-with, the present as to cultivate hope for a better future-to-come⁶⁶—which is not the same as constructing naïve, futuristic dreamlands.

⁶⁶ The notion of a “future-to-come” has primarily been discussed by Derrida ([1993] 1994, xix) in his *Specters of Marx*, in which he also introduces the notion of hauntology, as addressed in this dissertation's introduction, and in his later work in connection to his conceptualization of justice-to-come and democracy—ideas that will be developed in Chapter 3, starting from section 3.4.1.2.2. This notion has also been touched upon by Barad in her Derridean essays “Quantum Entanglements” (2010) and “After the End of the World” (2019). Here, I am using this notion in the context of Haraway's work and critical new materialist work in general, as for them, the construction of a better future has to be grounded, and can thus never be disconnected from the past and present. It is this queering of temporalities—as the past, present, and future seem to be flowing into one another—that is also central to Derrida's (and also Barad's) conceptualization of the future.

Having always been interested in the potential of feminist fabulations, figurations, and science fiction as means of world-making and bringing about social justice (see Haraway 1985, 1997a, [1992] 2004, 2011), in *How Like a Leaf*, Haraway (2000) expresses her thoughts on the present and the future in relation to the modern Western conceptualization of time (i.e., personally experienced and measurable flows of time as successive moments) and temporality (i.e., the more general passage of time defined as past, present, and future). Here, Haraway follows her own critique of teleological, progressive time as established in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (Haraway 1997a, 9–10), namely, that it is upheld by Western Christian salvation history and the progress narrative of modern science (i.e., a secularized version of salvation history’s teleological figuration of time). Haraway (2000) now adds a third temporal paradigm to her analysis, namely, advanced capitalism and its obsession with financialization and debt models, which take our attention away from the present, and force us to focus on impending events. This is another teleological model, in which the future is “literally locked into the debt repayment obligation. It’s an already-written future, with a bounded notion of temporality already built into it” (Haraway 2000, 99). This idea of an unescapable, perfectly laid out future conflicts with Haraway’s call to cultivate careful attentiveness toward the present.⁶⁷ It is an attentiveness that does not keep pushing

⁶⁷ See also feminist ethnographer Deborah Bird Rose’s (2004) idea of “responsive attentiveness,” developed in the context of research on white settler colonialism and practices of decolonization in Australia. To counter the violence that continues to be perpetrated against Native peoples, their lands, and the environment as a whole, Rose calls for the cultivation of an attentive, obligation-based ethics that runs across species boundaries. See also Haraway’s (2011) engagement with the works of both Rose and the artist Patricia Piccinini.

responsibility—or response-ability, as Haraway so aptly reconceptualizes this notion—away, neither spatially nor temporally, but rather, fully embraces it.⁶⁸

This focus upon the present is underlined beautifully in *Staying with the Trouble*, in which Haraway (2016) acknowledges the importance of looking at past historical events, ethico-political failures, and wrongdoings, as well as at future earthly possibilities. However, in addition to the epilogue to this chapter, she also points to the “all-too-ordinary urgencies of onrushing multispecies extinctions, genocides, immiserations, and exterminations” (37). Avoiding the apocalyptic language of emergencies and impending doom, however, Haraway redirects our perspective toward the present by employing a more speculative terminology of grounded hope. Seen from Haraway’s perspective—as well as those of authors such as fellow feminist science studies scholar Isabelle Stengers ([2009] 2015) and anthropologist Anna Tsing (2015)—“another world is not only urgently needed . .

⁶⁸ This reconceptualization of responsibility as *response-ability* is Levinasian in nature. In *Totality and Infinity*, alterity philosopher Emmanuel Levinas ([1961] 2015, 23, 99, 197) relates responsibility to answering the call of the Other. This notion was later picked up by Derrida, who has been inspired by Levinas’s philosophy as a whole (see Derrida [1997] 1999) and refers to it in his essay “The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)” (Derrida 2002). This article touches upon the animal’s suffering in relation to the human, setting the stage for animal studies—without, however, explicitly mentioning response-ability (see also Senior, Clark, and Freccero 2015). Interestingly, in *When Species Meet*, Haraway (2008, 88) refers to Derrida’s 2002 article while addressing the concept of response-ability, and how animals have often been rendered killable by human subjects (see also Haraway 2006b). Barad (2012b, 2019) follows in Haraway’s footsteps when employing response-ability. Although the Levinasian-Derridean understanding of response-ability, ethics, and justice runs through the philosophies of both Haraway and Barad, there are some important differences in their understandings of accountability and response-ability. For Barad, accountability, response-ability, and complicity are written into the world’s fabric, meaning that relations of ethical obligation are inescapable. This is also underlined in Barad 2010. This stance gives rise to questions, not only about the possibility of actively refusing to listen to these calls, but also as to the potentially different levels of responsibility and complicity among human subjects: For example, are we all “equally” responsible for the current economic and ecological crises? Haraway, as well as Shotwell (2016), whose work will be introduced in the main text shortly, nuances Barad’s extremely thick, almost deontological ethics by accentuating how people’s differently situated positionalities create differences when it comes to how well they can respond to certain worldly issues. I will come back to this idea of response-ability in this dissertation’s epilogue.

. [but the creation of such a world] is [also] possible” (Haraway 2016, 51), if only we were to become more attentive to what is unfolding today.

Are such attentive acts of staying with the trouble founded upon the cultivation of hope and utopian sandcastles, if they are not to be rooted in pessimistic gloom? Not quite. Haraway (2016) states:

There is a fine line between acknowledging the extent and seriousness of the troubles and succumbing to abstract futurism and its affects of sublime despair and its politics of sublime indifference. . . . Alone, in our separate kinds of expertise and experience, we know both too much and too little, and so we succumb to despair or to hope, and neither is a sensible attitude. Neither despair nor hope is tuned to the senses, to mindful matter, to material semiotics, to mortal earthlings in thick copresence. (4)

Clearly, Haraway is not keen on abstract, future-oriented theories and projects of “fixing the world,” as there is urgent work to be done in the here and now. Neither hope, nor despair, but an attentive, situated staying with the trouble is the motto of the Chthulucene—Haraway’s notion for the current post-Anthropocene⁶⁹ and post-

⁶⁹ The Anthropocene as a new geological era is said to have been introduced by Paul J. Crutzen (2006) as a way to denote the massive impact human subjects have had on the environment through industrial pollution, as well as agricultural and other environmental interventions. Various critical new materialists have touched upon this topic, especially in connection to anthropocentrism and the idea that our worldview, including the idea of the Anthropocene, has been too human-centered. Thinkers such as Haraway (2015), Braidotti (2013), and Stengers ([2009] 2015) have contributed to this debate. Especially Haraway’s (2015) essay is of interest here, as she comments on the potential arrival of the Chthulucene; an era in which humans could harmoniously live together with other species, if they were to realize the interconnectedness of things and adjust their behavior accordingly. For a new materialist take on the potential pedagogical interventions we could make to counter the Anthropocene crisis, see Carstens (2016); for a theorization of ecological toxicity, see Stiegler (2018).

Capitalocene⁷⁰ era in which we are required to pick up the pieces and reshape the world “*sympoietically*” in a situated, “earthly,” and relational manner. I share Haraway’s anxieties about hope—apprehensions that are related to Haraway’s critical take on religious savior narratives, scientific positivism, and overly optimistic transhumanist beliefs.⁷¹ However, are these anxieties so all-encompassing that they cancel out any potential theoretical and political activist acts based on hope; on the affective longing for a better future? Not quite, as we are clearly talking about a thinker who explicitly uses the language of manifestos, dreamwork, and science fiction to think the praxis of scholarly-activist critique anew.⁷² Rather, Haraway seems to argue against a non-situated, unrealistic take on hope, or feelings and conceptualizations of hope that endlessly (and dangerously) keep deferring response-ability to future times, thus preventing concrete changes in mentality and transformations from actually taking place. Haraway, together with the critical new materialist thinkers that she has influenced over the years, refuses to get lost in abstract utopias, yet is not necessarily against the cultivation of what I call “situated, grounded hope.” Feelings and dreams of hope that accentuate socio-

⁷⁰ Coined by sociologist Jason W. Moore (2013), and employed by critical thinkers such as Haraway, the term Capitalocene describes our current era—and the social and economic crises it faces. For a detailed genealogy of the notion, see also Moore (2016).

⁷¹ It is important to note here that transhumanism is regarded as differing from (critical) posthumanism. Transhumanist thinkers, such as Hans Moravec (1999), tend to be overly optimistic about humanity’s technological inventions and advancements. Furthermore, transhumanists often advocate the merging of human bodies with technological devices and prosthetics to “improve” mankind, whereas posthumanists are more critical toward technology and the idea of the human subject itself (for these distinctions, see also Braidotti 2013, 2019).

⁷² Haraway has commented on the style of manifestos as follows in an interview: “I suppose there is a kind of fantastic hope that runs through a manifesto. There’s some kind of without warrant insistence that the fantasy of an elsewhere is not escapism but it’s a powerful tool. Critique is not futurism or futurology. It’s about here and now if we could only learn that we are more powerful than we think we are, and that the war machine is not who we are” (Haraway in Gane and Haraway 2006, 152). Haraway here makes it clear that change and transformation are always possible and, I suggest, in a way are always connected to the cultivation of grounded hope.

political transformations are still acceptable, as long as we remain in tune with what is going on in the world today, and do not neglect our own entanglements with it.

Thus, there will be no imagined future(s) without a more situated and self-reflexive rethinking of present worldly unfoldings, and of what could be in relation to these unfoldings. Such a critical new materialist praxis of attentiveness and care includes the realization that humans, non-human species, and the environment are all in this together: “Staying with the trouble requires making ‘oddkin’; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles. We become with each-other or not at all” (Haraway 2016, 4). We need to “live and die well with each other in a thick present” (1), and the only way to do so is by becoming aware of the radical potential of cultivating situated knowledges, shared relationalities and making-with processes, and response-ability for all that is (still in becoming)—preferably in a post-extractive, advanced capitalist, post-anthropocentric, scholarly-activist manner.⁷³

It is clear that Haraway’s philosophy differs significantly from idealistic modern philosophical models. Rather than philosophizing on top of fluffy clouds or within the strict confines of the academic ivory tower, Haraway brings things back down to earth and problematizes the philosophical distinctions between theory and praxis, subject and object, and transcendence and immanence—moves that could almost be considered Deleuzian in nature.⁷⁴ Seen from the perspective of

⁷³ The notion of the “thick present” (Haraway 2016, 1) makes various reappearances throughout *Staying with the Trouble*, and although not explained in detail, the notion seems to denote Haraway’s emphasis on the need to cultivate a more ethical orientation toward the here and now—that is, being more aware of our present-day actions and the impact these might have on our future world.

⁷⁴ Deleuze has criticized various philosophical dichotomies, such as identity/difference and body/mind. Labeling his philosophy a metaphysics of immanence, Deleuze, together with Guattari, conceptualized the plane of immanence in *A Thousand Plateaus* to counter dualistic modern philosophies that were invested in dichotomized binaries (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005). For

Haraway's situated knowledges, we need to act in the immanent here and now, cultivate an "eco-ethico-political" awareness—as I would like to call it—and create some "serious fuss" (see also Stengers and Despret [2011] 2014). This position is shared by many contemporary critical new materialists, who are interested in various urgent contemporary issues and their impact, such as the Anthropocene and its environmental crises, the ongoing effects of (neo)colonialism, the global rise of neofascism, the right-wing recuperation of recognition-based identity politics and rights, and the (oftentimes literally annihilating) toxicity of extractive neoliberal capitalism. One particular urgent issue that seems central to these critical new materialisms relates to Butler's new materialist-sounding question of why certain bodies—and thus, embodied subjects—come to matter more than others (see Butler 1993, [2004] 2006). In rethinking perennial philosophical debates—for example those regarding subjectivity, agency, and what it means to be assigned the label of

Deleuze, immanence signifies immanence without opposition or, in other words, pure embeddedness. Everything that "is," is a mode of one substance, ontologically speaking, and will be located on this plane of immanence. The task of philosophers is to create such a plane for the development of philosophical concepts (see also Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994). Of course, it would be too radical to suggest that Haraway, because of her focus on worldly affairs and her critical take on the Oedipal construction of subjectivity and kinship, as well as the subject/object distinction, is a Deleuzian thinker. However, there are certainly some correlations to be found between the two. Haraway herself has nonetheless stated that she does not consider herself to be a Deleuzian or Deleuzoguattarian, mostly because of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming-animal (Gane and Haraway 2006; for Haraway's commentary on becoming-with and the dog/wolf binary, see also Haraway 2008, and especially footnote 39 on page 315 for her reference to Braidotti's feminist philosophical take on Deleuzian thought). The accentuation of immanence lies at the heart of many critical new materialist projects, such as those of Braidotti ([1994] 2011, 2013) and Grosz (2004, 2005, 2017). Another aspect that connects many critical new materialisms to Deleuzian philosophy is the careful attention paid to the here and now (while linked to the possible actualization of what is yet to come), as this section also demonstrates. The same is true for the time/temporality aspect: Although Deleuze's view on time could easily take up a chapter of its own, it suffices to briefly refer here to Deleuze's ([1968] 1994) *Difference and Repetition*, in which he conceptualizes time as cyclical, a straight line and, finally, as time-as-repetition. Time-as-repetition, however, is not the return of the same all over again—of the purely identical—but is in fact the time of the future. Moreover, Deleuze does not often use the notions of present and future, referring instead to virtuality and actuality, in which the virtual stands for a generative difference that will end up producing the actual—that is, something new. For Deleuze, the virtual holds the many potential unfoldings of the actual in itself. This is precisely how I conceptualize many critical new materialists' emphasis on the here and now—that is, as holding the various worldly possibilities of the future.

“human-enough”—many of today’s critical new materialist thinkers focus on how certain material forms and manifestations of embodied being are considered culturally illegible, non-conforming, different from, commodifiable, and often exploitable and annihilable. In a world that appears to be invested in promoting a global lethargic attitude, contemporary (critical) new materialist thought could make a real difference by cultivating an affirmative eco-ethico-political attentiveness to the world.

In addition to Haraway, whom I read as creatively combining this critical new materialisms-anticipating call for an increased eco-ethico-political awareness with her own political-epistemological project of situated knowledges, one can also think of the nomadic philosophy of Braidotti, as touched upon in Chapter 1. Reconfiguring subjectivity and the Western philosophical theorization of difference as negative in these post-anthropocentric, posthumanist times, Braidotti is attentive to, and offers an explicitly ethico-political analysis of, the subject’s environmental embeddedness (see Braidotti 2006b, 2013).⁷⁵ It is this accentuating of the interconnectedness between ecological, ethical, and political questions that sets

⁷⁵ In *Transpositions*, Braidotti’s (2006b) nomadic, ethical position is addressed as intimately connected with the ecological. Throughout *Transpositions*, Braidotti describes her philosophy as both ecophilosophical—because embodied subjects are always embedded in a material, environmental context—and an “ethics of sustainability” (165). Or, in other words, hers is an ethics that rethinks Nietzschean *amor fati*—the love or acceptance of one’s fate—and transforms it into a willingness to live life to the fullest, with all of its intensity, both positive and negative, and in the understanding that one’s life is always connected to the lives of other living beings. Braidotti also labels her nomadic philosophy an “ethico-political project” (205). According to various poststructuralists and new materialists, in contrast to the separation between ethics and politics in modern philosophy, ethical issues engender political questions, and vice versa. Braidotti herself underlines this entanglement as follows: “Nomadic ethics is political in the sense that it involves social relations; it addresses the issue of power as both *potestas* and *potentia* and it foregrounds the quest for interactive de-territorializations. This micro-political level is an embodied and embedded form of activism that contrasts with the return of overarching master narratives both on the Right (neo-liberalism and the genetic social imaginary) and on the Left (the revolutionary multitudes of the political spectrum)” (205). For an engagement with Braidotti’s (and Stengers’s) bringing together of ethics and politics, see Hoppe (2017).

critical new materialist philosophies apart. Another theorist who stresses the connection between these three domains, is political theorist Alexis Shotwell. In *Against Purity*, Shotwell (2016) states that we are living in an eco-economic “disturbance regime” (9), while having to fight against what she calls our problematic desire for theoretical purity (hierarchical, oppressive systems of classification)⁷⁶ and “[p]urity politics” (6); a heavily racialized-gendered politics that pretends that there is a pure, Edenic state of worldly affairs to which we can return. Feminist science studies scholar María Puig de la Bellacasa’s (2017) *Matters of Care* also belongs on this list, offering a posthumanist understanding of care, and an ecofeminist focus on the ethico-political principles of permaculture. Other apt examples of critical new materialist publications are critical race studies scholar Mel Y. Chen’s (2012) *Animacies*, which tackles environmental racism and the question of why certain queer, disabled, and racialized bodies (in their various intersections) come to matter less through animacy theory; and feminist science studies scholar Astrida Neimanis’s (2017) *Bodies of Water*, in which the author argues for a relational understanding of life through water as the element that connects all species. Also included are “Nomadology and Subjectivity,” an article by critical disability studies scholar Griet Roets (Roets and Braidotti 2012), who

⁷⁶ The longing for theoretical purity as expressed through systems of classification in modern Western thought and science has been criticized by various ecofeminists, philosophers of science, and critical thinkers. For example, in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*—which will be examined in detail in Chapter 3—critical theorists Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) connect the need to classify the world, which is inherent in modern reason, to the horrors of fascism and the Holocaust. Foucault was one of the first poststructuralist thinkers to further investigate this connection, and he comments on modernity’s need for order in *The Order of Things* (Foucault [1966] 2002). Categories and categorization processes have profound socio-political implications, as addressed by information scientist Geoffrey C. Bowker and sociologist Susan Leigh Star (1999) in *Sorting Things Out*. For other critiques of classification processes and their often dehumanizing outcomes, see Plumwood (1993), Van der Tuin (2015a), and Wynter (1994).

employs a Deleuzian framework to theorize differently abled bodies, not as lacking, but as differently embodied in an agency-enhancing manner; and queer theorist Jasbir K. Puar's (2017) latest book, *The Right to Maim*, in which the notion of debility is theorized to explain how social inclusion and bodily harm operate in tandem with biopolitical state violence. Each in their own unique way, these works demonstrate the eco-ethico-political interest and investment central to critical new materialisms. Moreover, all of these thinkers defend social justice-oriented posthumanist projects that take seriously the materiality and agency of the world—a world in which differently embodied beings have been socially constructed to matter in different and often unequal ways.

Paying attention to the here and now, and imagining of a more socially just future, are two foci that are accentuated in eco-ethico-political new materialisms—even more so than in less critical versions of new materialist theory. As I will demonstrate in the following section, these foci are shared with some other well-known materialist thinkers from the past. I will build this claim while slowly but surely moving from the positionality of a situated, genealogical storyteller toward that of a critical cartographer. This switch in methodology, positionality, and writing style matters, as my enterprise of critical cartographical charting in the remainder of this chapter focuses on the situated topographical depiction of new materialisms' evolvment with, and connection to, similar constellations—both past and present.

2.1.2. The Here and Now, Situated Hope, and Critical Historical Materialisms

By bringing Haraway's philosophy, critical new materialisms that accentuate the eco-ethico-political, and the strand of critical historical materialist philosophy affiliated with the Frankfurt School into dialogue with one another, several shared political-philosophical principles reveal themselves. The messianic oeuvres of critical theorists Walter Benjamin and Ernst Bloch are selected here because of their unexpected link with Haraway's non-messianic, Chthulucene-rooted and thus more "earthly" philosophy. Additionally, their more or less "minoritarian" status within the Frankfurt School deserves to be examined more closely. Benjamin's and Bloch's ideas regarding the present, socio-political transformation, and hope strongly resonate with Harawayan and critical new materialist thought. In the following, I select the most relevant essays and passages from their oeuvres to support this claim.

2.1.2.1. Jetztzeit, the Angelus Novus, and hope

"The Frankfurt School" is the more widely used label for the critical thinkers associated with the Institute for Social Research at the Goethe University Frankfurt, founded in the 1920s in Germany.⁷⁷ It consisted of dissident Marxist thinkers who analyzed the crucial issues of their time, such as the failed Russian Revolution, the rise of late liberal capitalism and mass culture, and the links between fascism, false consciousness, and philosophical rationalism. Their analysis combined Marxist materialism with insights from Hegelian dialectical philosophy, Freudian

⁷⁷ Because of the rise of Nazism, the institute was later relocated to Switzerland, the United States, and subsequently back to Germany after World War II.

psychoanalysis, and existentialist philosophy. Responsible for laying the foundations of critical theory—consisting of normative ethico-political philosophies that accentuate human emancipation and social justice (e.g., Bohman [2005] 2016)—thinkers such as Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and later also Jürgen Habermas, put the Frankfurt School on the map. Although Benjamin, and Bloch in particular, were only loosely connected to the School and its thinkers, they can still be regarded as historical materialists with an interest in social justice, freedom, and transformation. Of specific interest here are Benjamin’s notion of *Jetztzeit*, or the presence of the now (also translatable as “now-time”), and Bloch’s conceptualization of hope.

Although Haraway would probably look at the theological framework of Benjamin’s philosophy with suspicion because of its implied salvation narrative,⁷⁸ his conceptualization of time and history could be retroactively read as demonstrating an eagerness to “stay with the trouble.” In his dense, poetically intonated work “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Benjamin ([1955] 2007) rethinks historical time in a non-linear and non-Hegelian—i.e., non-dialectical—fashion, and is equally critical of the modern belief in progress upheld by the social democratic and fascist regimes of the 1940s (as demonstrated in theses eleven and thirteen). Further, in theses four, six, and seven, he develops a critique of linear history as operative in science, social democracy, and capitalism, and of how history is written both for and by the victorious (256). Based on these critiques, Benjamin

⁷⁸ One could also argue that Benjamin’s focus on the transcendental and the religious happens from within a historical materialist and thus worldly embedded structure. Nonetheless, both Benjamin and Bloch are best labeled as messianic thinkers (see also e.g., Khatib 2013; Rabinbach 1985). The claim that “Theses on the Philosophy of History” is still firmly grounded in historical materialism stems from Lindroos (1998), whose book focuses on Benjamin’s political philosophy.

comes up with two vital ideas, namely, *Jetztzeit* (theses fourteen and sixteen), and the *Angelus Novus* (thesis nine).⁷⁹ Both ideas are interconnected, as the *Angelus* embodies a specific perception of time and history: The “angel of history” (257) has its head turned toward the past, and only sees destruction and despair. Hoping to fix past wrongdoings and build something new upon these ruins (an almost eerie anticipation of the horrors to come during World War II), the angel pauses and faces the past. However, he is not able to pause for long, as a storm, labeled “progress” (257), immediately urges the angel forward, with his back facing the future, his eyes now focused on the interconnected past and present. For Benjamin, it is this particular openness toward the past from within the here and now that matters, as he did not consider oppression and political fascism as exceptional, but rather, perennially present:

The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the “state of emergency” in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism. (257)

There are various interpretations of Benjamin’s messianic angel, from those of unorthodox Marxists, to those of Jewish theologians (Handelman 1991, Mosès 2008). However, what I find most fascinating here, is how Benjamin’s ([1955]

⁷⁹ The concept of the *Angelus Novus* is based on a painting by Paul Klee that Benjamin had to leave behind when fleeing Germany in 1933. For more historical details about this event, see Jeffries (2016).

2007) image of the *Angelus Novus* queers time by accentuating how history should not be interpreted as running along a single, linear line—or what he calls “homogeneous, empty time” (261) in thesis thirteen. Rather, history consists of disruptive, explosive, yet still interlinked world-shattering moments; moments and glimpses that cannot be seen and understood by everyone. Clearly, Benjamin’s understanding of time and history is still firmly rooted in historical materialism: After all, the oppressed proletariat is Benjamin’s chosen subject of history (“Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge” [260]). At the same time, however, he bypasses the typical Hegelian-Marxist dialectical historical framework, in which the proletariat will simply end up replacing the bourgeoisie: In theses fourteen and eighteen, Benjamin brings in the concept of *Jetztzeit*, or “the presence of the now” (261), as a messianic replacement for homogenous empty time, which he considers to be an existentially alienating, meaningless, linear flow of the same, operating at the heart of capitalist and politically oppressive societies. In contrast, *Jetztzeit* spotlights the intense catastrophism and importance of the present in relation to both past injustices, and potential future rectifications and redemptions. History should no longer be about the past lived experiences of the victorious, or solely consist of the annals of (among others) the bourgeoisie or the conquerors. To “articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’” (255). Rather, it should “seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (255).

Thus, both history and the art of theorizing history are about creatively capturing those energetic ruptures in the present that are attached to crisis moments or various states of emergency. It is the theorizing of these ruptures that could

potentially engender real socio-political transformation. It is the immediate existence of, and critical reflection upon, the here and now that matters most to Benjamin. Paraphrasing his philosophy on the present and history, thinkers, revolutionaries, and activists have to “stay with the trouble,” here conceptualized as “a single catastrophe” (Benjamin [1955] 2007, 257)—a flash from the past that radically interrupts the present. Interestingly, this conceptualization predates Foucault’s understanding of history as a collection of discontinuous events waiting to be disentangled by the genealogical thinker, as expanded upon in Chapter 1, section 1.2.1.⁸⁰ Although Benjamin does not explicitly present us with a theory of hope, he does engage with this topic in thesis six, referring to “the spark of hope in the past” (255). This “spark” can be captured by the eye of the attentive historian or critical theorist, who spots the conditions for transformation by “brush[ing] history against the grain” (257), and thus stepping out of the traditional historical framework, in which the viewpoint of the oppressor is all-determining. Real changes and transformation do not come to us in a linear, progressive fashion. Rather, hope and justice arrive as flashes and ruptured moments in time; as

⁸⁰ The similarities between Foucault’s Nietzschean understanding of history and Benjamin’s historical materialism are surprising. Far from being a Marxist thinker, Foucault also reads power and oppression into the historical, and thinks of the analysis of the historical as genealogical art. He argues: “The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing the rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules” (Foucault [1971] 1977, 151). Like Benjamin, he argues that those in power are in control of the narrative of history. The potential comparisons do not end there: Similar to Benjamin, Foucault thematizes the historical, not as linear, but as discontinuous and filled with surprises: “The genealogist needs history to dispel the chimeras of the origin, somewhat in the manner of the pious philosopher who needs a doctor to exorcise the shadow of his soul. He must be able to recognize the events of history, its jolts, its surprises, its unsteady victories and unpalatable defeats—the basis of all beginnings, atavisms, and heredities” (Foucault [1971] 1977, 144–45).

historical experiences of oppression within the ruins of the past. Therefore, they must be grasped and interpreted with care.

Benjamin's materialist messianic philosophy thus calls for the cultivation of situated, perspectivist knowledge and, even more important for this section, realizing what is at stake in the world and attempting to make a positive impact upon it. Replacing the notion of time as neatly progressing with messianic, ruptured, and interruptive moments and flashes within the profane world, Benjamin suggests that things can be done differently, if only we can muster the power to critically re-orient ourselves and remain open toward what was (e.g., the various manifestations of class struggle and past fascisms), and what is currently unfolding. For the revolutionary future to arise, past, present, and missed opportunities for the coming into being of hitherto unrealized potentialities—or, better put, revolutionary justice—thus need to meet. Precisely this thought has also been expressed by Benjamin's contemporary and friend, Bloch, in his philosophy of hope.

2.1.2.2. The utopian, the Not-Yet, and grounded hope

Bloch was only loosely affiliated with the Frankfurt School and, like Benjamin, had to flee Germany when Hitler rose to power. Nevertheless, with his work *The Spirit of Utopia* (Bloch [1918] 2000), he played an important role in the development of historical materialist theory. Combining Marxist thought and Jewish messianism, Bloch analyzes the history of Western civilization as comprising revolutionary, disruptive moments. However, it is his most well-known three volume work, *The Principle of Hope* (Bloch [1954–1959] 1986), that is of most interest here. Bloch articulated his ideas about hope and the drive of people generally, and the working

class in particular, to be free. The reason for bringing in Bloch's philosophy of hope comes down to the following: Bloch's philosophy—in contrast to earlier, more modern, yet also orthodox, Marxist philosophies—introduces the idea of a tangible political utopia. This utopia is guided by a situated cultivation of hope that is rooted in materiality and, if we were to rephrase it in a Harawayan manner, grounded in the here and now.

In his introduction to *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch ([1954–1959] 1986) presents his existentialist, historical materialist philosophy while focusing on hope as an emotion that pushes people out of their solipsistic, inward-looking frame of mind toward the world (3), the “Not-Yet-Become” (6), and the utopian. As an affective and mental phenomenon, hope is conceptualized as bridging the mind/body split. Furthermore, as an emotion that is both orientated toward the future and focused upon freedom, it is also one of the most human of affects. Providing us with an overview of various historical forms of hope and utopian constructions, and examples of how various cultural artefacts have operated in the service of the utopian, Bloch adds existentialist and political philosophical layers to the notion of hope: It is hope, and a politicized version thereof in particular, that will guide us toward an ultimately classless (and thus free) society.

Similar to Benjamin—who was strongly influenced by Bloch's work—Bloch ([1954–1959] 1986) develops a process philosophy, driven by an “ontology of the Not-Yet” (13), in which the becoming of subjects and events, as well as the not-yet-closed potentialities of the past, are focal points. As human subjects, we are constantly striving toward the realization of the yet-to-come or, to put it more concretely, freedom, and do so by cherishing hope. This accentuation of the subject

gives Bloch's process philosophy the characteristics of an existentialist, human-centered anthropology, as mainly *human* subjects possess the ability to realize their full potential according to this philosophy. Human subjects are hungry for the actualization of their own potential and can visualize transforming the world for the better through dreaming. Additionally, there is a repository of failed or undeveloped actions and ideas in the past, to which we, in the here and now, can return in order to further the cause of social justice. This queering of temporalities is strongly reminiscent of Benjamin's work.

Importantly, the hope to which Bloch ([1954–1959] 1986) refers is not simply a naïve, disconnected feeling. Rather, hope and the utopian should always be considered and constructed as rooted in materiality. The virtual can only be realized if the right material conditions have been met—thus convincingly positioning Bloch's hope as being of a grounded, situated kind. It is precisely this kind of hope that links Bloch's project to both Haraway's dualism-shattering philosophy, and Braidotti's nomadic philosophy. Well-rooted, grounded hope has a role to play in contemporary critical thought, and in critical new materialisms in particular, as argued by Braidotti in *Transpositions* (2006b)⁸¹ and *The Posthuman* (2013). In the latter, she invests in “actively constructing social horizons of hope” (Braidotti 2013, 122) through a posthumanist ethics that advocates respect toward all beings. Hope *matters*, and is indeed related to the yet-to-come, as also underlined

⁸¹ For instance, see Braidotti's (2006b) engagement with Bloch's idea of a hopeful future: “Hope constructs the future in that it opens the spaces onto which the project active desires; it gives us the force to emancipate ourselves from everyday routines and structures that help us dream ahead. Hope carves out active trajectories of becoming and thus can respond to anxieties and uncertainties in a productive manner. It requires awareness of the past, or memory and the knowledge needed to handle its transitions into a possible future” (277).

in the interview passage below, which can be regarded as prefiguring *The Posthuman*:

The yearning for sustainable futures can construct a liveable present. . . . The future is the virtual unfolding of the affirmative aspect of the present, which honours our obligations to the generations to come. The pursuit of practices of hope, rooted in the ordinary micropractices of everyday life, is a simple strategy to hold, sustain and map out sustainable transformations. The motivation for the social construction of hope is grounded in a profound sense of responsibility and accountability. . . . Hope is a way of dreaming up possible futures, an anticipatory virtue that permeates our lives and activates them. (Braidotti 2012, 36–37)

Grounded hope propels us toward the future, and the same can be said about the utopian, which Braidotti and Haraway label as “visionary,” or the “still-to-be-actualized.”⁸²

In line with Haraway, Braidotti, and other (previously mentioned) critical new materialists, for Bloch, the utopian is not an abstract thought construct, nor an idealized political state. Bloch actually distinguishes abstract utopias from concrete, well-rooted ones,⁸³ as can be gathered from the following quote:

⁸² With regard to the visionary force behind perspectivist vision, see Haraway (1988, 585). For insights into how the virtual, the visionary, and the affirmative are entangled, see Braidotti (2013, 190–93).

⁸³ This distinction has also been underlined by Levitas (1990) and was later elaborated by queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz (2009). Muñoz’s hopeful manifesto was specifically written against the antirelational turn in queer theory, which was foregrounded by Leo Bersani (1996) and Lee Edelman (2004). The latter’s work attacks heteronormative and reproductive futurity and futures, instead accentuating refusal, the destabilization of norms, and negativity as alternative, queer modes of being (Edelman 2004). Although equally critical of the heteronormative ways in which the future has been sketched out in contemporary society, Muñoz (2009) brings in Bloch’s philosophy of hope and the utopian to support his beliefs in the potential of a political queer collectivity; a queer utopia. Muñoz follows Bloch’s distinction between abstract and concrete utopias, the latter being more connected

Pure wishful thinking has discredited utopias for centuries, both in pragmatic political terms and in all other expressions of what is desirable; just as if every utopia were an abstract one. And undoubtedly the utopian function is only immaturely present in abstract utopianizing, i.e. still predominantly without solid subject behind it and without relation to the Real-Possible [i.e., that which Bloch perceives as able to truly actualize itself in the future]. Consequently, it is easily led astray, without contact with the real forward tendency into what is better.

(Bloch [1954–1959] 1986, 145)

Imagined utopias that have no solid link to material reality are ultimately undesirable, as they are too far removed from the existential lifeworld and remain within the field of desires and dreams. Rather, what needs to be cultivated in dire times, is what I refer to as grounded hope, together with “concrete utopia[s]” (Bloch [1954–1959] 1986, 146) that neither overlap with “abstract utopian dreaminess” (146), nor are “directed by the immaturity of merely abstract utopian socialism” (146). It is precisely this craving for hope that is materially grounded, and a utopian image of the future that is both focused on transformation and “transcendent without

to real, materially grounded forms of historical consciousness: “Concrete utopias are relational to historically situated struggles, a collectivity that is actualized or potential. In our everyday life abstract utopias are akin to banal optimism . . . Concrete utopias can also be daydream-like, but they are the hopes of a collective, an emergent group, or even the solidarity oddball who is the one who dreams for many. Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope” (Muñoz 2009, 3). Political theorist Davina Cooper’s (2014) *Everyday Utopias* is also interesting in this respect. Like Bloch and Muñoz, she brings back the utopian to a worldly level and does so by examining how everyday utopias, such as worlds that are constructed in public bathhouses, come into being in our daily lives; concrete utopias that focus on “what is doable and viable given the conditions of the present” (Cooper 2014, 4). For a collection of reflections on the importance of utopian thinking in times of crisis, see also Vieira and Marder (2012).

transcendence” (Bloch [1954–1959] 1986, 146), that are shared by Bloch, Benjamin, Haraway, and several critical new materialists.

There are, of course, many notable differences between the historical materialisms of Benjamin and Bloch on the one hand, and the eco-ethico-political projects of Haraway and various critical new materialist thinkers on the other. One of the most crucial differences is the fact that both Benjamin and Bloch hold on to the modern anthropocentric theorization of the subject. However, there are also intersections worthy of note. All the above-named thinkers are interested in philosophizing from the ground up and highlight what is at stake in the here and now. Rather than tackling these urgent issues by means of apocalyptic theories, or by focusing too heavily on the future while canceling out the importance of present-day actions, they choose to stay with the trouble. The thickness of the presence and our shared response-abilities today are emphasized, while cultivating hope.

To conclude this section, let me to recapitulate what has been established thus far: First, Haraway’s philosophy sets the tone for many present-day critical new materialist projects. Second, rather than free-floating philosophical enterprises, new materialist philosophy as a whole, and critical new materialist thought in particular, are founded upon earlier philosophical materialist traditions. Last, critical new materialist thought accentuates the need to think *differently*, thinking-with the present and the issues of the moment. Mapping the links between specifically selected historical materialist philosophies and critical new materialist projects provides a taste of what a critical cartography might look like. This strategy will be employed once more in the following subsection, but on a larger scale and in more detail, by continuing to chart the various contemporary new materialist

constellations, highlighting their correlated stellar assemblages and, most importantly, their differences and contestations.

2.2. New Materialisms' Stellar Coordinates: Transcontinentality, Trans(/)disciplinarity, and Transversality

In the foregoing, I have conceptualized new materialist thought as a processual event still in becoming, with strong roots in other forms of philosophical materialism. In addition, I have suggested that several critical new materialisms are specifically eco-ethico-political in nature. The following sections will continue to map these different constellations of present-day new materialist thinking and their interconnected stellar assemblages. Special attention will be given to an affirmative critical engagement with several of the most prominent contemporary arguments against new materialist thought.

Chronological and genealogical strategies do not do justice to the evolutionary temporal complexity of new materialist thought, or its situated embedment. A Foucauldian genealogical methodology highlights the intertwinement of power, knowledge, and truth in discursive regimes, major historical ruptures, and the coming into being (and subsequent demise) of the modern subject. In contrast, a critical cartographical methodology takes these entanglements between (the coming into being of) knowledge and power to their limit, as the knower is now understood to be fully part of these power-laden processes. Moreover, it accentuates the need to analyze the intricate complexities of today's globalized, neoliberal societies on both the micro and the macro levels—an important geopolitical interplay that is often absent from more genealogical

accounts. Last, a critical cartographical methodology combines well-rooted critique with an affirmative attitude.⁸⁴

2.2.1. A Pluralist “New Metaphysics” and Methodology

Since the mid-2000s, literature on new materialist thought has burgeoned, describing this new school of thought as “neo-materialism” (Braidotti 1991, 265, 2000a, 160), “renewed materialisms” (Coole and Frost 2010, 4), and “a new metaphysics” (Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012, 13). All of these terms underline the fact that these philosophies (dis)continuously work through, and revitalize, philosophies of the past to make them applicable to the here and now. Although the debate surrounding the conceptualization of new materialist thought already occurred in the 1920s,⁸⁵ the post-poststructuralist enterprise as we know it today, was primarily put on the map by Braidotti and philosopher Manuel DeLanda. Since then, various monographs, special issues, anthologies, articles, and research projects have been devoted to the rise of these diverse new materialist philosophies.⁸⁶ It is vital to note here that both Braidotti (1991) and DeLanda (1996)

⁸⁴ Both the choice for this critical cartographical methodology and its links with Foucauldian genealogy have been discussed in Chapter 1. The clearest example of this methodology can be found in Braidotti’s 2005 article on the rise of neoliberal postfeminism, and in her later work *Transpositions* (2006b).

⁸⁵ Moral philosopher James Pratt (1922), for instance, refers to the debate surrounding new materialism in his article, in which he speaks of the rerise of materialism in analytical philosophy after the theoretical demise of materialist philosophy during the nineteenth century (as represented by e.g., Büchner [1855] 1891; Haeckel [1868] 1876). The new materialist philosophy that Pratt discusses here, relates to philosopher Roy Wood Sellars’s coinage of new materialism as an evolutionary, critical realist philosophy of mind. According to Sellars (1922), this theory would transcend those problems that characterized former materialist undertakings, which were regarded as less logically consistent, yet trying to grapple with staying with the (material) trouble. Of course, the Continental tradition from the 1920s onwards had its own “new” materialist philosophy, among others in the form of the aforementioned historical materialisms.

⁸⁶ To give a non-exhaustive overview of the literature so far: *Australian Feminist Studies* published a special edition on feminist science studies, corporeal feminisms, and new materialisms in 1999 (Magarey 1999), as did *Feminist Theory* (Squier and Littlefield 2004), and *Women: A Cultural*

started referring to this “new” branch of thought in relation to Foucauldian and Deleuzian philosophy, and to poststructuralism as a whole.

2.2.1.1. *The multiple forms of new materialisms: Introductory definitions*

Braidotti (1991) first mentions neo-materialism in her book *Patterns of Dissonance*:

A general direction of thought is emerging in feminist theory that situates the embodied nature of the subject, and consequently the question of alternatively sexual difference or gender, at the heart of matter. . . . This leads to a radical rereading of materialism, away from its strictly Marxist definition. . . . The neo-materialism of Foucault, the new materiality proposed by Deleuze are . . . a point of no return for feminist theory. (263–66)

Review (van der Tuin and Hinton 2014). Anthologies, such as Alaimo and Hekman’s (2008) *Material Feminisms*, Coole and Frost’s (2010) *New Materialisms*, Pitts-Taylor’s (2016) edited volume *Mattering: Feminism, Science, and Materialism*, and Kirby’s (2017) *What If Culture Was Nature All Along?* also placed new materialist thought on the map. More recently, volumes and pieces on new materialist thought and cultural studies have emerged (Bennett and Joyce 2010), as well as on new materialisms’ impact on visual studies, the creative arts, and bio-art (Barrett and Bolt 2013; Kontturi 2018; Radomska 2016; Sobchack 2004); its value for interface studies (Drucker 2011, 2013); its relevance to pedagogical and curriculum studies (Hickey-Moody and Page 2015; Hinton and Treusch 2015; Radomska 2013; Ringrose, Warfield, and Zarabadi 2018; Sidebottom 2019; Sidebottom and Mycroft 2018; Snaza et al. 2016; Taylor and Bayley 2019; Taylor and Ivinson 2016); and its relevance to rethinking theology and religious studies (Bauman 2018; Crockett 2018; Keller and Rubenstein 2017). Both Braidotti and Hlavajova’s (2018) *The Posthuman Glossary*, and Åsberg and Braidotti’s (2018) *A Feminist Companion to the Posthumanities* can be added to the aforementioned volumes, as these books, in addition to theorizing a critical vocabulary for posthumanist times, focus upon major new materialist ideas. Recently, works have also been published on the relations between new materialisms, digital media studies, and informatics (e.g., Blackman 2019; Bühlmann, Colman, and van der Tuin 2017; van der Tuin 2019). Taken together with two of the more thought-provoking handbooks on new materialist thought, namely, Dolphijn and Van der Tuin’s (2012) *New Materialism*, and Van der Tuin’s (2015a) *Generational Feminism*, all of these edited volumes, editions, and projects give us an adequate overview of the various types of new materialisms and their primary thinkers, summed up here alphabetically: Barad (2003, 2007, 2010, 2012b, 2019); Bennett (2004, 2010); Bogost (2012); Braidotti (2002, 2006b, 2013); Chen (2012); Colebrook (2014); DeLanda (2006); Grosz (1994, 2004, 2017); Haraway (1991, 1997a, 2016); Kirby (2006, 2011); Lemke (2015, 2016); Meillassoux ([2006] 2008); Morton (2013); Puar (2012, 2017); Puig de la Bellacasa (2017); Saldanha (2007); Shotwell (2016); van der Tuin (2008b, 2015a); Wilson (2015); among others.

It is noteworthy that Braidotti instantly brings neo-materialism in connection with the development of feminist theory in the 1990s, a period during which poststructuralist feminist theories were being pushed to their limits when it came to the theorization of power and agency, and subjectivity and embodiment. To illustrate, Butler's (1993) *Bodies That Matter*—a work anchored in Foucauldian poststructuralism—was written as a response to the many critiques on the seemingly purely discursive conceptualization of the body in her earlier work *Gender Trouble* (Butler 1990). After touching upon Irigaray's radical philosophy of sexual difference, Butler's gender performativity theory, Rich's politics of location, and feminist epistemologies—and hence grounding some of neo-materialism's roots in feminist philosophy—Braidotti underscores two aspects that are central to new materialist thought, namely, the radical dismantling of dualisms, and the project of reinterpreting and reinvigorating existing theories.

In his “The Geology of Morals: A Neo-Materialist Interpretation,” DeLanda (1996) also introduces his view of neo-materialism in connection to Deleuzoguattarian philosophy and the project of reinterpreting past philosophies. Commenting on geological and social stratification processes, DeLanda reinterprets Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy through a neo-materialist lens. Employing this lens in his own work, he focuses on the materiality of the world and its inhabitants.

Concluding, both Braidotti's and DeLanda's descriptions of new materialist thought point to certain (dis)continuities with foregoing philosophical frameworks, Marxist materialist philosophy, and poststructuralism in particular. While doing so, they stress the necessity of a more grounded conceptualization of subjectivity as materially embodied and situated.

More than two decades later, the definition (and outline of the field) of new materialist thought has been further enhanced by numerous authors. The three defining volumes on new materialist philosophy are: Alaimo and Hekman's (2008) *Material Feminisms*, Coole and Frost's (2010) *New Materialisms*, and Dolphijn and Van der Tuin's (2012) *New Materialism*. Feminist epistemologists Alaimo and Hekman (2008) address the impact of the so-called cultural turn on feminist thought, while claiming that this turn led to a certain intellectual "impasse" (1). While critically deconstructing binary oppositions has been the forte of both poststructuralism and postmodernism, by arguing against modernity's emphasis on material reality, language/reality and nature/culture splits have been left untouched. Alaimo and Hekman describe this "retreat from materiality" (3) as highly problematic, as it pushed "lived, material bodies and evolving corporeal practices" (3) aside. Grounding renewed attention for the material in ecological feminisms, the editors further note that today's "material feminism" (5) accentuates the idea that "[n]ature is agentic" (5), and that this attention to the material and nature "opens up many fundamental questions about ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics" (7). Alaimo and Hekman thus ground the (re)new(ed) interest in material reality in both feminist poststructuralisms and ecological feminisms, just as Braidotti highlights the importance of feminist theory—specifically in its epistemological forms—when it comes to the development of new materialist thought. Additionally, Alaimo and Hekman define these material feminisms as emphasizing questions of agency (how, for instance, nature is pushing and punching back); the entanglements between the human, non-human, and the environmental; a material ethics that surpasses cultural relativism and focuses on theory and well-grounded practices;

and a thinking through of the ethico-political consequences of our present-day technoscientific practices.

In their introduction to *New Materialisms*, Coole and Frost (2010) take things even further. As political theorists, they acknowledge the influence of environmental, Marxist, and poststructuralist feminist theories on new materialisms. However, they aim to open up their philosophical scope by emphasizing how the material as such has been turned into something completely passive within the Western philosophical tradition. Interested in questions of power and agency, and critical of the limitations of the cultural turn, Coole and Frost state:

Everywhere we look, it seems to us, we are witnessing scattered but insistent demands for more materialist modes of analysis and for new ways of thinking about matter and processes of materialization. . . . We interpret such developments as signs that the more textual approaches associated with the so-called cultural turn are increasingly being deemed inadequate for understanding contemporary society. (2–3)

A return to the various materialist philosophies of the past is needed if we are to update these past theories and their conceptual vocabularies, in the face of a contemporary society that is dealing with a myriad of complex pressing issues, such as neoliberal extractive capitalism, globalization, advanced technoscience, and digitization. The editors suggest that the ways in which we “labor on, exploit, and interact with nature” (4) need to be re-examined, and these “*renewed* materialisms” (4) could play a major role in this process. Clearly, this emphasis on “newness” is

linked to Braidotti's and DeLanda's return to earlier materialist theories. In Coole and Frost's volume, new materialisms' "rich materialist heritage" (4), rather than being denied, is underlined. They are seen as reinvigorated materialisms, capable of tackling these unique contemporary challenges by critically elaborating on the age-old questions of agency, subjectivity, power, and the interactions between human subjects and their environment. Importantly, they are also plural in form, as new materialisms are regarded as situated knowledges.

This pluralist view on new materialisms is also underscored by Dolphijn and Van der Tuin (2012) in *New Materialism*. Describing new materialist philosophy as a "new metaphysics" (13) that "traverses and thereby rewrites thinking as a whole" (13), the project of making "the old" relevant to the here and now, is again spotlighted. Additionally, Dolphijn and Van der Tuin stress new materialisms' "visionary force" (15), as these immanent philosophies are said to be invested in paving the way for that which is yet to be actualized. Discussing the differently situated varieties of new materialist thought, the authors underline the heterogeneity underpinning this new metaphysics, while clearly annotating how the domains of the ontological, the epistemological, the ethical, and the political are intertwined in such new materialist, dualism-surpassing analyses.⁸⁷ Furthermore, this inherited poststructuralist and postmodernist attentiveness toward assessing dualistic

⁸⁷ Regarding the differences between the various new materialisms, Dolphijn and Van der Tuin (2012) state: "The final interview with Quentin Meillassoux seems to go back to the new materialism proposed by DeLanda. Whereas Barad and Braidotti work toward a new materialism that is immediately ontological, epistemological, and ethical, DeLanda and Meillassoux seem to be more interested in the ontological, either at the expense of an immediate or simultaneous interest in epistemology and ethics (DeLanda) or by leading up to epistemological questions of the classificatory kind (Meillassoux). This reading, however, would itself be classificatory, and would divide the terrain to an extent that may overstate differences and overlook similarities" (16). Dolphijn and Van der Tuin thus aim not to overstate the differences between these philosophies.

thinking is emphasized in a recent essay by Van der Tuin (2018b), in which she conceptualizes new materialist philosophies as a novel “research methodology for the non-dualistic study of the world within, beside and among us, the world that precedes, includes and exceeds us” (277).

Bringing all of these detailed descriptions together, the philosophical roots, theoretical scope, and disciplinary praxes of contemporary new materialist philosophy, as well as its co-constitutions with the world,⁸⁸ appear to be incredibly diverse. Furthermore, we can also see how the coming into being and reception history of contemporary new materialist thought is intertwined with the situated histories and backgrounds of those who describe them. Of course, the aforementioned editors and authors are not innocent bystanders, instead writing both on and with new materialisms. Whereas more Anglo-American-oriented theorists like Alaimo and Hekman, or Coole and Frost, firmly anchor new materialist thought in the more US-situated traditions of (feminist) science studies and environmental feminisms, Dolphijn and Van der Tuin approach new materialisms from a more Deleuzian, Continental perspective—albeit without ignoring the transcontinental beginnings and unfoldings of this evolving phenomenon.

In the following, I present an open description of new materialisms, inspired by the project of Dolphijn and Van der Tuin (2012). Together with Van der Tuin’s (2015a) *Generational Feminism*, which addresses the canonization of various

⁸⁸ Rather than the more common term “applications,” I prefer to use the term “co-constitutions” in this context. New materialist theories are not just “applicable to” certain contexts and situations, but rather, according to the Baradian (2007) idea of knowing in being (see Chapter 1 of this dissertation), arise from with(in) worldly affairs and environments.

feminist generations and theories, their joint project offers a perspective that, in contrast to other secondary literature, does not treat new materialist thought as simply “another” turn waiting to be replaced by the next one, but rather accentuates its liveliness. This open description explicitly springs from my own situated position as someone from the Continent, trained in (feminist) philosophy and critical theory, while academically anchored in both the United States and Western Europe. Of course, this is not to say that the overview given thus far has been non-situated or “neutral,” as the selection of the aforementioned sources is always already determined by the theorist’s location and training. For me, this means that extra attention is given to both the sexual difference philosophical tradition, which is very Continental in nature, and the more Anglo-American discipline of feminist science studies and epistemology.

2.2.2. A Pluralist “New Metaphysics,” Methodology, and Eco-ethico-politics

As also stated earlier, it is very difficult, and in this case even undesirable, to provide the reader with an exhaustive definition of contemporary new materialist thought. Instead, one could give the following, more pliable account.⁸⁹ New materialist

⁸⁹ It is important to note here that a variety of so-called turns have been associated with, or deemed analogous to, new materialist thought since its emergence in the 1990s. This has to do with the shared “post-poststructuralist” attitude of these turns, in which immanent ontologies and a broader understanding of agency are emphasized. Think of turns such as the ontological turn (specifically in anthropology), the speculative turn, the transhumanist turn, the (critical) posthumanist turn, the actor-network theoretical (ANT) turn, the digital turn, the vitalist turn, and many more. While these turns are often seen as synonymous with new materialist philosophy, their theoretical-political priorities differ. These differences become especially clear in relation to new materialisms, object-oriented ontologies (OOOs), ANTs, and speculative realist philosophies, as will be developed in detail in section 2.4. Additionally, as a result of my own situated academic training, I focus mainly on the fields of philosophy, cultural studies, and the humanities as a whole in my mapping of contemporary new materialisms. Notably, new materialist philosophies are also used in, for instance, the social sciences (see Fox and Alldred 2017; Holdbraad and Axel Pedersen 2017), and the natural sciences (see Pitts-Taylor 2016). New materialisms are attempting to bridge the long-established gaps between the humanities, the social, and the natural sciences, as also evidenced by the now

philosophy starts fundamentally with and from the standard poststructuralist critique of modern philosophy and some of its core principles (e.g., the supposedly fully autonomous, rational, disembodied subject, Cartesian dualism, the belief in socio-political and technoscientific progress, universalism, (exclusivist) rights-based humanism, and anthropocentrism). New materialisms, and especially critical new materialisms, revisit and subsequently build upon these poststructuralist theories and their critiques of modern philosophy, rethinking dichotomies, such as nature/culture, subject/object, mind/body, matter/meaning, constructivism/essentialism, and many others. Working through and beyond the so-called cultural turn,⁹⁰ new materialist thinkers highlight the importance of the material, the body, and embodied subjectivity, albeit without negating either the cultural, or the interplay between the cultural-discursive and the material. Thus, new materialist thought does not advocate a naïve return to the heyday of biologism and biological essentialism, nor does it represent a negative mirror image of the cultural turn. Furthermore, special attention is given to the conceptualization of the embodied subject, whose material body is no longer regarded as a raw substance that is passively awaiting socio-cultural inscriptions, markings, and imprints. Rather, the body is conceptualized as an active agent, involved in processes of

popular field of environmental humanities (see Emmett and Nye 2017; Oppermann and Iovino 2017).

⁹⁰ For me, this idea of “working through and beyond” embodies the core new materialist principle of rethinking and reinvigorating “the old.” It not only resonates with the Freudian notion of *Durcharbeitung* (see Freud [1914] 1950), or the therapeutic process in which a patient, together with her/his therapist, works through and overcomes the resistance s/he had toward one’s own consciousness, but can also be found in Ahmed’s (1998) *Differences That Matter*, in which she suggests that contemporary feminist thinkers should critically work through psychoanalysis as a possible feminist analytical tool, before moving beyond it. Here, Ahmed is not only influenced by Freud, but also by the French postmodernist Jean-François Lyotard (1987), who, in his essay “Re-Writing Modernity,” mentions this process as a means of rethinking postmodernism versus the grand narratives of modernity.

meaning-making. Because matter and meaning can no longer be thought separately, and because the geopolitical and personal situatedness of knowledge production is fully recognized, epistemological reflections are given an extra dimension in new materialist thought. Subjects are thus automatically part of the knowledge processes and practices in which they participate, and as a result bear a level of responsibility for the world in which they live and theorize. Seen from such a perspective, epistemology, ethical responsibility, and accountability become completely intertwined. This could be regarded as a radical continuation of the Foucauldian power/knowledge theme, infused with the political epistemologies of several feminist standpoint thinkers.

2.2.2.1. The multiple unfoldings of new materialisms: Eco-ethico-politics

Let us once more return to Braidotti who not only emphasizes the importance of ethical responsibility and accountability when producing knowledge, but, as we just saw, also coined the notion of neo-materialism in 1991 and highlighted many of its characteristics in the following paragraph:

What is clear is that by the mid-1990s the differences among then various strands and branches of the post-structuralist project were becoming more explicit. The hegemonic position acquired by the linguistic branch—developed via psychoanalysis and semiotics into a fully-fledged deconstructive project that simply conquered intellectually the United States—intensified the need for clearer terms of demarcation and of theoretical definition. Thus “neo-materialism” emerges as a method, a conceptual frame and a political stand,

which refuses the linguistic paradigm, stressing instead the concrete yet complex materiality of bodies immersed in social relations of power. (Braidotti 2012, 21)

Addressing poststructuralism's multidirectional development, and sketching out her own intricate cartography, Braidotti theorizes neo-materialism as rooted in poststructuralist philosophy and a line of feminist thought that is discontinuously moving beyond the limits of the cultural turn—here referred to by Braidotti (2012) as “the linguistic paradigm” (21). Referring to French antihumanist philosophies, such as those of Georges Canguilhem, Foucault, and Deleuze—systems of thought that emphasize the relation between power and embodiment, and processes of (ab)normalization and disciplining—as well as the projects of Haraway, Irigaray, and her personal take on Deleuzian thought, Braidotti stresses the necessity of analyzing materially embodied subjects and the micro and macro webs of power in which they exist, and against which they resist.

Another interesting characteristic is that neo-materialism is not merely a monist rethinking of metaphysics, expressed through the creation of novel concepts to capture today's complex reality. Rather, new materialisms can also be interpreted as a philosophical methodology that leads to the creation of such a monist, dualisms-transcending metaphysics, while at the same time carrying serious political weight. I will come back to these ideas in sections 2.3.3.2 and 2.4.2.1.1, in which I discuss the critiques of new materialisms' “newness,” and their relation to the political and political agency, respectively. For now, it suffices to state that the emphasis Braidotti (like Frost and Coole) places on the political in the aforementioned quotation is thought-provoking and distinguishes her perspective

from those of less political thinkers such as Alaimo and Hekman, who place greater emphasis on new materialisms' epistemological weight. While deconstructing Western binarized anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism, and other dichotomized constructions, new materialist philosophers are invested in a political analysis of power relations as both *potestas* and *potentia* (see e.g., Braidotti 1991, 2005), and control and surveillance; relations of which all human, non-human, and less-than-human subjects partake in.

In addition to these aspects, new materialisms—and particularly critical new materialisms—also reveal an active, relational caring for the environment, the world, and its inhabitants. It is this holistic approach toward all types of lively assemblages that brings us back to what I have called critical new materialisms' eco-ethico-political investment at the start of this chapter: Nature and all that is of a material-cultural-digital nature is regarded as pushing and punching back, and put at the forefront of new materialist theorizing. Every piece of matter *matters* in this new materialist, relational, ontological worldview, meaning that new materialisms can be read as critiques of the ongoing brutal economization, exploitation, and even sheer destruction of living matter in all of its existential forms. These are pressing issues that have become magnified since the 1990s: The specters of fascism, populism, and extremism are yet again haunting us, but at the same time, the material-ideological conditions behind their reappearance are more ambiguous and complex than ever. Philosophical poststructuralism, as well as its social constructivist explanatory model and the strict structuralist model of analysis that preceded it, are (at least partly) exhausted. These models can no longer capture the complexity of unfolding events and are unable to grasp the agential liveliness of

matter in its multiple expressions. Moreover, they cannot provide us with a roadmap of the future—something that new materialisms, with their *Zeitgeist*-capturing critical-analytical tools and creative conceptual models, hope to do.

To wrap up this section, I would like to repeat the following claims: Contemporary new materialisms constitute a pluralist, evolving strand of philosophy that is occupied with revisiting poststructuralism's critique of modern philosophy and (the death of) the modern subject. They deconstruct hierarchal binary oppositions and highlight the importance of analyzing materiality in all of its forms and the coming into being of embodied subjectivity. They do not merely present us with another metaphysics, as stated by Dolphijn and Van der Tuin, but also consist of a particular methodology and a type of political investment, as Braidotti argues. Furthermore, critical new materialisms, represented by thinkers such as Haraway and Braidotti—but also Chen and Shotwell—are fundamentally eco-ethico-political in nature because of their focus on social justice and transformation. They philosophize from the ground up to change the world for the better, one critical consciousness-raising, grounded hopeful step at a time. It is this eco-ethico-political attentiveness to the world of today, and of tomorrow, that distinguishes critical new materialisms from other, related stellar assemblages. Continuing this cartographical journey, I now move on to focus on three characteristics that will allow me to triangulate the core coordinates of (critical) new materialist constellations, namely, transcontinentality, trans(/)disciplinary, and transversality.

2.3. The Shared Coordinates of Contemporary (Critical) New Materialist Constellations

The diversity of these new materialist philosophies and their interlinked assemblages is astounding. Therefore, I will now provide the reader with a mapping of the different strands of new materialist thought. First, however, an overview of the three aforementioned stellar coordinates that help group together new materialist philosophies in all their various forms, is needed. Naturally, these coordinates are necessarily entangled and co-emergent, however, they will be discussed separately here for the sake of logical argumentation.

2.3.1. Transcontinentality

The transcontinentality coordinate has to do with a rather straightforward claim, namely that new materialisms' roots are transcontinental and theoretically rhizomatic, as specified in Chapter 1, section, 1.2.2., and thus interconnected and still expanding. In other words, they have become so-called traveling theories,⁹¹ depending, of course, on the perspective one assumes. I specifically wish to underline this coordinate, as much of the recently published Anglo-American

⁹¹ The notion of “traveling theory” refers to postcolonial thinker Edward Said’s understanding of how theories travel globally, and to Braidotti’s take on the latter, which she combines with the idea of the transatlantic disconnection, which is said to have operated in philosophy (think of the Analytic/Continental gap) and feminist theory in the 1980s and 1990s (see Braidotti [1994] 2011). Said’s (1983) conceptualization takes place in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. For Said, “ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another” (226), but “such movement into a new environment is never unimpeded” (226). Theories, intellectual traditions, and concepts do not just travel, but, like the people who invented them, are caught up in webs of power, imbalances, and inequalities. Said differentiated four different stages in the traveling of theories, namely: “a point of origin” (226), at which an idea is conceived; “a distance transversed” (227), needed so that this particular idea can come “into a new prominence” (227) in a new time and location; “a set of conditions” (227) that is needed for the original idea to get accepted; to conclude, the idea is then “to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new position in a new time and place” (227).

secondary literature on the topic overemphasizes those new materialisms that have emerged (with)in their Anglo-American contexts, as if these are the sole representatives of their field. This for example becomes clear in theologian Catherine Keller and philosopher of religion Mary-Jane Rubenstein's (2017) volume on new materialisms, theology, and religious studies. Rethinking the "*stuff* of religion" (6) through various new materialist and other perspectives, the volume explores religion's relation to theology and science in an interdisciplinary, thought-provoking manner. The only new materialist authors represented within its pages, however, are vitalist thinker Jane Bennett and Barad. The citational politics of most of the included pieces are inadequate, as only Barad, Bennett, Whitehead (in relation to his religious process philosophy), and a few object-oriented ontologists are cited. Some minor footnote references to Bergson, and Deleuze and Guattari are included, but these have mainly been added by Bennett to situate her own work within the tradition of philosophical vitalism. The introduction does not touch upon the reasons why only these new materialisms have been chosen, nor do the editors take care to situate their take on new materialisms as such. This is a reductive move, as the field's heterogeneity is precisely what makes it so fascinating. Worse still, one could argue that this move installs a form of American cultural imperialism while canonizing new materialist theory. This tendency can also be observed in other instances of Anglo-American secondary literature (e.g., Ahmed 2008; Ellenzweig and Zammito 2017; Pitts-Taylor 2016), creating a situation in which

new materialist projects that are not rooted in the Anglo-American context, are erased.⁹²

In contrast to this reductive view, I argue that new materialisms are a continent-bridging enterprise, exactly because they are so cautious of reconstructing dichotomies. Braidotti's nomadic new materialism, with its crisscrossing transcontinental roots, provides us with a good example of this capacity. Her philosophy has been inspired by the philosophy of Genevieve Lloyd, which is rooted in the Australian context, and the corporeal feminisms of the 1980s and 1990s, represented by fellow Australian thinkers such as Moira Gatens and Elizabeth Grosz. Equally, Braidotti's work is rooted in the poststructuralism of Foucault and Deleuze's Spinozist philosophy, while Irigaray's sexual difference philosophy has played an important role in the development of Braidotti's own understanding of embodied subjectivity. Other sources of inspiration include the ongoing influence of the (already transcontinental) feminist critiques of psychoanalytic discourse and,⁹³ last but not least, the Anglo-American feminist

⁹² Two examples of new materialist work rooted in a Continental context come to mind here: First, cultural anthropologist Birgit Meyer pursues the entanglement of religious studies, theology, cultural anthropology, and new materialisms. In charge of the project "Religious Matters in an Entangled World" at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, Meyer and her team investigate the material turn in religious studies by means of anthropological research in Europe and Africa (for more information, see *Religious Matters* 2019). For a critical take on the possibility of such analyses of the materiality of religion, see also Bräunlein (2016). A second example is the "Localizing Feminist New Materialisms" project, led by Finnish feminist theorist Taru Leppänen. The project considers formerly unaddressed topics and fields, such as child development studies and musicology, via a new materialist lens (for more information, see *Localizing Feminist New Materialisms* 2019).

⁹³ Brennan (1989), for example, demonstrates how transcontinental these feminist critiques of (mostly Lacanian) psychoanalysis have always been. This most likely has to do with the fact that, even though Lacanian psychoanalysis never reached the same intellectual status in the United States and the United Kingdom as it did in France, psychoanalysis in the form of object relations theory did become widely adopted in the Anglo-Saxon context. In addition, many literary studies departments in the United States and the United Kingdom in the 1980s were influenced by the so-called *écriture féminine* movement, represented by Kristeva, Cixous, and Irigaray, as addressed earlier in section 1.1.1 in Chapter 1.

standpoint theoretical projects of Haraway's situated knowledges and Rich's politics of location. Although the Foucauldian and especially the Deleuzoguattarian undertones in Braidotti's philosophy are strong, there has nonetheless been a serious transcontinental traveling back and forth of theories, concepts, and ideas in her new materialism. The same could be said of Barad's agential realism; an oeuvre that has its origins in Anglo-American feminist science studies and epistemological critiques, but that is simultaneously rooted in rereadings of Foucauldian poststructuralism, the work of the Danish physicist Niels Bohr; the already overtly transcontinental feminist poststructuralism of Butler; and Levinasian-Derridean ethics—two thinkers that touch upon the Western and specifically European philosophical mechanisms of marginalization and exclusion. Of course, choosing to focus on the oeuvres of Braidotti and Barad in this dissertation also implies a particular reification of feminist philosophical canonization processes. Yet, at the same time, it is a well-motivated choice that stems from my own transcontinental academic training, which has its roots in (sexual) difference thinking (at Utrecht University in the Netherlands) and feminist science studies, critical pedagogies, and queer theory (at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in the United States). Moreover, this choice also relates to the fact that the global theoretical influence of these two philosophies cannot be denied at this point in time.

Another apt illustration of new materialisms' transcontinentality, and in this case, its impact, relates to how feminist science studies, and the critical new materialisms of Haraway and Barad in particular, have been picked up internationally. Although there is indeed a tendency to overemphasize Barad's agential realist work as representing new materialisms as a whole, one cannot deny

that the philosophies of both Barad and Haraway have successfully traversed the globe. Haraway's notion of situated knowledges has not only inspired Braidotti but has also been employed by Van der Tuin (2015a) and Australian sociologist Peta Hinton (2014), playing a pivotal role in the development of critical new materialist thought on the Continent. In fact, the Harawayan-Baradian optical metaphor and methodology of diffraction is no longer regarded as a rereading methodology confined within the (still very Anglo-American-oriented) field of feminist science studies, but has, for example, also been employed to reinterpret the Continental oeuvres of Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir (see Geerts and van der Tuin 2016b), and Ernst Cassirer and Gilbert Simondon (see Hoel and van der Tuin 2013). The principle of diffraction is also increasingly employed as an affirmative pedagogical tool via which to introduce a potentially more dialogical relationality in the classroom, uniting thinkers from very different disciplines and geopolitical contexts.⁹⁴ This broad, diverse usage makes diffraction a transcontinental, critical new materialist principle/methodology—one used to revitalize thinking, teaching, and (political) praxes.

2.3.2. Trans(/)disciplinarity

Another new materialist coordinate is that of trans(/)disciplinarity—a characteristic that remains largely uncontested (see Alaimo and Hekman 2008; Coole and Frost 2010; Dolphijn and van der Tuin 2012). Although new materialisms are certainly

⁹⁴ For a British example, see e.g., Hickey-Moody et al. (2016); for a distinctive South-African pedagogical example, see Bozalek et al. (2016) and Bozalek and Zembylas (2017). Braidotti et al. (2018) also put transcontinental diffractive pedagogies at the forefront, while Taylor and Bayley (2019) bring together different transcontinental diffractive applications.

more closely associated with the humanities, philosophy, and the arts, they are rooted and applied in a variety of different academic fields, such as science studies, sociology, physics, life sciences, educational and curriculum theory, and archeology, as well as in the often innovative crosspollinations between these fields. New materialisms, in fact, escape the confines of traditional academic disciplines, and do not adhere to specific academic and theoretical boundaries, as they are allergic to dichotomies—especially their potential re-establishment. This makes sense, as new materialist constellations imply an entangled rethinking of ontological claims (new metaphysics), epistemological issues (methodology), and political questions (political stance). All of these issues ultimately have a concrete ethical impact on the existential lifeworld, and critical new materialisms in particular instruct us to cultivate a situated ethical attentiveness toward this impact. Confining new materialisms to the strict limits of the monodisciplinary would therefore seem illogical.

The same is true for interdisciplinarity, or the (in this case even more suitable) notion of intra-disciplinarity.⁹⁵ As new materialisms imply a rethinking of the formerly separated domains of ontology, epistemology, ethics, and politics from the outset, confining new materialist thought to the labels of intra-disciplinarity or even multidisciplinary would be too limiting. Trans(/)disciplinarity, in the sense of cutting across and bridging various academic boundaries (as well as the project

⁹⁵ For more on the neologism of intra-action, see Barad (2007). In contrast to the more traditional idea of interaction, intra-action emphasizes the movement and co-constitution of phenomena in Barad's agential realist philosophy. For Barad, intra-action represents an agential realist take on causality and highlights the "mutual constitution of entangled agencies" (33). Agential phenomena do "not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action" (33). The idea of intra-action aptly expresses the mutual theoretical exchanges between two (or more) academic disciplines. We will touch upon this idea in section 2.4.2.2.

of epistemological gatekeeping), is more useful in this case, as it touches upon the entanglements that arise between different disciplines, and the changes that are subsequently engendered within such disciplines. In this sense, Barad's neologism of "trans/disciplinarity" seems to be an even more appropriate coordinate for these new materialist constellations, as it focuses on cuts and entanglements.

The concept of trans/disciplinarity was first articulated in an essay from 2001 and further elaborated upon in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Barad 2007) when theorizing agential cutting processes⁹⁶—processes that form the inspiration for the "cutting" that is going on in this neologism. In her 2001 essay, Barad focuses on agential literacy, or an agential realist take on contemporary feminist science studies pedagogies that disrupt our modern Western atomistic understanding of the world. As agential realism emphasizes the entanglements between theory and pedagogical praxes, agential literacy stands for a new critical pedagogical approach that argues science is always produced from within a situated and thus non-innocent, specific position. It also implies that we, as knowledge seekers and knowledge-producing agents, are already part of the world we inhabit, and therefore need to take up ethico-political accountability for the kind of knowledges we produce, and to whose benefit—which is a key question in the fields of feminist and decolonial science studies. Such a pedagogy, focused on accountability, is by its

⁹⁶ Agential cutting is central to Barad's agential realist philosophy and goes directly against the Cartesian mind/body or interiority/exteriority split, which has divided and cut up reality into subjects versus objects, which are then stuck in a hierarchical relation of mastery and domination forever. In an agential realist understanding of the world, however, we cannot speak of such hierarchically separated subjects and objects. Rather, phenomena are always already linked. They are "ontologically primitive relations—relations without preexisting relata" (Barad 2007, 148). In this model, there are no independent ontological entities. It is only through particular intra-actions that cuts are made through various apparatuses or "boundary-making practices" (Barad 2007, 148). I will come back to this in section 2.4.2.2.

very nature trans/disciplinary: It is both affirmatively grounded in, and different from, a multidisciplinary approach, as reflections with regard to the formation of knowledges and disciplines are focused on as well—something that is usually not explicitly focused on in multidisciplinary research. While there is an engagement with various disciplines and theories, the discursive and material aspects of doing (and teaching) science, together with reflections on ontology, epistemology, and ethics, are always already entangled. Hence, trans/disciplinarity focuses on the aspects of accountability inherent in processes of knowing, learning, and teaching, and this is emphasized by the slash—symbolizing the agential cut at work in trans/disciplinarity. Following Barad, we need to be accountable for the disciplinary cuts or boundaries that are being made when working with different disciplines, and to the “different histories and institutional structures of various disciplinary practices” (Barad 2001, 238).⁹⁷

Trans/disciplinarity thus stands for letting various disciplines speak to one another while combining them and being accountable for—and thoughtful of—the disciplinary cuts and boundaries one is making while doing so. This accentuation of self-reflexivity and accountability (concerning the production of knowledges and theory) can also be found in present-day new materialisms. To emphasize these processes of “cutting” and “bringing together,” I will slightly alter Barad’s term and use “trans(/)disciplinarity” in the remainder of the dissertation, with the slash

⁹⁷ Feminist theorist Nina Lykke has also addressed the subject of interdisciplinarity, multidisciplinary, transdisciplinarity, and what she calls post-disciplinary approaches in an essay from 2013. Although mainly talking about these issues in relation to contemporary feminist theory, like Barad, Lykke ([2011] 2013) mentions “[b]oundary work” (138) and discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the different approaches. Lykke’s articulation of feminist studies as a post-discipline resembles the Baradian trans/disciplinary approach, as she argues for “transversal openness and stable sites for transdisciplinary reflections” (Lykke [2011] 2013, 143), and even refers to Barad’s idea of agential cutting. For an earlier discussion of these topics, see also Lykke (2010).

symbol embodying the “cutting” part, and the parentheses the “bringing together” aspect.

2.3.3. Transversality

The third and final coordinate that contemporary new materialisms share, is transversality. This notion underlines how spaces intersect and tends to be depicted by a transversal line cutting across, and connecting, two parallel, separated lines. This coordinate has been highlighted by Van der Tuin and Dolphijn in their 2010 article, entitled “The Transversality of New Materialism,” as well as in their edited volume from 2012. I will follow in their footsteps here, while also touching upon the Deleuzoguattarian roots of this notion.

2.3.3.1. A Deleuzoguattarian concept

Transversality has a dual genealogy. Whereas some Deleuze and Guattari commentators see it as a fundamentally Deleuzoguattarian notion (albeit with distinctive Deleuzian roots; see Bryx and Genosko [2005] 2010), others attribute transversality to Guattari in the context of his critique of psychoanalysis (see Palmer and Panayotov 2016).

Articulated in *Molecular Revolution*, Guattari’s ([1977 and 1980] 1984) notion of transversality is relatively straightforward and intended as a critical take on Freudian transference—that is, how a patient’s emotions are often unconsciously transferred onto the psychoanalyst—and a critique of institutionalized psychiatry in France. In this form, transversality opposes the idea of a one-on-one, unconscious transference. With this notion, Guattari hopes to replace the latter with a more

collective therapeutic praxis that could eventually lead to political action, thus resulting in a therapeutic praxis that breaks out of its institutional constraints. For Guattari, transversality is opposed to vertical and horizontal power structures (i.e., pyramidal orders and compartmental hierarchical structures). He explains:

Transversality is a dimension that tries to overcome both the impasse of pure verticality and that of mere horizontality: it tends to be achieved when there is maximum communication among different levels and, above all, in different meanings. (18)

If a certain degree of transversality becomes solidly established in an institution, a new kind of dialogue can begin in the group: the delusions and all the other unconscious manifestations which have hitherto kept the patient in a kind of solitary confinement can achieve a collective mode of expression. (20)

Transversality thus represents a more reciprocal, non-hierarchical relationality between analyst and patient, or subjects in general. Philosophically speaking, transversality is way of thinking—and a tool—that transcends a certain logic of power, and that can be used to open up the institutions, theories, and praxes across which it operates.

This binary-destabilizing aspect is also part of Deleuze's ([1964] 2000) take on the concept of transversality. Simply put, for Deleuze, transversality goes against logocentric thinking and writing as a hierarchical, rationalist philosophy that has to be disrupted from the inside out while working through and beyond it. Furthermore, transversal thinking consists of connecting heterogeneous elements (e.g., old and

new philosophical concepts, general ideas, situations provoking certain theoretical thoughts) in a non-totalizing, crisscrossing manner.

All of these aspects are later combined by Deleuze and Guattari ([1980] 2005) in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Here, transversality remains non-logocentric in nature, and stands for a philosophical way of thinking and writing that cuts across dichotomies by means of more relational, zigzagging movements, picking up various assorted ideas and concepts along the way:

A line of becoming is not defined by points that it connects, or by points that compose it; on the contrary, it passes *between* points, it comes up through the middle, it runs perpendicular to the point first perceived, transversally to the localizable relation to distant or contiguous points. (293)

Transversal thinking and theorizing revolve around opening up still undiscovered pathways and connections while building on the foundations of the old, followed by moments of creative concept and theory development. In this sense, new materialist theory can be seen as embodying and performing transversality, as it is heavily invested in reinvigorating zigzagging processes of cutting across both formerly dichotomized splits—such as subject/object, nature/culture, matter/mind, materialism/idealism—and disciplines and their disciplinary boundaries, with the ultimate aim of producing something novel. Dolphijn and Van der Tuin (2012) conceptualize this as follows:

This is to say that new materialism not only allows for addressing the conventional epistemic tendency to what can be summarized as classification or territorialization (when a new trend appears on the academic stage, it is usually interpreted as a “class” that can be added to an existing classification of epistemologies), but also—and at the same time—for de-territorializing the academic territories, tribes, and temporalities traditionally considered central to scholarship. (100)

By rethinking the question of matter, new materialisms territorialize and simultaneously de-territorialize philosophical theories, disciplines, and concepts, transversally cutting across and bridging the pre-determined boundaries that have been built between the natural, the social, and the human sciences.

2.3.3.2. *“Newness,” founding gestures, and transversality*

Thus, new materialisms are primarily about these still evolving, boundary-crossing movements and, as can be gathered from this chapter, build upon preceding poststructuralist and materialist philosophical work. Hence a critical examination of the often cited “newness” critique of new materialist thought is needed. Are new materialist thinkers—if indeed, they can be that easily grouped together into a singular category—positioning themselves as doing something “radically new,” completely different and disconnected from earlier intellectual work? Or are the foundational anchor-points—or the “founding gestures,” as Ahmed (2008) calls them—more firmly rooted in what has come before and operating more transversally than such a critique claims?

Ahmed's (2008) article and analysis form the ideal starting point from which to elaborate on this "newness" critique.⁹⁸ Mostly targeting feminist new materialisms, and the philosophies of Elizabeth Wilson, Grosz, and Barad, Ahmed argues that these thinkers are guilty of overemphasizing the supposed anti-biology—and thus constructivist—attitude of feminist scholarship preceding the new materialist turn. Focusing upon the biological and matter, Ahmed argues that Wilson, Grosz, and Barad have allegedly turned matter into a "fetish object" (35)—that is, a purely theoretical object that one can either completely engage with, or totally disengage from. Ironically, this move is said to bring the material/cultural binary into effect once more. Furthermore, Ahmed interprets the philosophies of Wilson, Grosz, and Barad—and, in a way, new materialisms as a whole, as these thinkers are seen as the field's main representatives—as a neo-discipline that deliberately shatters any sense of continuity with the preceding cultural turn. Suggesting that these thinkers are trying to wholly transcend (and thus reject) that which has come before them, Ahmed claims they are participating in what she calls an "inflationary logic" (31); a logic that wrongfully increases the power of the so-called anti-biological feminists of the cultural turn. By doing so, and by employing the notion of "newness" as a means of self-positioning, the thinkers Ahmed engages with in her article are said to have created a false "narrative of forgetful feminism" (32).

In her book *Why Stories Matter*, feminist theorist Clare Hemmings (2011) investigates what kind of stories have been told about the history of Western

⁹⁸ A similar contestation can be found in Sullivan (2012). For other takes on this matter, see Bruining (2016) and Van der Tuin (2008a).

feminism and brings to the fore an argument that is similar to Ahmed's. Hemmings's study of the production of stories of progress, loss, and return in feminist theory and activism is unquestionably relevant in these so-called postfeminist times—i.e., the now popular neoliberalism-infused claim that the feminist movement has achieved its goals and thus has become obsolete. Hemmings argues that feminist new materialisms—reduced here to traditional analyses of women's socio-economic inequality and the Braidottian approach that foregrounds the body—solely consist of return narratives. This could be considered an oversimplification, as there are many more varieties of critical new materialist thought, and Braidotti's nomadic philosophy focuses on the transversal connections between past and present theories of, and on, matter. Hemmings states that these return narratives are centered upon a longing for the past, yet simultaneously aim to correct some of the deficiencies of past feminisms. Is materiality indeed reduced to “a trope” (114) in new materialist thought, as Hemmings claims, similar to Ahmed's fetishized matter? Or is the story more complex?

There is indeed a type of reinvigoration at work in new materialisms, as the aforementioned linkages between Haraway's work and the historical materialisms of Bloch and Benjamin, for instance, have shown (see section 2.1.2.). However, the revisiting of “the old” is not quite as nostalgic as portrayed by Ahmed and Hemmings. In fact, the continuity inherent in their discontinuity with the (feminist/philosophical) past is highlighted in new materialisms. In a way, this also changes the present-day outlook on the old—and hence the past itself. An example that zigzaggingly brings us back to Chapter 1 of this dissertation is Haraway's (1988) “Situated Knowledges,” in which she articulates her notion of feminist

objectivity (see section 1.1.2.2.3.). Haraway does so explicitly in relation to Harding's strong objectivity, and thus works through and beyond Harding's philosophy, not out of simple nostalgia, but out of respect for this tradition of epistemological critique. One could even argue that Ahmed and Hemmings are falling into the same trap they are accusing the aforementioned thinkers of. This is true for Ahmed in particular, who implies that Barad interprets Butler's (1993) *Bodies that Matter* in a decontextualized manner, falling prey to a non-situated reading praxis by failing to frame Barad's work in relation to Haraway's epistemological critique.

Contrary to what Ahmed and Hemmings suggest, the apparent "newness" or "neo-" prefix of new materialist thought is connected to certain "re-turnings" (Hughes and Lury 2013, 787), retroublings, and reinvigorations.⁹⁹ Or, as Dolphijn and Van der Tuin (2012) have also put it in relation to the previously addressed idea of transversality: "The 'new' in new materialism is not a term that accepts or continues a classificatory historiography of (academic) thinking that necessarily comes with a hierarchy or any kind of a priori logic" (89). Rather than a negation of the multitude of philosophical and critical theoretical works already out there,

⁹⁹ These "re-turnings" of (feminist) new materialist epistemologies are underlined by sociologists Christina Hughes and Celia Lury (2013), who revisit epistemologies of situatedness to construct what they call an ecological methodology and epistemology. Similar claims are made in more recent articles about the politics of new feminist materialism (see Davis 2014; Loewen Walker 2014). Barad (2014) also touches upon the idea of re-turning(s) in "Diffracting Diffraction." For Barad, re-turning consists of "a multiplicity of processes" (168) of reading and thinking that move beyond reflecting upon the past in a linear manner. Re-turning to something means "turning it over and over again—iteratively intra-acting, re-diffracting, diffracting anew, in the making of new temporalities (spacetime-matterings), new diffraction patterns" (168). This has also been underlined by Barad in an interview, in which the topic of diffractive thinking is introduced to underline how agential realist/new materialist philosophy through diffraction builds upon what has come before: "It is about taking what you find inventive and trying to work carefully with the details of patterns of thinking (in their very materiality) that might take you somewhere interesting that you never would have predicted. It's about working reiteratively, reworking the spacetime-mattering of thought patterns; not about leaving behind or turning away from" (Barad in Juelskjær and Schwennesen 2012, 13).

new materialist thought works through and beyond preceding philosophies in a critical-affirmative manner. Of course, this does not mean that Ahmed's point is not important: New materialist philosophers should be mindful of the materialist traditions that have preceded them and pay attention to praxes of self-positioning in order to avoid falling prey to fetishization or the (re)production of dangerously totalizing perspectives.

2.3.3.3. *Transversality at work in new materialisms*

To further support the claim that new materialist philosophies are working through and beyond what has come before, one may consider Braidotti's rereading of Irigaray's sexual difference theory. Meant to rectify the negative mirror role assigned by phallogocentrism to woman as the non-subject in Western philosophy and psychoanalysis, Irigaray's ([1974] 1985a, [1984] 2004) philosophy of sexual difference largely ends up repeating the dualistic logic it was supposed to deconstruct: In her construction of woman as a now speaking subject, Irigaray seemingly only makes space for two types of subjects, namely, female and male, thereby reifying a binary morphology and symbolic order and imaginary. This issue is tackled in an article by Braidotti (1993), in which she addresses the importance of constructing a situated feminist epistemology "to break out of the paralyzing structures of an academic style that has turned philosophy into a machine of intimidation and exclusion" (2), to then leave "the patterns of identification that the discipline of philosophy expects" (2) behind. While (dis)identifying with the male philosophers, completely in line with Irigaray and other *écriture féminine* writers, Braidotti simultaneously cultivates an attitude of (dis)loyalty toward Irigaray's

philosophie féminine.¹⁰⁰ She rereads and tweaks Irigaray's restrictive conceptualization of sexual difference—a notion originally meant to counter the phallogocentric erasure of femininity, motherhood, female subjectivity, and materiality.¹⁰¹ Braidotti's rereading can be seen as transversal in nature, pushing this sexual difference paradigm to its limits by describing three levels of sexual difference: the differences between men and women; the differences among women; and the differences within each female subject. Conceptualizing difference as something non-essentialist, non-binary, and non-pejorative, Braidotti opens up the idea of sexual difference by working through and beyond Irigaray's original articulation.

As also noted in Chapter 1, for Braidotti, feminist philosophy is preoccupied with reconciling the dissonances between the modern Western project of philosophy and epistemological-political feminist inclinations, while making sure not to reinstall the epistemic violence of the past. Thus, she is especially wary of potentially universalizing notions of womanhood and reinstalling new exclusions and binaries. In her own words:

The myth of Woman is now a vacant lot where different women can play with their subjectivity. The question for the feminist subject is how to intervene upon the notion of Woman in this historical context, so as to create new conditions for the becoming-subject of women here and now. (Braidotti 1993, 9)

¹⁰⁰ Braidotti (1991) herself refers to this kind of attitude as (dis)identification (228ff.).

¹⁰¹ Many have criticized Irigaray for holding on to a dualistic, heteronormative understanding of sexual difference (see Butler 1990, 1993; Deutscher 2002; Stone 2006). For more information about this debate, see Geerts (2016a).

Braidotti's new materialist take on sexual difference and the notion of "Woman" is transversal, as she attempts to open up these politically valuable ideas while thinking them anew in a contemporary context. This updating process is underlined again in *Nomadic Subjects*, in which Braidotti ([1994] 2011) defends her own nomadic new materialist take on sexual difference (as differing) as a valuable political-philosophical project. She advocates its geopolitical importance (because such a project can assist in the fight against global antifeminist rhetoric) and argues that it lays the foundations for a philosophy that concentrates on a split, ever evolving subject. Transversally updating Irigaray's sexual difference philosophy in a Deleuzoguattarian manner, the feminine is now "redefined as a moving horizon, a fluctuating path, a recipe for transformation, motion, becoming" (114).¹⁰²

To round up this section, my situated take on contemporary new materialist constellations consists of seeing new materialist thought as an enterprise of thinking and theorizing *anew*. Moreover, I argue it presents us with an updated metaphysics, a methodology, and a politics that cannot be thought independently from epistemological, ecological, and ethical crises and concerns. The three aforementioned new materialist coordinates of transcontinentality, trans(/)disciplinarity, and transversality characterize new materialisms as arising in a variety of different situations and contexts, and hence might present new materialist thought as something abstract. However, I hope that, in addition to this versatility, I have also been able to underline the latter's tangible situatedness and groundedness. This is demonstrated by principles such as situated geopolitical awareness, accountability, and fluidity.

¹⁰² See Dolphijn and Van der Tuin's (2012) discussion on "sexual differing" (15; esp. Chapter 7).

2.4. Contemporary (Critical) New Materialist Constellations and Interlinked Stellar Assemblages: A Critical (Digital) Cartographical Exercise

I continue my critical cartographical charting with an in-depth analysis, examined from my own continents-bridging location, of new materialisms while taking stock of the field as such.

2.4.2. (Critical) New Materialist Constellations Mapped: Some Illustrations

In addition to the aforementioned overview volumes, other, more focused secondary sources have been published. For example, political theorist Jane Bennett (2004), biopolitical philosopher Thomas Lemke (2015), and sociologist Debora Lupton (2018) have all sketched out their ideas on new materialist thought.

In anticipation of her later work *Vibrant Matter* (Bennett 2010), in her article “The Force of Things,” Bennett (2004) provides us with a variety of new materialisms. The philosophies of Foucault, Butler, and Irigaray are presented as illustrations of “body materialism” (348), as they highlight how cultural practices have an effect on the body. Other existing materialist philosophies are summarized as theories of “ancient materialism” (357), mostly propagated by Lucretius, who conceptualized the whole world as materialist; the “historical materialism” (357) of Marx and Adorno, introducing a normative social theory about the world and its subjects; and the neo-Marxist “aleatory materialists” (359), who still employ Marx’s normative theory of justice and freedom, yet simultaneously emphasize material indeterminism. Lastly, Bennett’s own Spinozist “thing-power materialism” (348) is addressed, combining vitalist philosophies with Bennett’s posthumanist conviction that the world consists of energy-laden, relational things—

rather than mere “objects” waiting to be instrumentalized. Two aspects are of interest here: First, Bennett groups together several poststructuralist thinkers as body materialists, thereby suggesting that there is a philosophical connection to be made between poststructuralist thought and the materialist layers present in new materialist philosophies.¹⁰³ Second, her conceptualization of worldly phenomena as lively things entangled in power relations matters, too, as this could be interpreted as a subtle critique of object-oriented ontological thinkers, who are often accused of disregarding power relations.

Lemke’s (2015) review essay takes a different turn, but similarly starts by rooting new materialisms in other, preceding forms of materialism. Lucretius, Hobbes, and Spinoza are all named, and Lemke transversally connects Dolphijn and Van der Tuin’s *New Materialism* (2012) with philosopher James K. Feibleman’s *The New Materialism* (1970) as two books that both propose a non-dualist materialist ontology. Like Bennett, Lemke thus accentuates the pluralist and transversal character of new materialisms. Lupton’s (2018) overview underlines a similar argument, presenting a synopsis that is more sociology-oriented and breaks down different new materialist interventions, such as vital materialisms, indigenous materialisms, diffraction-based theories, and so forth.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Here, Bennett is clearly trying to distinguish her posthumanist take on materialism from several body materialists, such as Foucault, Irigaray, and Butler, who remain overinvested in the human actor. Bennett may have a point—especially concerning the philosophies of Irigaray and Butler—but there are also other body materialisms out there, such as those of Haraway, Braidotti, and Barad, that hammer on the importance of analyzing the different values that have been attributed to human subjects because of their differing forms of embodiment while, for example, connecting the issue of embodiment to larger ecological issues.

¹⁰⁴ It is interesting to note that until quite recently, the field of sociology had not been impacted by new materialist thought that much (see e.g., Fox and Alldred 2017).

My own critical cartography is situated differently than those of the three authors presented above, but similarly underscores the diversity of new materialist thought. Guided by the three aforementioned coordinates, the historical linkages between “older” materialisms, such as historical materialist thought, power/knowledge, and (feminist) poststructuralist thought, will be accentuated. Influenced by my positionality as a feminist philosopher with a curiosity toward the entanglements between the epistemological, pedagogical, and the ethico-political, I will sketch out my map by using the following four extra anchor-points, which overlap with some of the most frequently asked questions, concepts, and themes in the Western philosophical tradition, namely: (1) (human) subjectivity and agency; (2) power and power relations; (3) the mind/body dualism and its connection to other major interlinked binary oppositions, such as subject/object and culture/nature; and (4) the levels of (and relationalities between) the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethico-political. These anchor-points will assist me in better visualizing the cuts and correlations employed.

2.4.2.1. Differentiating between new materialisms and critical new materialisms

I would like to start by further contextualizing the cuts that I have made so far between new materialisms as a whole, and critical new materialisms in particular. Thinkers such as Braidotti, DeLanda, philosopher Quentin Meillassoux, and cultural theorist Brian Massumi all fall under the umbrella of new materialist thinkers. However, when studying their philosophies more closely, it becomes clear that a thinker like Braidotti always puts the topics of power, power relations, and

ethico-politics at the center of her work—the political seems to matter.¹⁰⁵ This is not to say that thinkers like Meillassoux do not care about political matters. However, these thinkers do regard ontological questions as more significant, as they are all in their own way first and foremost occupied with rethinking (post)modern metaphysics. Highlighting a few passages and key notions from these thinkers' works should further illustrate this point.

2.4.2.1.1. New materialisms: From a focus on the ontological . . .

Meillassoux's ([2006] 2008) *After Finitude* can be seen as a continuation of the Humean-Kantian debate surrounding the contingency of the laws of nature. The book offers a critique of modern metaphysics, which is deemed too anthropocentric. It also critically expands on Meillassoux's teacher Alain Badiou's philosophy of the event. Additionally, *After Finitude* is most known for its critique of philosophical correlationism, or the post-Kantian postulate that human knowers can only know what is presented to thought itself, and can never engage with *das Ding an sich*, or the object on its own in reality:

Correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another. Not only does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object in itself, in isolation from its relation to the subject, but it also becomes necessary to maintain

¹⁰⁵ As also hinted at earlier, in this dissertation, I use “the political” in the broadest sense of the word—that is, as a combination of an attentiveness toward questions of social justice, an analysis of power relations and imbalances, political actorship, and a conceptualization of a concrete type of political theory and politics.

that we can never grasp a subject that would not always already be related to an object. (Meillassoux [2006] 2008, 11–12)

Correlationalists thus regard thought (here narrowed down to the epistemological) as always connected to being (the ontological), and vice versa. Meillassoux counters this correlationalist understanding of the world, which he feels is present in almost any post-Kantian philosophical enterprise. He does so by focusing on what correlationalists cannot theoretically grasp, but that to Meillassoux and scientific data clearly still exists, namely, the ““ancestral”” (19), pointing toward all of reality that existed before life on earth, and the ““arche-fossil”” (20), as the materials pointing at the existence of the ancestral. Labeling his own anti-correlationist philosophy as “speculative materialism” (62), Meillassoux then continues by laying the foundations of a new materialist metaphysics. This metaphysics is non-anthropocentric, because it moves the focus from the modern knowing human subject to the world as it exists beyond the human. It is also critical of the representationalism and subject/object divide that accompany the disproportionate appreciation of the human subject.

However, because of its preoccupation with rethinking the metaphysical outside and beyond correlationalism and anthropocentrism—precisely that which could make Meillassoux’s philosophy new materialist—it is unsurprising that *After Finitude* does not include any explicit power analyses or references to the political. Additionally, one could argue that, exactly because of this missing focus on the political, Meillassoux’s philosophy closely resembles speculative realism. While

this particular strand of thought is often conflated with new materialist philosophy, as I argue in the following, it in fact differs from it substantially.¹⁰⁶

Similar to Meillassoux, DeLanda, in his *A New Philosophy of Society* (2006) and *Assemblage Theory* (2016), criticizes representationalism and rethinks how the ontological has been analyzed thus far by explicitly expanding on Deleuzoguattarian thought. The first book mentioned here includes a basic articulation of DeLanda's (2006) assemblage theory.¹⁰⁷ Proposing a realist, non-essentializing ontological framework based on the Deleuzoguattarian notion of *agencement* ("layout") as articulated in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005), assemblage theory provides a tool with which to study society. It transcends atomistic-individualist interpretations of society, as well as the proponents of the so-called "*organismic metaphor*" (DeLanda 2006, 8), who claim that entities need to be analyzed holistically—which for DeLanda means that

¹⁰⁶ Philosopher Graham Harman (2010)—one of the founders of speculative realism—defines this strand of thought as follows: "These days, Speculative Realism is a well-known phrase with especial appeal to the younger generation in continental philosophy. . . . Rather than a unified school, Speculative Realism has always been a loose umbrella term for four markedly different positions: my own object-oriented philosophy, Ray Brassier's eliminative nihilism, Iain Hamilton Grant's cyber-vitalism, and Quentin Meillassoux's speculative materialism" (1). What seems to unite these thinkers, is their refusal of correlationalist philosophies, and their critique of the major roles that anti-materialism/idealism, humanism, and anthropocentrism have played in the tradition of Western philosophy. OOOs focus on similar issues, but also accentuate the idea that objects exist in the world independently. While Meillassoux's philosophy still seems to fall under the category of new materialism, Brassier and Grant, as well as Harman, are definitely speculative materialists. In *Philosophies of Nature After Schelling*, Grant (2006) retells the history of metaphysics by focusing on Plato's conceptualization of matter, taking up the position of transcendental materialism. While, in *Nihil Unbound*, Brassier (2007) puts forward a transcendental nihilism in which material meaninglessness is emphasized to criticize how philosophy has thus far ignored the topic of extinction. To complicate matters, Harman has recently started to refer to his work as immaterialist, as we will see shortly in section 2.4.3.1.

¹⁰⁷ Deleuzoguattarian assemblage theory has been picked up and elaborated upon, not only by DeLanda, but also by Massumi and Puar, whose work will be addressed in more detail in section 2.4.2.2. Assemblage theory addresses how materiality self-organizes, and how self-organization could be employed for more ontological conceptualizations of subjects and societies. According to Deleuze and Guattari ([1980] 2005), assemblages come into being via the processes of coding, stratification, and (re)territorialization.

interactions between entities ultimately do not get examined. Rather, all social subjects (humans, organizations, cities, etc.) are interpreted as moving, always reconfiguring assemblages, which in their turn have to be examined via their components and the relations between them (although they are never completely determined by such relations).¹⁰⁸

What differentiates DeLanda's analysis from the philosophies of Massumi and Braidotti, who expand on the Deleuzoguattarian view of the political as connected to the ontological,¹⁰⁹ is his ontology-focused engagement with power relations, inequalities, and so forth. This approach is continued in *Assemblage Theory*, in which DeLanda (2016) touches upon, among others, social, linguistic, martial, and scientific assemblages, albeit seemingly never moving beyond the level of the ontological. DeLanda states that "the ontological status of all assemblages is the same" (19) and that they "populate the same ontological plane" (19), meaning that his assemblage theory boils down to a materialist flat ontology. Flat ontology can be broadly defined as the philosophical idea that there is only one ontological type and, hence no differentiations should be made between, for instance, "humans" and "objects."¹¹⁰ This is where things become difficult, as in contrast, critical new

¹⁰⁸ Although this may seem like a small detail, the way in which DeLanda theorizes relationality makes his new materialist philosophy differ strongly from, for example, Barad's agential realism (see e.g., Barad 2007) and Latour's ANT (see e.g., Latour 2005)—two models that will be discussed in 2.4.2.2. and 2.4.3. The contrast with Latour's more relational ontological model is interesting: DeLanda's assemblages are made up of parts that are always independent of their relational network, whereas Latour's philosophy is built upon networks of entities, in which entities are defined through their relationalities with, and between, one another.

¹⁰⁹ In an interview with Marxist Antonio Negri, Deleuze claimed that his books with Guattari were political in nature (see Deleuze and Negri 1990). For more information with regard to the potential political aspects of Deleuzoguattarian philosophy, and the contrast with, for example, Derrida, who is often more immediately seen as a political thinker, see Badiou (2009) and Patton (2011).

¹¹⁰ The notion of flat ontology was first coined by DeLanda (2002) in *Intensive Science & Virtual Philosophy*: "While an ontology based on relations between general types and particular instances is hierarchical, each level representing a different ontological category (organism, species, genera), an approach in terms of interacting parts and emergent wholes leads to a flat ontology, one made

materialists put an emphasis on multifocal analyses of power and how to transform certain power relations.

Moreover, a striking difference must be noticed in relation to the aforementioned issue of correlationalism: Anti-correlationist thinkers such as Meillassoux and DeLanda are so radical in their critiques of representationalism that a fully autonomous world of phenomena or objects arises. By contrast, critical new materialisms are suspicious of representationalist thought, emphasizing the possibility—and even the necessity—of encountering the world and worldly affairs from within the world. Critical, attentive, and careful engagement is key here, as became clear when looking at Haraway’s focus on cultivating grounded hope, Braidotti’s interest in the virtual, and Barad’s articulation of knowing in being, to give but a few examples. In all of these critical new materialist philosophies, the ontological and the epistemological are not separated from one another, nor are beings cut off from their worldly environment. I will return to this major contrast when addressing speculative realism and object-oriented ontological thinking.

2.4.2.1.2. . . . toward a more multifocal (critical) approach in Massumi and Braidotti

Massumi’s (2002) *Parables for the Virtual*, together with some of his more recent works, differs from DeLanda’s new materialism, as the political plays a larger role.

exclusively of unique, singular individuals, differing in spatiotemporal scale but not in ontological status” (47). For DeLanda, a flat ontology is an ontological model in which there is only one ontological type, namely, individuals resulting out of a process of individuation. Both species and organisms, which he refers to in this particular passage, are regarded as individuals. I will come back to the topic of flat ontology in section 2.4.2.1.2., as many critical new materialists have criticized this idea, as well as the additional ontological theses put forward by speculative realists and object-oriented ontologists.

While interested in the conceptualization of a process philosophy (which spotlights the metaphysical and its subset, the ontological) in relation to the fields of cultural studies and philosophy, Massumi offers a study that is equally critical of representationalism. However, starting with an examination of material bodies (the topics of embodied subjectivity and identity) and that which enables them to move or inhibits their freedom (the topics of power and movement), Massumi's outlook on the world and what culturally produced artefacts could entail, differs from Meillassoux and DeLanda. Refusing both naive realism and radical social constructivism, Massumi "put[s] matter unmediatedly back into cultural materialism, along with what seemed most directly corporeal back into the body" (4). Furthermore, he proposes a process philosophy of intensities, flows, and affects.¹¹¹ Two aspects in particular make Massumi's process philosophy new materialist and proto-political, namely, his deconstruction of the modern mind/body split, and his conceptualization of affect.

Following Spinoza, Bergson, and Deleuze, by emphasizing affects and the intensities they provoke and chaperone, Massumi (2002) reconceptualizes

mind and body, . . . volition and cognition, at least two orders of language, expectation and suspense, body depth and epidermis, past and future, action and reaction, happiness and sadness, quiescence and arousal, passivity and activity . . . not as binary oppositions or contradictions, but as resonating levels. (32)

¹¹¹ Affect in this particular context does not fully correspond to emotion, per Spinoza's and Massumi's claims, as affects are "irreducibly bodily and autonomic" (Massumi 2002, 28) and arise during encounters between subjects and/or beings before consciousness and consciousness-propelled emotions come into play.

This line of thought is continued in his later work *Semblance and Event*, in which Massumi (2011) coins the concept of “thinking-feeling” (11). Presenting another dualism-deconstructing idea, this mode of awareness helps in the analysis of what “pure experience” (Massumi 2011, 11) or direct bodily perceptions entail. This thinking-feeling capacity is not solely preserved for humans, as Massumi’s (2002) posthumanist commentary critiques poststructuralism’s overemphasis on the human actor as the creator of the experiential/cultural:

It is meaningless to interrogate the relation of the human to the nonhuman if the nonhuman is only a construct of human culture, or inertness. The concepts of nature and culture need serious reworking, in a way that expresses the irreducible *alterity* of the nonhuman in and through its active *connection* to the human and vice versa. Let matter be matter, brains be brains, jellyfish be jellyfish, and culture be nature, in irreducible alterity and infinite connection. (39)

The process philosophical aspect of Massumi’s materialism is revealed again here, via an emphasis on the relationalities between different kinds of energy-carrying or vitalist beings.

Yet, what implications does this relational ontological perspective, which is critical of both anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, hold for the conceptualization of the political? This question is of importance to the works of DeLanda and Braidotti, and, in fact, any other new materialist thinker, because of the decentralization of the human subject. This decentralization process—already prefigured by the death of “Man” in poststructuralism—engendered a myriad of

new questions, among which the question of the potential reconfiguration of the modern human subject as a political actor is of major importance. This question is connected to another objection against new materialist thought, namely, that new materialisms are apolitical, and lack any investment in concrete power analyses and/or reflections on the topic of freedom/constraint. Clearly, this contestation stands in stark contrast with the aforementioned claims by Coole and Frost, and Braidotti (see sections 2.2.1.1 and 2.2.2.1) that new materialist thought is a political stance. Gender studies scholar Stephanie Clare's essay from 2016 is tone-setting in this debate.

Clare (2016) namely argues that many, particularly feminist, new materialisms appear to prioritize the ontological over the epistemological, thereby abandoning the Foucauldian power/knowledge stance that links the epistemological to the political. This is an overgeneralizing statement, similar to Clare's other claim that new materialist thought as such does not situate its foundations well.¹¹² As anticipated in Chapter 1 and demonstrated earlier in this chapter, and in contrast to Clare's claim about the overprioritization of the ontological in new materialisms, Foucault's poststructuralism—accentuating the interconnectedness between the epistemological and the political—has been one of new materialisms' most

¹¹² Again, Clare makes a very broad claim here, as several new materialist authors clearly indicate their situated locations and philosophical heritages. Here, one may think of Bennet (the vitalist tradition as a whole, and Bergson and Thoreau in particular), Massumi (the Deleuzoguattarian tradition), and Braidotti (sexual difference theory and feminist psychoanalysis critiques, Foucault, antihumanism, and the Deleuzoguattarian tradition). Clare seems to make this claim in support of a political argument regarding the apparent lack of engagement between new materialisms and indigenous thought. While this is indeed a thought-provoking point, one could also bring in Haraway's (1988) claims about the general situatedness of knowledge production and wonder if situated, responsibly produced—and thus non-totalizing—theories of, and on, the world are not supposed to be limited and non-exhaustive. A more situated critique similar to Clare's has been articulated by Todd (2016), who, from within her positionality as a Canadian indigenous feminist, addresses questions of marginalization in Western academia, the ontological turn in anthropology, and the apparent appropriation of certain indigenous ideas in Latour's philosophy.

important influences. This leaves us with the crucial question of what counts and what does not count as political in new materialist thought and consequentially, what such a new materialist politics could look like. I will come back to this set of queries when addressing Massumi's and Braidotti's understanding of the political.

First, however, I would like to comment on the aforementioned discussion on political agency. The political theorist David Chandler spearheaded the debate with his 2013 piece, entitled "The World of Attachment." Here, Chandler (2013) addresses the relational ontologies operating behind various new materialisms, posthumanist theories, and actor-network theories (ANT).¹¹³ These ontologies are focused on embedment—that is, "we" as human actors "are" just as much in the world as "things," and therefore we are no longer able to really transform the world around us. According to Chandler, this loss of anthropocentric privilege also implies a loss of "human" interventionist power. Therefore, he argues that these philosophies do not provide us with enough material to keep the idea of the modern human subject alive—a subject that is both freely acting, and at times constrained. Furthermore, the fact that these philosophies are "relational" (put between brackets here, as Chandler is mostly focusing on flat ontology-promoting philosophies, which are more reductive than relational in the critical new materialist sense) and thus no longer characterized by a subject/object divide that keeps the world neatly and categorically organized, gives rise to an alleged crisis of political agency.

Mostly focusing on Bennett (2004, 2010) and Latour ([1991] 1993, 2005, [2012] 2013), Chandler (2013) then argues that these philosophies, due to their

¹¹³ Political theorist Paul Rekret (2018) recently published a piece consisting of similar arguments, while focusing on the works of Meillassoux, Bennett, and Barad.

radical posthumanist interpretation of the world and the beings in it, have completely abandoned the human subject as a meaning-creator and political actor: “The world appears to lack the imprint of human construction and therefore to be ‘post-human.’ We are reborn or born-again in a world in which we appear to be without the signposts of modernity” (520). Latour and Bennet, now regarded as the sole representatives of new materialist philosophy, are then said to have installed a “distributive theory of agency” (523), so that non-human things should now also be regarded as equally agential as human actors. Chandler argues that it is this move of redistributing agency, together with disrupting the categories of subject/object, that limits human agency in general, and human political agency in particular. This narrow focus on Bennett and Latour means that Chandler starts from a limited theorization of what new materialist philosophy consists of. Furthermore, he selects flat ontology-based theories in which the human actor is merely one actor among others. It is therefore unsurprising this leads Chandler to claim that human subjects are no longer capable of acting upon the world in new materialist ontologies: Rather than picking a new materialist theory with a thicker conceptualization of the human-as-actor, Chandler seems to have intentionally selected the more vitalist, actor-network theories or ANTs, in which the power of the human actor is relativized. This probably has to do with the popularity ANTs within the field of political theory, and particularly in the context of international relations. Taken together with the idea that everyone and everything is “relationally” entangled (but, actually, in these flat ontological frameworks, reduced to one and the same ontological type, which is not the same as “relationally” connected) in these supposedly posthumanist, new materialist theories, the foregoing leads Chandler to conclude

that we, as human actors in the world of new materialism, no longer possess “a sense of freedom” (525), but are living in “a world of blind necessity” (525) and total, incomprehensible complexity. For Chandler, in such a context, politics is no longer about “freedom” (525) but has instead become “merely a question of responsiveness—of ethical responsibility” (525). Necessity, pure relationality, and unlimited agencies abound.

There is definitely some truth in Chandler’s argument regarding the notion of politics-as-responsiveness here, as new materialisms are indeed tweaking the traditional emancipatory politics of justice and rights models in order to find answers to present-day issues and crises, which are now of a previously unimaginable complexity. However, not *all* new materialist thinkers adhere to the kind of power-effacing flat ontological framework that Chandler reads into all of new materialist and posthumanist thought, while only looking at very specific varieties of the latter strands. Many new materialist thinkers—and especially critical new materialist thinkers—do not want to abandon “the world of truths and power” (Chandler 2013, 533), as they are not necessarily relativists,¹¹⁴ nor defenders of flat ontology.¹¹⁵ Furthermore, the increased complexity of the world

¹¹⁴ I find Chandler’s claim in this respect particularly troubling: Many poststructuralist/postmodernist philosophies have been similarly accused of relativism in the past, and it is particularly worth noting that a feminist thinker such as Haraway has also been accused of being a postmodernist relativist. Haraway (2000) herself has replied to her critics as follows: “Part of the discomfort comes from the fact that if you talk about the relentless historical contingency of experiencing yourself, or of crafting scientific knowledge, people hear relativism or pure social constructionism, which is not what I am saying at all. But that’s the kind of reduction that keeps getting made” (133). If Chandler understands the whole of new materialist thought to be relativistic, then he is surely misinterpreting the deconstruction of realism/social constructivism inherent in new materialisms and failing to take more critical new materialist thought into account, which highlights social justice-oriented values and principles.

¹¹⁵ Chandler’s critique has been addressed, both by Coole (2013), and Cudworth and Hobden (2018). Coole (2013) touches upon the redistribution of agency among non-human and even inanimate entities in several new materialist ontological frameworks, while hammering home new materialisms’ pluralism. Furthermore, she addresses the ethical and political impacts of new

as presented in various new materialist ontological frameworks does not imply that political action—or any other type of action, for that matter—has become impossible. The human subject as a position(ality) is not discarded as such in the works of, for instance, Braidotti and Barad. In fact, the eco-ethic-political orientation of these two philosophies both tweaks *and* underlines the existence of human subjects as political actors, reconfiguring this formerly all-powerful subject on the basis of her/his entanglements with the world, environment, and beings.

Taking the issues that Clare and Chandler raise here as our starting point, let us now examine how both Massumi and Braidotti push Meillassoux's and DeLanda's focus on the ontological in a different direction. Massumi primarily unfolds his own thoughts about these subject matters in *Politics of Affect*, a collection of interviews published in 2015. Massumi (2015) here addresses what he calls “ontopower” (64)—a type of “pre-emptive power . . . mobilized by the contemporary military machine” (64) that combines aspects of surveillance, capitalist suppression, and military interventionist power—and affect as “protopolitical” (ix). He presents a Deleuzoguattarian micropolitics¹¹⁶ of affect that indeed

materialist thought, while emphasizing that the role of the human actor is not necessarily negated by such a rethinking of agency. In *The Emancipatory Project of Posthumanism*, Cudworth and Hobden (2018) elaborate on the issues of agency and the potential political orientation of new materialisms and posthumanist thought in particular, while pleading for a posthumanist emancipatory politics that takes the increased complexity, multiple crises, the decentralization of the human subject, and the centralization of what they call “the creaturely” (134) into account. It is interesting to note here that Cudworth and Hobden stick to Chandler's interpretation of new materialist thought and focus on Latour's ANT and Bennett's vitalist philosophy. The debate concerning new materialisms and the political has also been picked up by Washick et al. (2015).

¹¹⁶ Many of the Deleuzoguattarian new materialist thinkers, such as Massumi (2002, 2015), but also Braidotti (2013), Van der Tuin (2015a), and Saldanha (2006, 2012), adhere to such a micropolitical model. Deleuze and Guattari ([1980] 2005) themselves touch upon this topic in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In “Micropolitics and Segmentarity,” they elaborate upon a Foucauldian power analytics, while differentiating between the macropolitical and the micropolitical. For Deleuze and Guattari, “everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a *macropolitics* and a *micropolitics*” (213). They sketch out the micropolitical by explaining the difference between Nazi or communist totalitarian states on the one hand, which are given form by a “rigid segmentarity” (214), and the

differs from the grand political theories of modernity. Because affect is not seen as purely human-focused, and is concerned with various embodied multidirectional intensities, flows, and orientations, it is at times rather difficult to grasp what this micropolitical model consists of. It is definitely not meant to be a crude counter-politics of some sort; Massumi's micropolitics of affect can still be "fascistic or progressive; reactionary or revolutionary. It all depends on the orientation of the transindividual desires speculatively gestured into motion" (209). Or, more precisely: "Micropolitics, affective politics, seeks the degree of openness in any situation, in hopes of priming an alter-accomplishment. Just modulating a situation in a way that amplifies a previously unfelt potential to the point of perceptibility is an alter-accomplishment" (58). More traditional analyses of power obviously still matter in Massumi's micropolitics, as structures and acts of oppression and injustice are still all around us and have to be interrogated. However, at the same time, this political model aims to go beyond this narrow interpretation of politics. It wishes to measure the intensities that exist between subjects; how the bodies of subjects in encounters become "in" or "out" of tune; how small, temporary fluctuations in established power relations arise—fluctuations that a more traditional political

"microfacisms" (214), or the more ungraspable flows of desire, ideological assumptions, perceptions, power, etc. that are operating behind such states on the other. Like Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari expand the power and reach of the political: with their analysis of micropolitics and, first and foremost, of microfascisms, they demonstrate how we, as subjects, are not only controlled by politico-legal institutions and their more visible frameworks of power. Rather, subjects are also controlled by—as well as being resistant to—micropolitical techniques of governance, such as surveillance, self-disciplining, hidden norms and curricula, and so forth. Such a micropolitics moves beyond the human political actor, as things such as the natural environment, but also other forces, such as the economic, are seen as relevant and even agential in such a model.

model focused on emancipation, such as that of Clare and Chandler, might not be able to grasp so easily.¹¹⁷

Massumi's micropolitics is thus fully grounded in rethinking the ontological as relationally entangled—and not necessarily “flattening,” reductive—processes, and therefore challenges many forms of dualism. This is precisely where Braidotti's Deleuzian, critical new materialist philosophy enters the picture, bringing together the realms of the ontological and the political, as well as the epistemological and the ethical. By venturing far beyond an examination of the ontological, Braidotti (1991, [1994] 2011, 2013) takes both the claims of Foucauldian power/knowledge, and Butler's (1993) different levels of bodily mattering, seriously. Motivated by the ethico-political and a hitherto negative conceptualization of difference as *differing-from* (and not difference as, for instance, *adding-to*), Braidotti criticizes the idea that every phenomenon on the negative side of the binary pole is to be exploited and often even devoured in order to provoke processes of change. While this undertaking is, to say the least, quite emancipatory, it indeed ventures beyond the modern human subject as the sole actor, as nature and our manipulatable body are also seen as mattering.

¹¹⁷ An example of the potential efficacy of such a more micropolitical-oriented analysis of power shifts is demonstrated in Geerts and Van der Tuin (2013). See also Puar (2012), who comments on Massumi's narration of the Super Bowl event. Massumi (2002) talks about the increase in domestic violence experienced on the day of the Super Bowl, describing the change of intensities between the television, the spaces of the kitchen and living room, gender roles, and the bodies that are present. In this passage, Massumi deconstructs the codification of domesticity and (re)codes patterns of violence. In her piece on the potential complementarity of intersectional thought (which is identity-based) and assemblage thinking (which is Deleuzoguattarian in origin, and moves toward a more micropolitical, flow-based analysis), Puar (2012) sees this micropolitical analysis as valuable, but at the same time also remains skeptical of the practical implementations and implications of such a “nonrepresentational, non-subject-oriented politics” (50). Puar's own Deleuzian-inspired assemblage materialism will be addressed in the main text shortly in section 2.4.2.2.

This ethical side to Braidotti's Deleuzoguattarian nomadic philosophical project was already explored in *Transpositions* (2006b), which forms the final addition to Braidotti's trilogy, consisting of *Nomadic Subjects* ([1994] 2011) and *Metamorphoses* (2002). *Transpositions* spotlights a call for an affirmative, accountable ethics of becoming, care, and sustainability that promotes resistance against the biotechnological dangers of our time. It then makes a comeback as a foundation for her later work, *The Posthuman* (2013), in which more ethico-political matters are addressed. By emphasizing that "we" are in all of this together, a new materialist, social ontological model is presented. This posthumanist model revisits our Western individualist metaphysics, accentuating how life in all of its different and differing materialized forms is relationally connected because of a shared vitalist embodied "fleshiness" (Braidotti 2013). Yet the analysis does not stop there, as this analytical model is propelled by a situated ethico-political critique of how every fragment of lively matter—labeled as "zoe . . . the dynamic, self-organizing structure of life itself" (Braidotti 2013, 60)—in this globalized, neoliberal biotechnological society is currently at risk of becoming monetarized, sold, exploited, and even destroyed once it loses its given utilitarian value. Braidotti's model of care ethics, as elaborated in *Transpositions*, is here transformed into an even more critical posthumanist, and thus human-decentering model of "[z]oe-centred egalitarianism" (Braidotti 2013, 60). This model goes against the differential treatment of differently embodied beings, which are located within an "eco-philosophy of multiple belongings" (49). Ironically, in the eyes of extraction-based capitalism, these beings are becoming more and more "equal," as they can all be equally "mined" for profit. This concrete awareness of power

relations, inequalities, and exploitation on both the micro- and the macrolevels,¹¹⁸ combined with ecological awareness, thus runs through both *Transpositions* and *The Posthuman*, giving this nomadic new materialism a clear critical component, ranging from critiques of the negative theorization of difference; the exclusivism associated with the ideology of Western humanism; the manipulation and commodification of genetic and other bodily materials; European and global xenophobia, anti-immigration sentiments, and neo-fascism; to environmental destruction. Moreover, these critiques are conceptualized in a grounded, affirmative manner, meaning that Braidotti does not stay within the all too easy realm of negative critique. Rather, and similar to Haraway, as discussed in section 2.1., she constructs a critical posthumanist politics of affirmation, grounded in situated hope. Toward the end of *The Posthuman*, Braidotti herself neatly and poetically captures all the facets of a potential critical new materialist take on worldly affairs:

[N]omadic posthuman thought yearns for a qualitative leap out of the familiar, trusting the untapped possibilities opened by our historical location in the technologically mediated world of today. It is a way of being worthy of our times, to increase our freedom and understanding of the complexities we inhabit in a world that is neither anthropocentric nor anthropomorphic, but rather geopolitical, ecosophical and proudly *zoe*-centred. (Braidotti 2013, 194)

¹¹⁸ Braidotti also accentuates the importance of micropolitics in an equally Deleuzian fashion as Massumi. See for instance *Transpositions*, in which she suggests that “nomadic politics is not about a master strategy, but rather about multiple micro-political modes of daily activism or interventions on the world” (Braidotti 2006b, 205). Braidotti does not want a modern type of supposedly universalist emancipatory politics; today’s world is too complex for such a “grand” master narrative. Rather, hers is an eco-ethico-politics of the embedded, situated subject that, by means of resistance, critique, and affirmation, can respond to certain events and engender potentially positive outcomes. Daily acts of intervention thus count, yet, because of the ecological orientation inherent in her micropolitics, it also carries with it macrolevel consequences and effects.

Nomadic critical new materialist thought is affirmative, critical, and posthumanist. Moreover, by employing a *Zeitgeist*-adjusted, critical-creative vocabulary and toolbox, it sees and examines the world as relational and in all of its complexity.

Thus, to bring this section to a conclusion, it has hopefully become clear that cuts can, and should, be made between various new materialist constellations. In addition to the philosophies of Meillassoux and DeLanda, one could also think of John Protevi (2009, 2013),¹¹⁹ Ian Buchanan (2000), and Gary Genosko (2012, 2016), who, like Massumi, have to be situated in the more Deleuzoguattarian branch of new materialist thought. Also included are Adrian Johnston (2013), whose transcendental materialist work is comparable to that of Meillassoux, and François Laruelle ([1996] 2013) and Katerina Kolozova (2014)—speculative realists who are nevertheless often also grouped under the umbrella term of new materialist thought. All of these thinkers clearly prioritize a rethinking of the ontological. However, there are also new materialisms that explicitly draw upon their shared heritage of gender and feminist studies, queer theory, postcolonial and critical race studies, and earlier materialist and standpoint theoretical studies. These disciplines and fields spotlight the non-innocence of theorizing, and the importance of examining power relations and struggles. However, this does not mean that those new materialist projects with a primary focus on reconceptualizing the ontological should be discarded. Quite to the contrary, they remain valuable, occupied with transversally rethinking metaphysical models from the past, notions of subjectivity and agency,

¹¹⁹ Especially Protevi seems to be closer to Massumi's micropolitics of affect and is thus further removed from the more apolitical strand of new materialist thought as propagated by, for instance, Meillassoux. Protevi's (2009) *Political Affect* demonstrates this quite well. Here, Protevi sketches out a what he calls a "bodies politic" (vii) to denote how bodies, politics, and forces of politicization interact in "socially embedded and somatically embodied affective cognition" (vii).

and classic dualistic ontological interpretations of our increasingly complex lifeworld. Staying true to my own feminist and queer studies-inspired legacy, I do, however, think that critical new materialisms provide us with an even thicker ethico-political account of the world and several of its contemporary crises and issues. Keeping the characteristics of critical new materialist philosophies in mind, there now follows a plotting of these various constellations and their main proponents.

2.4.2.2. Critical new materialisms: Feminist science studies-rooted new materialisms, Deleuzian (nomadic) new materialisms, and others

Chapter 3 of this dissertation will rest heavily upon the aforementioned cut between critical new materialisms, and new materialisms for its productive, diffraction-based intervention, aiming to philosophize two events of terror and their impact from the ground up. The presentation of these various critical new materialisms offered below will thus be painted with broad strokes, as some of these philosophies make a reappearance in the following chapter.

2.4.2.2.1. Technoscientific and ecofeminist new materialisms

Haraway's boundary-crossing eco-ethico-political feminism has been referenced numerous times throughout this dissertation for its importance in paving the way for critical new materialisms. Furthermore, her philosophy has inspired other prominent feminist science studies scholars¹²⁰ and philosophers of science.

¹²⁰ This dissertation has already referred to the field of feminist science studies on several occasions, specifically in relation to Haraway's political epistemological framework and her notion of

Particularly inspiring in this respect are Haraway's accentuation of situated, embodied, and accountable subject positions and knowledge production; the cultivation of a more socially just science and grounded hope; and the deconstruction of various dichotomous structures, such as the splits between subject and object; the human agent and other (formerly considered as) non-agential beings; and nature and culture.¹²¹

These lines of thought have been further elaborated upon in the following theoretical works: Barad's (2003, 2007) agential realism, which, as I will shortly point out, is a continuation of Haraway's technoscientific critique. The ecological projects of Shotwell (2016) and Puig de la Bellacasa (2017), Native American feminist science studies scholar Kim TallBear's (2013) critique of the technoscientific (mis)construction of genetics, race, and indigeneity, and ethnographer Natasha Myers's (2015) *Rendering Life Molecular*, which examines the material power of protein models, also are Harawayan in nature. Anthropologist Anna Tsing's (2005, 2015; see also Tsing et al. 2017) ecofeminist commentary on global ecological connections and matsutake foraging within a capitalist world in ruins of course has to be mentioned as well. Other Harawayan science studies works

technoscience. For a diverse overview of the field of feminist science studies, see Åsberg, Koobak, and Johnson (2011), Mayberry, Subramaniam, and Weasel (2001), and Wyer et al. ([2001] 2014). For more on intersectional, queer, and postcolonial/decolonial takes on feminist science studies, see e.g., Cipolla et al. (2017), Lyons, Parreñas, and Tamarkin (2017), and Pollock and Subramaniam (2016).

¹²¹ This deconstruction of the nature/culture split resulted in the idea of naturecultures (see Haraway 1997a, 2006a) and the material-semiotic actor (Haraway 1988). Haraway's concept of naturecultures has also been theorized by Latour ([1991] 1993) in *We Have Never Been Modern*, but then in the context of his critique of the nature/culture split. Although Haraway seems to opt for a more radical, relational notion of naturecultures, Latour's critique of the way in which modernity attempts to preserve a state of purity by means of the nature/culture split is both similar and thought-provoking: For Latour, "nature-culture" (7) dominates Western modernity and science, yet while the "Moderns" (10) hold on to this split, it is at the same time obvious that there are only "hybrids of nature and culture" (11) out there, which are anxiously contained through processes of translation and purification; processes that have to remain separate at all times.

are: Ethnographer Deborah Bird Rose's (2004, 2011) ethics of entanglement-focused—or relational, cross-species ethical—books on environmental change and its impact on Aboriginal peoples and the endangered dingo; critical race studies scholar Neel Ahuja's (2016) *Bioinsecurities* which, although critical of posthumanist narratives, can be interpreted as a feminist science studies-based analysis of how American imperialism has supported racialized species and disease management; anthropologist Kristina Lyons's (2016) research on human-soil relations in the Colombian drug wars; neuroscientist Deboleena Roy's (2018) *Molecular Feminisms*, which brings together feminist theory and neuroscientific questions; Wilson's (2015) new materialist rethinking of biological data in relation to gut bacteria and depression; *Ghost Stories for Darwin* by Banu Subramaniam (2014), a book that touches upon eugenics, ecology, and the construction of differences via multispecies being. And then Frost's (2016) *Biocultural Creatures*, which conceptualizes humans as biocultural creatures, thereby deconstructing human exceptionalism within life sciences; plus, Alaimo's (2016) ecofeminist critique of the Anthropocene through the concept of transcorporeality. Philosopher Catherine Malabou's ([2004] 2008, [2009] 2012) Derridean plastic ontology and cerebral plasticity also belongs here, but is more Derridean than Haraway in nature, although nature and culture are analyzed together here as well. There are of course many more examples that could be given here, but each and every one of these projects engages with distinctly Harawayan elements that push them further toward critical new materialist horizons. They do so with a clear attentiveness attuned to contemporary ecological-economic crises, and a sensitivity toward matters of gender, race/ethnicity, and queerness.

This Harawayan heritage is particularly evident in Barad's (2003, 2007) agential realist philosophy—a label preferred by Barad over “new materialist,” as agential realism places stronger emphasis on the scientific realist foundations of her project.¹²² Barad's critical philosophical project revolves around the desire to engage with Western scientific knowledge production in a more accountable manner, and to rethink the philosophical vocabulary of subjectivity, agency, anthropocentrism, power, etc., through an explicitly posthumanist, agential realist lens. For example, in “Posthumanist Performativity,” Barad (2003) lays out the foundations of her quantum physics-influenced project by questioning the primacy of the cultural turn (and its prioritization of the linguistic-discursive and the representational) and reconceptualizing performativity in a posthumanist manner. Performativity is not only linked to the coming into being of the human subject and the (gendered-racialized) materialization of bodies (i.e., Butler's [1993] poststructuralist performativity), but is also about the materialization processes of “all bodies” (Barad 2003, 810) and the “material-discursive practices” (810) that engender differences between human bodies and those bodies that have not received the status of being “fully” human.

Following in Haraway's footsteps, Barad (2003) deconstructs a series of categorical oppositions by proposing an agential realist framework with which to examine the world, our scientific knowledge praxes, and the aforementioned processes of materialization. Agential realist philosophy moves away from a Western atomistic metaphysics, the Cartesian mind/body split, and the

¹²² The following passage on Barad is a rewritten version of part of my QE field statement (see Geerts 2016b).

accompanying somatophobia. It critically interrogates our deep-seated cultural belief in representationalism and our tendency to “thingify” that which surrounds us, pushing us toward a relational understanding of the “intra-action[s]” (815) between subjects and objects. These intra-acting subjects and objects are more accurately conceptualized as “phenomena” (815). In such a framework, they start out as interconnected phenomena before becoming separated through agential cutting—distinctions and differences thus emerge through both being and doing. Barad’s philosophy thus requires us to shift our traditional individualistic metaphysical perspective, and to rethink notions such as agency, subjectivity, interaction, and causality, as well as how we understand ourselves (i.e., identity and difference), the world, and how we relate to it. Seen through such a lens, the world is no longer “composed of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but ‘things’-in-phenomena” (817), as everything is relationally interconnected before the aforementioned processes of agential cutting happen (or are undertaken).

This creates an interesting contrast when compared to the aforementioned anti-correlationist philosophy of Meillassoux, which positions the world as a separate, unknowable phenomenon. Conversely, in agential realism, the world and the entities in it are not split apart. They are neither passively waiting for us to unravel their secrets by means of scientific instruments and models that are said to have the power to represent reality as it is, nor entirely socially constructed. By bridging scientific realism and social constructivism, agential realism conceptualizes the world as consisting of multiple intra-acting phenomena, which can thus only be understood by looking at the material-discursive practices by which they are engendered, and with which they are entangled. This

conceptualization also impacts the nature/culture split: materiality and nature, now regarded as agential, are actively involved in the processes of their own becoming—as also proposed by Haraway (1988, 1997a, 2016).

Moreover, in such a relational model, humans, non-humans, and the world itself are all entangled: “‘We’ are not outside observers of the world. Nor are we simply located at particular places in the world; rather, we are part of the world in its ongoing intra-activity” (Barad 2003, 828). Such an intra-active being-of-the-world-in-its-intra-active-becomings obviously has far-reaching consequences for how “we” operate in the world, which is why Barad, again in a similar way to Haraway, focuses on accountability in “Posthumanist Performativity” (2003) and later on in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007). This accountability not only relates to agential cutting or boundary-making practices—as differences come into being in such practices—but also to how “we” act both upon and within a world that “we” are intra-actively becoming with. If “we” were to realize this, would “we” then, for instance, still act so easily against the interests of the environment—which we are, after all, entangled with?

To further expand on the aforementioned idea of agential cutting: Agential cutting goes against the Cartesian mind/body or interiority/exteriority split, which has cut up reality into “subjects” that can then master and exploit the “objects” that are “out there.” However, in an agential realist understanding of the world, phenomena are always already linked. They are “ontologically primitive relations—relations without preexisting relata” (Barad 2007, 148), and it is only through particular intra-actions that cuts can be made and certain entanglements become clearer. This is where the notion of the apparatus comes in: Apparatuses—a

reworking of Foucauldian discursive practices and Bohr's idea of the apparatus—
“are the material conditions of possibility and impossibility of mattering” (Barad
2007, 148). Apparatuses are not solely microscopes or telescopes, used to
“objectively” discover and measure scientific facts and events. Rather, they also
consist of a multitude of material-discursive engagements, praxes, and practices
with and within the world they co-constitute in its endless becoming. For Barad
(2007), apparatuses are “a dynamic set of open-ended practices, iteratively refined
and confined” (167), and create different cuts, over and over again, so that different
entities may arise. These cuts are both material and discursive, and hence engender
inclusions and exclusions by leaving “marks on bodies” (Barad 2007, 178). These
are precisely the processes and markings to which Barad wants “us” to be
accountable. Now that apparatuses are considered both part of the world, and world-
making, the positions of the neutral scientific observer and innocent bystander have
become untenable. It is our responsibility to be accountable to the marks that are
being made on certain bodies; the distinctions that (often forcibly) come into being
between bodies; and the fact that some bodies seem to matter more than others.
From an agential realist perspective, and again reiterating Haraway's philosophy,
“we” are thus obliged “to intra-act responsibly in the world's becoming” (Barad
2007, 178).

These ethical reverberations are echoed throughout *Meeting the Universe
Halfway* in connection to the aforementioned idea of knowing in being. Barad
(2007) conceptualizes the idea of an “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” (185) to more
accurately analyze the entanglements between being, knowing, and doing. This
model culminates into a posthumanist, Levinasian-Derridean “ethics of worlding”

(392) that radically pushes and opens up our ideas of responsibility as response-ability to everything that matters—or indeed, should matter. We will come back to this idea of response-ability in Chapter 3 and the epilogue of this dissertation.

2.4.2.2.2. Nomadic new materialism and other Deleuzoguattarian critical new materialisms

Of course, there are other critical new materialisms—those that, for instance, are not rooted in the Anglo-American tradition of (feminist) science studies. Some of these materialisms have been inspired by the Deleuzoguattarian tradition, and Deleuze and Guattari's (see e.g., Deleuze [1968] 1994; Deleuze and Guattari [1991] 1994, [1980] 2005) rereading of the more Continental minoritarian philosophies of Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Bergson. In addition, some have been influenced by (feminist critiques of) Lacanian psychoanalysis, poststructuralist thought, or the *écriture féminine* movement and other bodily materialisms. While these particular critical new materialist authors continue to focus on rethinking agency and subjectivity, the relation between the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethico-political, and how power operates in society, they do so while employing different conceptual-theoretical toolboxes and genealogies.¹²³ Braidotti's (2002, 2006b, [1994] 2011, 2013, 2019) aforementioned nomadic new materialism is but one example. Drawing influences from feminist thinkers such as Irigaray, Lloyd, and Gatens, Braidotti's contemporary Grosz (1994, 2004, 2005) is another new materialist that has brought the domains of the biological, the ecological, and the

¹²³ For a more detailed overview of feminist Deleuzian authors, see also e.g., Colebrook and Buchanan (2000).

socio-cultural together by means of incorporating Spinozist, Darwinist, Derridean, and Deleuzian thought. Especially Grosz's (2017) work *The Incorporeal* is of interest here, as it disrupts the idealist/materialist dichotomy by claiming that incorporeal forces are the conditions of all types of life on earth.¹²⁴

Other thought-provoking scholars who combine a similar focus on the ecological with a Deleuzoguattarian and often feminist touch are Claire Colebrook (2014, 2015), who develops a thorough posthumanist critique of the Anthropocene; and the posthumanist thinker, Patricia MacCormack (2012) who, in *Posthuman Ethics*, rethinks ethical relationalities and the modification of bodies through a Deleuzian framework. Also worthy of mention here are media theorist Jussi Parikka (2014, 2015), who combines environmental questions with a Deleuzian investigation of our digitalized media ecologies and the waste that is created to bring digital apparatuses to life; and the Deleuzian thinker Adrian Parr (2017), whose *Birth of a New Earth* touches upon various technoscientific, militaristic, and colonial questions surrounding the Anthropocene. Clearly, these authors are as critically new materialist as the previous group, equally wishing to provoke societal change and starting from specific eco-ethico-political concerns emanating from the Anthropocene and technoscientific practices. However, these thinkers use different frameworks to do so and, like true Deleuzians, inevitably mix their analyses of the ontological with examinations of the (bio-/necro-)political.

¹²⁴ One could also create another subset of critical new materialisms here, as the oeuvres of Grosz, Barad, and Kirby are anchored in Derridean philosophy. This becomes clear in the digital cartography accompanying this chapter (see section 2.4.3.1.) as well as in Appendix A.

2.4.2.2.3. *Vitalism, assemblage theory, and animacy theories*

There is yet another set of critical new materialist constellations at play that, again, stress the necessity of rethinking perennial philosophical questions through the lenses of various vitalist posthumanist theories and the poststructuralist, Butlerian question of which bodies come to matter within certain standards of cultural intelligibility, and why. Of course, this is not to say that the latter question is *not* addressed in the foregoing critical new materialisms. Thinkers such as Haraway, Braidotti, and Barad are invested in a more affirmative conceptualization of difference and are thus closely linked to the oeuvres mentioned in this section. Bennett (2010), Chen (2012), Chen and Luciano (2015), queer disability studies scholar Peggy Kafer (2013), Puar (2007, 2017), and critical race studies scholar Kalindi Vora (2015), however, prioritize who gets to count as a human subject today via an increased focus on the inhuman, and processes of dehumanization. They each do so by delving into specific variations of vitalist theory that go against modern mechanistic interpretations of the world and its beings by claiming that all that lives, shares a certain life force. Furthermore, this conception of a shared life force allows us to establish classifications among more animate, less animate, and inanimate beings—a classificatory scheme of which these scholars are, of course, suspicious. Drawing heavily upon nineteenth-century anti-positivist *Lebensphilosophien*¹²⁵ and thinkers such as Bergson, Lucretius, Nietzsche, Spinoza, and (in the case of Bennett

¹²⁵ Although life philosophy and vitalism conceptually differ from one another, *Lebensphilosophie*—literally translated as the “philosophy of life”—is often seen as combining elements of both (see e.g., Reill 2005). For a more detailed overview of vitalism’s tricky origins (because these philosophies ended up being exploited by, and in favor of, the Nazi [bio-/necro-]political regime) in the *Lebensphilosophien*, see Carstens and Geerts (forthcoming).

and Puar) Deleuze, they tackle the topics of life, bodies, subjects, and the processes of material-semiotic signification in which these embodied subjects are entangled.

In *Vibrant Matter*, Bennett's (2010) conceptualization of agency accentuates non-human forces and things, such as chemicals, trash, and metal, whereas Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007) and *The Right to Maim* (2017) present a new materialist focus on how dehumanization processes come about from the perspective of critical queer and race studies. By drawing on Massumi's assemblage-focused micropolitics (which, as articulated earlier, is Deleuzoguattarian in nature), Puar shows how race/ethnicity, queerness, and disability form an assemblage that nation-states use to biopolitically manage and dehumanize populations. Bennett follows the more Spinozist-Bergsonian line of vitalism that runs through Deleuze's and Guattari's works.

Chen (2012), Chen and Luciano (2015), Kafer (2013), and Vora (2015)¹²⁶ could also be read as proponents of critical new materialist philosophy, as they are equally interested in tracing and examining the dynamics of dehumanization, abjection, and expulsion while simultaneously aiming to transform this problematic dynamics into more just ways of living together. They do this, not by emphasizing vitalist or assemblage-based models, but through an engagement with animacy theory. This specific framework consists of queer and critical race theoretical influences, bio-/necropolitical reflections, and posthumanist thought, and helps to interpret the labels that have been put on bodies that are perceived as non-conforming. Chen, Kafer, and Vora offer a comprehensive explanation of issues

¹²⁶ For a project that follows up on Vora's 2015 book, see Atanasoski and Vora (2019). This 2019 book focuses on what the authors call technoliberal capitalism, its racial-colonial logic, and (posthumanist) (bio-/necro-)political outcomes.

such as environmental racism, the interactions between race/ethnicity, class, sexuality, and disability, neoliberal population management, and the reduction of human subjects to biocapital.¹²⁷

2.4.2.2.4. Critical new materialisms and critical race studies: The “missing” link?

Chen’s (2012) *Animacies*, together with the aforementioned works of Kafer and Vora, brings another subset of critical new materialist thought to mind. In the following, I consciously make a specific cut within critical new materialist thought and group this subset of race-focused critical new materialisms together, so as to better engage with the critique that certain topics of interest are prioritized over others in new materialist scholarship. It is important to note that, outside of this cartographical plotting, these theories are fully interlinked with the foregoing critical new materialisms, as will be further revealed in the digital critical cartography that has been designed to accompany this thesis (see section 2.4.3.1).

Recently, various thinkers have highlighted potential tensions between new materialisms and critical race studies. The best-known contestations—or perhaps more accurately, cautionary voices—are those of posthumanist critical race studies

¹²⁷ It could be argued that my reading of Kafer’s and Vora’s works as an engagement with animacy theory is a little farfetched. Although it is true that Kafer mostly engages with queer theory, both Kafer and Chen—the latter explicitly using animacy theory—deconstruct the labels that have been used to dehumanize certain subjects in contemporary society in similar ways. They do so by unpacking the categorical logic behind such labels, and by engaging with Edelman’s (2004) queer fucking of, and with, the future (i.e., by means of queer theory and queer, and thus non-heteronormative, sex acts) through the deconstruction of the paradigm of the white, able-bodied, middle-class symbolic “Child” (representing heteronormative futurity). While Vora’s work, too, does not explicitly refer to animacy theory, she does make use of the notions of vital energy and biocapital, and is intellectually related to Puar and Cooper because of their shared (post-)Foucauldian philosophical heritage (i.e., analyses with a clear focus on the exploitation and disciplining of matter and a relational analysis of power as both disabling and enabling).

scholar Zakiyyah Jackson (2013), political scientist Chad Shomura (2017), feminist theorist Kyla Wazana Tompkins (2016), and critical theorist Alexander G. Weheliye (2014). These four thinkers urge us to exercise greater caution when centering posthumanist concerns and non-human subjects, as there are still myriad ongoing processes of dehumanization that specifically affect racialized—and also gendered, sexualized, classed, etc.—subjects today.

Tompkins (2016) is especially critical of new materialist thought, as it as a whole appears to reaffirm a new, false, universal image of the subject.¹²⁸ Indeed, there exist several philosophies, labeled as posthumanist and/or new materialist, that do not demonstrate adequate geopolitical awareness, and dangerously “horizontalize”¹²⁹ existing power relations—an issue to which we will return shortly, in the context of object-oriented ontologies (OOOs). However, despite these critiques—and in agreement with Shomura (2017), who nuances Tompkins’s critique by pointing at already present countercurrents in new materialist thought that do focus on analyses of, for instance, power and racialization processes—I nevertheless feel that there are many new materialist theorists who tackle difficult socio-political issues, such as race/ethnicity, difference(s), the (re)rise of fascism and nationalism, and processes of dehumanization and othering, consequentially engendering fruitful dialogues between new materialisms and critical race

¹²⁸ For a response to Shomura’s more nuanced interpretation of new materialist thought, see Tompkins (2017).

¹²⁹ The notion of horizontalization here expresses perfectly what is happening in several so-called flat ontologies: if all objects are treated as autonomous entities, and the relationalities between them are horizontalized, the impression is given that these objects have always been equal, leading to the normalization and even naturalization of power differences.

studies.¹³⁰ Chen's (2012) work has already been mentioned in this context, and Barad (2003, 2007), Braidotti (2002, 2006b, [1994] 2011, 2013, 2019), and Grosz (1994, 2004, 2005, 2017) further demonstrate that an affirmative reconceptualization of all kinds of differences that were formerly perceived as negative, is central to this strand of thought.

There are also thinkers who, primarily working from within critical race studies, rethink race as a material construction, thus reformulating the nature/culture dichotomy that has often plagued debates surrounding race and ethnicity, but also gender and sexuality, and the signification processes connected to them. While Chen (2012) and Puar (2007, 2017) do so via assemblage and animacy frameworks, Asian American studies scholar Rachel C. Lee's (2014) *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America* combines posthumanist insights with a new materialist articulation of race to examine the biopolitical construction of Asian American bodies. Arun Saldanha (2006, 2007, 2012; see also Saldanha and Adams 2012) undertakes a similar project by re-ontologizing race via a Deleuzian new materialist framework. Critical geographer Kathryn Yusoff's (2018) *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* examines narratives on geography and the Anthropocene by combining critical race studies and new materialist perspectives, while scholars such as the philosopher Achille Mbembe ([2013] 2017) and critical sociologist Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007, 2017) engage in intricate analyses of blackness and Western philosophy's anti-black symbolic and imagery, which has materialized such bodies as abject from the outset. All of these thinkers, each in their own way, use a new

¹³⁰ For an argument similar to that of Shomura—but then with a focus on the notion of white ignorance and its impact on the production of theory in general, and specific forms of new materialist thought in particular, see Carrington (2017).

materialist approach via which to delve into the categorical construction of race. Now conceptualized as a biological fiction, they demonstrate how race continues to be an influential social category and identity marker, which is often used in bio-/necropolitics.

Of course, the fact that there are contemporary thinkers who are building their critical race studies-oriented projects upon new materialist foundations does not mean that new materialist thought as such does not have its limitations. When surveying the field of critical new materialist philosophies in particular, it becomes clear that the topic of race, and the category of ethnicity in particular, together with their linkages, as well as the fields of postcolonial and decolonial studies, need to be discussed in greater detail. Furthermore, it is important to note that many of the authors mentioned above are not routinely mentioned in overview lists of new materialisms. This necessitates an increased awareness toward the currently ongoing canonization processes of, and within, new materialisms, to avoid reifying both old and novel marginalizations and exclusions.

2.4.3. New Materialisms' Interlinked Assemblages: Some Examples and Complications

Before concluding this chapter, I would like to underline the existence of various interlinked assemblages of thought that correlate to, and often overlap with, contemporary new materialisms. In doing so, I focus on the problematics of power—or an attentiveness to designing a power analytics that assists in examining existing power relations—in connection to flat ontological frameworks.

With the open-ended, rhizomatic mapping presented in this chapter, I hope to demonstrate that critical new materialisms matter because of what I refer to as their eco-ethico-political and social justice-bringing transformative essence. Moreover, I aim to emphasize their reinvigoration of the four aforementioned leitmotifs—namely, (human) subjectivity and agency, power and power relations, the mind/body dualism and its connection to other binary oppositions, and the levels of (and relationalities between) the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethico-political. Looking back at some of the secondary literature on the topic—for example, Chandler’s piece on the political actor in new materialisms, and Tompkins’s aforementioned article—it becomes clear that different varieties of new materialist or interrelated thought are often grouped together, leading to rather unnuanced interpretations of this strand of thought. Contrary to some perceptions, new materialisms are not solely represented by thinkers such as Latour and Bennett. Furthermore, there definitely are scholars who are trying to bring critical race studies and new materialist approaches together. That said, in the passages that follow, I will create cuts between what I consider to be new materialist philosophies on the one hand, and interrelated—but not exactly new materialist—fields of scholarship on the other. While some of the theoretical assemblages I introduce here partially intersect with interests that are central to new materialist theories, their genealogical histories and/or attention to power relations and constructing a power analytics differ.

Affect theory, or the affective turn, certainly echoes some of new materialisms’ core principles. This strand of thought accentuates affective, unconscious forces—and thus not necessarily human forces, as noted in relation to

Massumi's work—that arise during encounters between beings, beings and events, and beings and their environments. Affect theory therefore does not only deconstruct the modern belief in the subject's rationality and autonomy, but it also transcends various forms of representationalism that were emphasized within the cultural turn, as many of these subconsciously felt affective forces precede linguistic articulation and theorization.¹³¹

Nevertheless, affect theory and new materialisms do not fully equate. Manning (2006), Massumi (2015), and Puar (2007, 2017) could for instance be regarded as new materialist affect theorists, as affect theory and Deleuzoguattarian thought often intersect. However, many contemporary affect theorists appear to be making even more use of the vocabularies of (critiques of) psychoanalytical theory, poststructuralist philosophy, and queer theory. For example, Ahmed's (2004) *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* explores the politics of emotions and affects from a queer phenomenological viewpoint, but then from within a more poststructuralist framework, as the cultural is still prioritized.¹³² Political theorist Deborah B. Gould's (2009) *Moving Politics* is also worth considering here, as Gould investigates how emotions and affects mobilized and materialized the political activism of ACT UP in the 1990s; as is the work of queer theorist Eve K. Sedgwick (2003), who addresses queer sexuality and politics through an analysis of various forms of affect. Cultural studies scholar Elspeth Probyn's (2005) *Blush* explores societal shame in its physical, material manifestations, whereas cultural theorist

¹³¹ For a detailed overview of the field of affect theory, see also Gregg and Seighworth 2010 and Stewart 2007.

¹³² Arguably, Ahmed transcends this emphasis on the cultural in her analysis of the stickiness of objects, emotions, and labels in this book, which could be seen as proto-new materialist because of the emphasis on the bodily and the materiality of these labels are thought together.

Lisa Blackman (2012) combines perspectives from affect theory, neuroscience, and new materialisms to conceptualize phenomena such as hypnosis, telepathy, and the placebo effect. Finally, Lauren Berlant's (2011) *Cruel Optimism* offers a queer and trauma theoretical analysis of the affective impacts of the decline of social mobility and the belief in individual progress in the United States through the idea of cruel optimism. Most of these works indeed engage with at least some of the key concepts of (critical) new materialisms, such as a deconstruction of the Cartesian mind/body split, and allowing embodied affects to speak for themselves. They also tend to involve a micropolitical analysis of affective flows of energy. However, affect theory's genealogical, conceptual apparatus still seems to differ from that of new materialist thought. A further exploration of both the preexisting and virtual entanglements between these two theoretical assemblages would thus prove to be productive.¹³³

Other interrelated assemblages that deserve to be mentioned here are the expansive fields of transhumanist and posthumanist theory. Whereas transhumanist Hans Moravec's (1999) *Robot* leans heavily on a technoscientific optimism that would be questioned by Haraway and Braidotti as they immediately would take the realistic downsides of the technoscientific into account, philosopher Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's (2009) critical Nietzschean take on transhumanism—verging on critical posthumanism—would be more appreciated. Transhumanist thinkers Max More and Natasha Vita-More's (2013) volume on transhumanist philosophies zooms in on potential technoscientific methods of human improvement. Together with

¹³³ A variety of crosspollinations between new materialisms and affect theory have already taken place (see e.g., Golańska 2017a; Malinowska and Gratzke 2018).

literary critic Katherine Hayles's (1999) *How We Became Posthuman*, Cary Wolfe's (2009) *What is Posthumanism?*, and philosopher Francesca Ferrando's (2019) *Philosophical Posthumanism*, this volume provides a useful mapping of the intricate differences between transhumanist and critical posthumanist thought.

One final related field that I would like to mention here is that of the more process-orientated philosophies, such as those of Manning (2009) and Stengers (2011), who have both been inspired by the Deleuzian and Whiteheadian notions of becoming and the processual. As seen throughout this chapter, various new materialist philosophies are characterized by a processual understanding of a world in becoming (such as the more Deleuzoguattarian critical new materialists, who regard identity as processual, or Bennett's vitalism, which accentuates process-oriented thought). However, a conceptual-genealogical distinction has to be made between more Whiteheadian and Deleuzoguattarian process philosophies. Whereas the latter appear to be more grounded in Spinozist, Nietzschean, and Bergsonian monist understandings of the world, Whiteheadian philosophies tend to be more theological in nature.¹³⁴

Importantly, there are a variety of other interesting turns that I could have chosen to spotlight here, such as the ontological turn in anthropology, which slightly overlaps with object-oriented ontologies or OOOs (see Viveiros de Castro [2009] 2014; Holbraad and Axel Pedersen 2017; Lather 2016). Other possibilities include (among many others) both the non-human turn, and the related turns toward animal studies and (queer) crip studies (see Despret 2016a, [2012] 2016b; Freccero 2018;

¹³⁴ For an overview of more Deleuzoguattarian and Whiteheadian process philosophies with a focus on object-oriented ontological thinking, see Faber and Goffey (2015).

Kalof 2017; Jaquette Ray and Sibara 2017; Weil 2012). Also of potential interest are the Bataillean, nihilist inhuman turn (see Land 2011; Negarestani 2014a, 2014b); the ecological and ecocritical turns (which are also related to critical new materialisms; see Bignall and Braidotti 2019; Goodbody and Rigby 2011); the turns toward the digital humanities and the posthumanities (see Åsberg and Braidotti 2018; Bernico and Kölke 2016; Braidotti 2019; Burdick et al. 2012; Gold 2012). Instead, I have opted to zoom in once more on critical new materialisms' eco-ethico-political characteristics to round up both this mapmaking exercise, and the chapter, as I am interested in the critical—yet also affirmative—potential of critical new materialisms. I do so by making use of the self-designed digital critical cartography that accompanies this dissertation (for example, see Appendix A).

2.4.3.1. (Critical) new materialisms: (Non-)conceptualizations of power relations problematized and digitally depicted

The focal point of this chapter's final section brings us back to the aforementioned cut between a more general new materialist focus on the ontological, and a specifically critical new materialist interest in moving beyond such a limited ontological analysis. As has hopefully become clear, I argue against the overgeneralization and reductive flattening out of new materialist philosophy by creating a space for what I refer to as critical new materialisms, located mostly within the cracks of the new materialist canon that is currently materializing. Bringing about this specific cut matters, as there are two major interconnected issues at stake: First, we have to address the potential rephallogocentrization of contemporary new materialist thought, as the field is often represented as solely

consisting of male-identified philosophers—in this case, speculative realists and object-oriented ontologists—who pay less attention to socio-political transformation. Second, we must avoid the dangerous reduction of new materialist thought to something apolitical, or even anti-political—a reduction that in these complex times of crisis is more dangerous than ever, as it would at least partially decapacitate critical theorists from theoretically and politically intervening.

Gathering from the emphasis that is put on worldly affairs, the cultivation of grounded, situated hope, non-innocent theorizing, and the strong eco-ethico-political engagement of thinkers such as Haraway, Braidotti, and Barad, it is evident that there is something quite feminist—in the political sense of the word—at stake when plotting these new materialist and critical materialist cartographies. These eco-ethico-political accents do not seem to be as present in the new materialisms of Meillassoux and DeLanda; philosophies that are often marked as speculative realist. Although I do not wish to provide yet another mapping—this time of speculative realist philosophy, OOOs, and ANTs—I do want to contextualize these three subsets of thought, further elaborating the issue of flat ontologies and power analytics.

The term “speculative realism” was coined during a conference at Goldsmiths, University of London in 2007 to denote the anti-correlationist philosophies of Brassier (2007), Hamilton Grant (2006), Harman (2010), and Meillassoux ([2006] 2008). It comprises a collection of new materialisms-related philosophies that have been widely read beyond the confines of academia.¹³⁵ The

¹³⁵ Think of the many blogs that have promoted speculative realist thought thus far, such as *Speculative Heresy* (2019), *Naught Thought* (2019), the popular journal *Collapse* (2019).

foregoing philosophies are united by their philosophical realism and the idea that there is a world “out there” flourishing on its own and fully independent from human subjects-as-knowers. Although these philosophers differ in their interpretations of materialism,¹³⁶ it is evident that they are pushing Meillassoux’s anti-correlationalism to the extreme, resulting in a disconnect between human knowers and the world on the one hand, and a philosophy that is mostly interested in the ontological on the other.

The speculative realist movement has engendered various subbranches, such as object-oriented philosophy (OOP), coined by Harman (2010, 2016), and the increasingly prominent already-discussed OOOs, supported by, among others, Ian Bogost (2012) and Timothy Morton (2013, 2016). This subdiscipline rejects anthropocentrism, correlationalism, and the over- and undermining of objects in the world.¹³⁷ Instead, the assumption that the world consists of independently existing objects is prioritized.

Levi Bryant’s (2011) ontology in *The Democracy of Objects* is worth mentioning here, too, as it neatly summarizes some of the goals of OOOs. The term represents Bryant’s version of an ontological framework in which he states that there is only a single type of being: objects. This means that the human subject is conceptualized as merely one among a myriad of possible objects, including bright

¹³⁶ Most of these thinkers identify with some level of materialism. In his more recent work, however, Harman (2016) opts for an immaterialist position in order to “do justice to the reality of objects” (15) and to get away from contemporary new materialisms that are “overmining” (15) objects, their reality, and the relationalities between them. For another overview of the field of speculative realism, see Bryant, Srnicek, and Harman (2011).

¹³⁷ In the context of OOO, “overmining” refers to the overinvestment in an idealist philosophy that claims everything is present in the mind of the human subject, whereas “undermining” applies to social constructivist theories that claim that only cultural realities count. See e.g., Harman 2016 for more information.

objects, dim objects, dark objects, and rogue objects. The decentralization of the human—which is key to Bryant’s onticology—guides us toward the aforementioned dilemma of flat ontologies. Bryant describes the outcome of such an onticology as follows:

In shifting from a dual ontology based on the nature/culture split to collectives, onticology and object-oriented philosophy place all entities on equal ontological footing. Rather than two distinct ontological domains, the domain of the subject and the domain of the object, we instead get a single plane of being populated by a variety of different types of objects including humans and societies. (24)

Similar to Harman, Bryant (2011) unthinks the status of the human within Western theoretical thought by accentuating a “*subjectless* object” (7). However, while this entails an interesting disruption of the subject/object binary, this does not mean that onticology—or any other type of OOO—is now fully comparable to critical new materialisms.¹³⁸ Even though Bryant speaks of a “democracy of objects” (7)—as all objects are regarded as equal in his onticology—his conceptualization of the world (and those of other OOO thinkers), specifically his critique of the subject/object,

¹³⁸ Bryant’s approach is similar to that of Latour, whose ANT forms another linked theoretical assemblage that often gets grouped together with new materialist thought yet differs from it by overemphasizing the ontological (see Latour 2005, [2012] 2013 [2017] 2018; Latour and Weibel 2005). Notably, ANT consists of a multitude of approaches: Apart from Latour’s viewpoint, Callon and Law (1997) can also be seen as representatives of ANT, while the philosopher Annemarie Mol (2002) is often viewed as a feminist post-ANT thinker. ANT itself came into being via Latour’s work in science and technology studies (STS), which closely resembles the sociology and philosophy of science, and feminist science studies. As in Bennett’s vitalist approach, in various OOOs, or the posthumanist philosophies we have encountered thus far, the notion of actorship in ANT is broadened. In this social analytical theory, the world and its institutions, for example the military or the laboratory, are ontologically made up of various networks of relationships that contain interacting actors. According to Latour, these actors—both humans and non-humans—possess equal agential capacities.

still differs substantially from, for example, Haraway's and Barad's take on the subject/object split.¹³⁹ This is an important facet of this chapter's overall argumentation—the cut that has been made between new and critical new materialisms.

Let us re-examine Barad's (2007) agential realism, as this particular philosophy illustrates the differences between OOOs and critical new materialisms quite well. Barad writes the following about relationality and what she calls agential separability:

[P]henomena are differential patterns of mattering (“diffractive patterns”) produced through complex agential intra-actions of multiple material-discursive practices or apparatuses of bodily production, where *apparatus are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices—specific material (re)configurations of the world—which come to matter*. These causal intra-actions need not involve humans. Indeed, it is through such practices that the differential boundaries between humans and nonhumans, culture and nature, science and the social, are constituted. (140)

Unpacking this complex passage, it again becomes clear that Barad's philosophy—like most other critical new materialisms—does not privilege human subjectivity

¹³⁹ This is not to say that there are no feminist thinkers who have experimented with speculative realism. For a collection of more feminist OOOs, see e.g., Behar (2016), as well as King's (2016) boundary object-oriented approach to new materialist thought. For a specific feminist take on speculative realism, see Sheldon (2016). For a combination of OOO and queer theory, see O' Rourke (2011). Another feminist thinker that focuses on the power of objects in general, and their often animistic powers in particular, is Marenko (2009). Marenko's work could also be positioned at the intersection of Bennett and Deleuze, because of its focus on objects as material-semiotic, and its overall engagement with Deleuzian theory. Because of the foregoing thinkers' feminist orientation, these readings are bringing power analyses back into OOO.

and actorship. Everything that exists, is intra-actively entangled and in becoming. It is through boundary-drawing practices that a specific type of human subject, composed of various identity-related characteristics, is separated from other subjects. As the world itself is conceptualized here as equally agential as the now deprived human actors, there is indeed some form of flat ontology at work in agential realism and other critical new materialisms.

However, the difference between critical new materialisms and speculative realist philosophies lies in the ways in which this flat ontology is framed.¹⁴⁰ Critical new materialists do not concern themselves with constantly reanalyzing a supposedly withdrawn world full of objects. Rather, they are preoccupied with theorizing from within a situated location in the world, prioritizing the entanglements, encounters, and relational affairs between beings. Moreover, in critical new materialisms, the world is conceptualized as lively, packed full of encounters and complexity, rather than a world in which each and every object is

¹⁴⁰ For a similar analysis, see also Alaimo (2014) and Åsberg, Thiele, and Van der Tuin (2015). Alaimo (2014) argues for a critical new materialist intervention, namely, to reconceptualize thinking itself “as stuff of the world” (13). Alaimo’s critical take on the supposed “equalizing” effect of OOO’s flat ontologies can be summarized as follows: “When Ian Bogost contends that ‘nothing has special status, but that everything exists equally—plumbers, cotton, bonobos, DVD players, and sandstone, for example’ (2012, 6), my reactions to this provocation are predictable, alas. Why place bonobos and DVD players and plumbers on an equal plane? Doesn’t this flat plane quash the animal studies arguments for animal minds, animal cultures, animal communications? (Sure, there is a plumber on that list but there is little danger that his position adjacent to cotton will dismantle sturdy humanist presumptions.) Is the focus on objects too posthumanist or not posthumanist enough? How would (how do) the philosophical interventions of OOO play out in popular culture, politics, activism, and daily life? What is the relation between the objects of OOO and consumer products?” (14). Åsberg, Thiele, and Van der Tuin (2015) have a similar response to Alaimo: “However, in the proposed ‘equality between objects’ of OOO, we do not find a substantive distinction made between, say, a hair dryer and a farmed mink in a cage. This focus on an ontology of objects takes neither the ‘orientation’ nor the human power relational aspect in any process of knowledge production into account; that is, orientation as something that is both embodied and embedded, and includes the power/knowledge dimension of ‘the Orient’ as we know from, for instance, Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* (2006). So, did ‘flat’ become the new ‘Absolute’?” (148). What is ontologically “equal,” is thus not necessarily equal on the plane of ethics and politics. Phenomenologist Michael Marder (2013), who thinks with and from the perspectives of plants, supports this critique of OOOs.

endlessly overanalyzed as an atomistic entity. To illustrate, all phenomena within Barad's agential realism co-constitute one another, and it is precisely because of these entanglements that most critical new materialists emphasize the importance of recognizing the existence of power relations, developing what could be seen as a normative ethico-politics that includes a multilayered power analytics. Ontologically speaking, all worldly objects may be "equal," yet in their entanglements, encounters, and the cuts that are made between them, power relations come into play. This is precisely the point where the "stuff" of ethico-politics truly starts to matter.

Furthermore, the agential realist notion of knowing in being, and the situated, non-innocent, embodied theorizing of other types of critical new materialisms more generally, clash with the anti-correlationalist stance inherent in speculative realism and OOO. There are technically no pre-existing, isolated—or, put in OOO language, "withdrawn"—objects in critical new materialist ontological depictions of the world, simply because any kind of phenomenon is regarded as arising *from* and *within* the world in relation to other phenomena from which they are cut while intra-acting. Complete "withdrawal" seems out of the question in such a complex, interconnected world, and additionally clashes with the more situated positionality of the researcher/thinker/activist/etc., which is informed by, and through, a universe full of intra-acting phenomena.

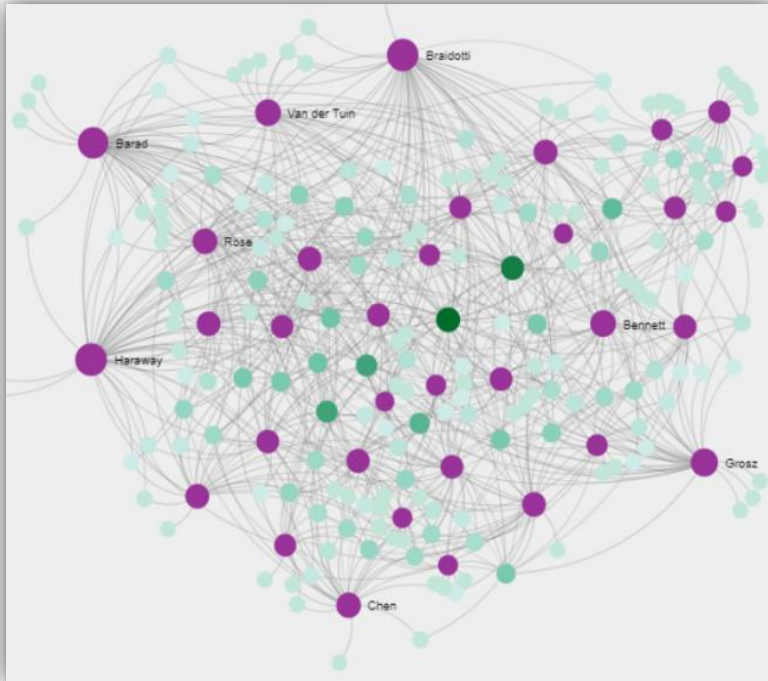
Approaching the end of this chapter and the first part of the dissertation, it has become evident that the ways in which contemporary new materialisms are represented, matter. As someone approaching the Western philosophical canon from a critical feminist and queer perspective, aiming to more closely examine the

processes of knowledge production, disciplinary canonization, and epistemological-political gatekeeping, it is vital to think about what has until now been considered part of new materialisms, what has not, and why. With the specific cuts brought about between these various stellar constellations and interlinked assemblages, an open-ended interpretation of the field of contemporary new and critical new materialisms has been provided. As the animated depiction of my situated plotting exercise demonstrates, these constellations and assemblages are often more rhizomatically connected than we realize, but at times also differ from one another.¹⁴¹ Again, contemporary new materialist philosophies are not to be reduced to the “boys only club” of object-oriented philosophers, even though, as can be observed in the first still of my digital critical cartography, these philosophies are tightly linked to one another. The digital cartography, which is partially shown below, is further explained in Appendix A (which I encourage the reader to read before proceeding) and is accessible via <http://dhstatic.hum.uu.nl/digicart/> (Geerts, Hebing, and de Kruif 2019).

Stills 1 and 2 depict the relationalities between these OOO thinkers. Still 1

¹⁴¹ Of course, I am aware of the fact that new materialist theories are all about a critical engagement with representationalism, which made the decision to work with visual digital mapping difficult. Once something is “depicted,” it risks losing some of its original vivacity. For a similar Deleuzian commentary on representationalism within qualitative research, see MacLure (2013). That is why, in cooperation with the team at Utrecht University’s Digital Humanities Lab (2019), I chose a software program that would allow me to show the liveliness of the philosophies under consideration. By using a combination of Excel and Gephi—a visualization tool used to visualize graphs and networks—a digital critical cartography of contemporary new materialisms was created. Although perhaps not as rhizomatic, entangled, and messy (see Grellier 2013) as initially hoped for, the digital cartography explained in Appendix A remains sufficiently fluid because it depicts several new materialist philosophies, represented by thinkers and concepts, as interconnected networks with particular nodes (in this case, shared concepts) that connect them to one another (or not). To fully experience the liveliness of this digital cartography, I invite the reader to follow the link included in the main text.

shows the full cartography in all of its interconnectedness. Zooming in on Bennett’s node, Still 2 depicts the connections between various OOO philosophers.



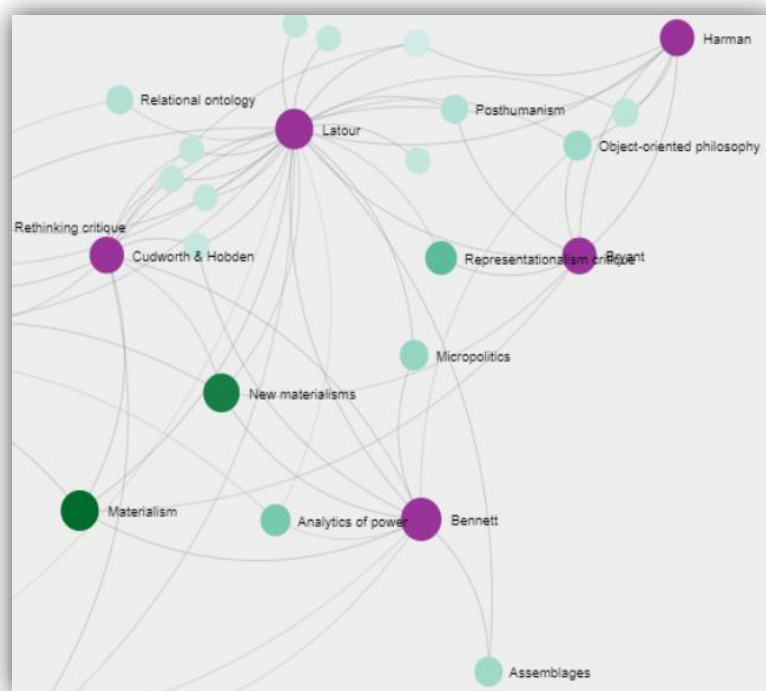
©Geerts, Hebing,
and de Kruif 2019
Still 1: Digital
Cartography
Overview: 1¹⁴²



© Geerts, Hebing,
and de Kruif 2019
Still 2: Object-
oriented
Philosophy

¹⁴² The stills that will be depicted here are taken from the website in question, omitting references to the navigational table and information pane to save space. A manual of how to best navigate this website has been attached to this dissertation as Appendix A, also providing the reader with more information about the methodology used. Appendix B then presents the data used.

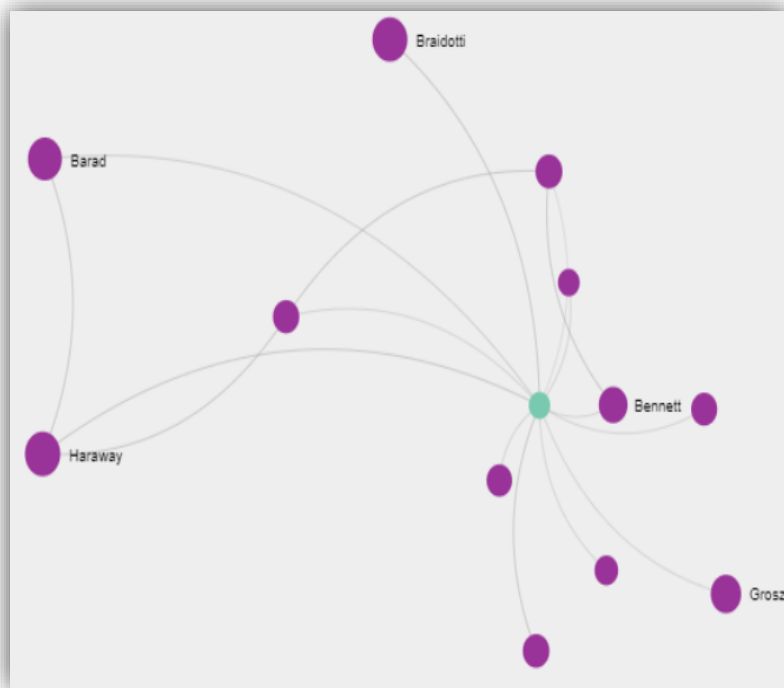
Further zooming in (a move that is not depicted here), an overview of some of the major concepts and ideas that these thinkers share, emerges. Latour and Bennett are located on the periphery, because their philosophies are, as noted throughout the foregoing mapping exercise, related to OOOs, but are also more heavily invested in power analyses than the latter. Additionally, new materialisms should not be limited to the more Latourian ANTs because, although redistributing agency in a manner that befits today’s interconnected and thus more complex societies, ANTs often lack a careful engagement with how agential cuts are made, and thus fail to account for the constant intra-action between phenomena, and the socially constructed categories, labels, and identity markers that are influenced by power relations.



© Geerts, Hebing,
and de Kruif 2019
**Still 3: Latour and
Bennett**

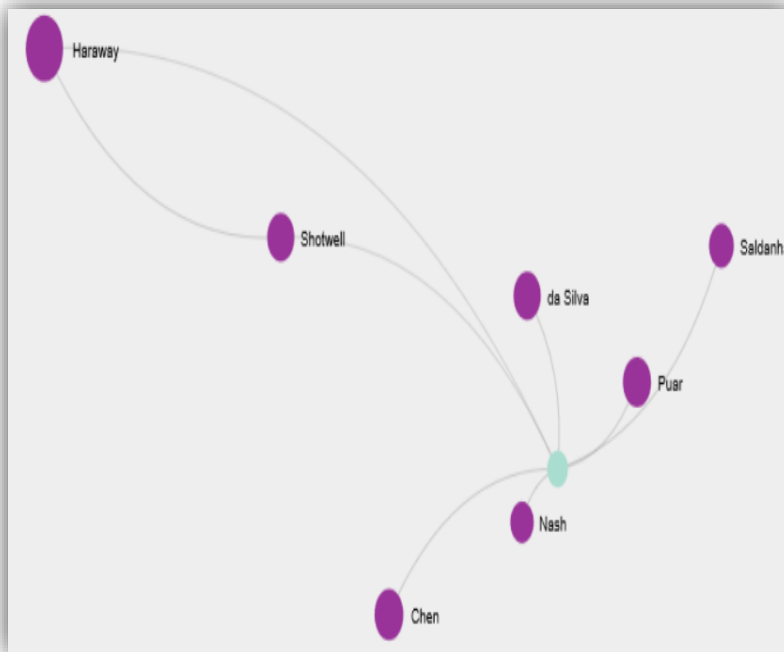
As we can observe in Stills 3 and 4, Latour and Bennett—whose philosophies come closer to that of Latour than any of the other critical new materialisms—share several key concepts. Yet, the cartography also shows how

Bennett's vitalist philosophy is more invested in power analyses, linking her to the critical new materialism of Haraway, but also to those of Braidotti and Grosz, as visualized in Still 4.

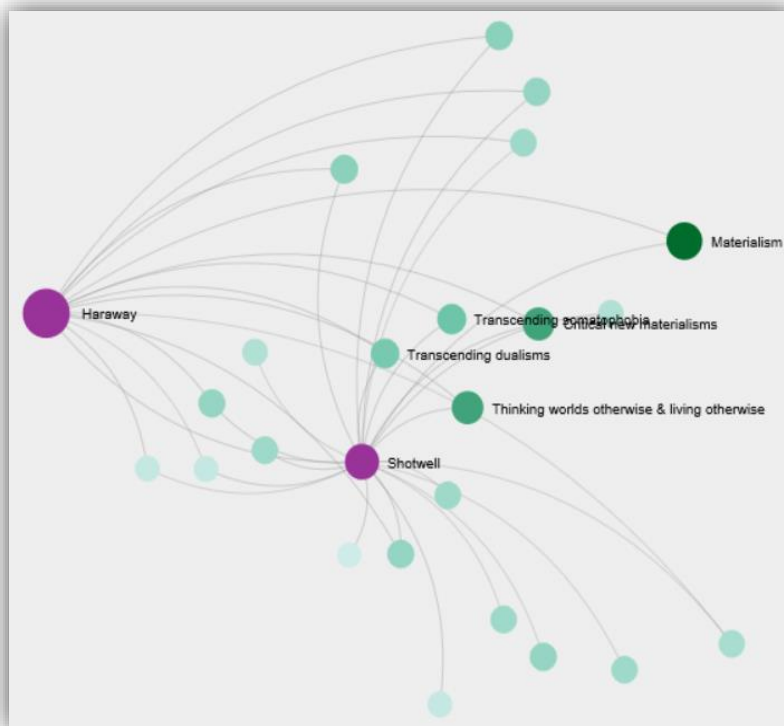


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Hebing, and de
Kruif 2019
Still 4: Bennett
and Critical New
Materialisms

Finally, Stills 5 and 6 provide more insights into those particular critical new materialisms that highlight the materialization of race as an important aspect of embodiment, and the overall eco-ethico-political differences between new and critical new materialisms, allowing us to draw explicit cuts between the two. The philosophy of Chen, but also those of, for example, Puar, Da Silva, and Shotwell, form a rhizomatically entangled cluster, as we can see in Still 5. These theories explicitly emphasize issues of race, and processes of racialization and (de)humanization. Nonetheless, the digital critical cartography also shows how interrelated these critical new materialisms are with other, similar philosophies. To illustrate this point, as can be observed in Still 6, Shotwell's philosophy is closely linked to Haraway's ecophilosophy.



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Still 5: Critical
 Race Studies-
 inspired New
 Materialisms



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 Kruif 2019
Still 6: Shotwell
 and Haraway

Many more conclusions could be drawn from this digital critical cartography, which could be considered as a diffractive pedagogical tool. Moreover, the digital project itself demonstrates that contemporary new and critical

new materialist thought is constantly evolving, cutting across a variety of restrictive, fixating categories that rest upon a tree logic by means of its rhizomatic, transversal disposition.

2.5. Chapter Summary

In this chapter, new materialist thought has been positioned as existing in a state of constant motion and evolution, and thus forever escaping any clear-cut definition, or any kind of definitive mapping. Instead, it was conceptualized as a transversal, revitalizing undertaking with crisscrossing, transcontinental roots and a strong foundation in (post-)Foucauldian poststructuralist philosophies. Heavily invested in rethinking the dualist, somatophobic underpinnings of both modern and poststructuralist thought, new materialisms spotlight the entanglements between the material and the cultural-discursive, and the epistemological and the political, while pushing the poststructuralist deconstruction of the modern human subject even further by revaluing the agential capacities of the material world, and all of the beings in it.

Further building onto my situated take on what it means to do feminist philosophy in this day and age as explained in Chapter 1, this particular chapter presented a critical cartography of various new materialist constellations and interlinked assemblages. A clear focus has been placed on the more critical, explicitly social justice-oriented new materialisms as a more eco-ethico-political subset of new materialist philosophy that, as argued, had to be carefully examined in preparation for the third (and final) chapter of this thesis. First, a smaller-scaled cartography of Bloch's and Benjamin's historical materialisms and Haraway's

anticipatory critical new materialist ecophilosophy demonstrated the groundedness of new materialist thought and its accentuation of the “here and now.” Proceeding, this chapter looked at the genealogy and the reception history of new materialisms, as well as its stellar coordinates of transcontinentality, trans(/)disciplinary, and transversality. In the process, three frequently heard, important contestations—namely its alleged “newness,” the tricky conceptualization of political agency, and new materialist thought’s supposed lack of focus on race—against new materialisms have been addressed and woven into the analysis.

The last section of this chapter then put the logic of the aforementioned coordinates and the pluralist makeup of new materialisms into practice by unfolding a situated plotting of contemporary new materialist thought, with a major emphasis on the differences between more ontology-focused new materialisms and critical new materialisms. As this chapter has demonstrated, the latter are not only eco-ethico-political in nature, but also take seriously the necessity of constructing a critical power analytics and the challenges posed by pressing contemporary issues.

In Part II of this dissertation, the more traditional writing and interpretative genealogical and critical cartographical styles that have been experimented with so far will slowly but surely make space for a tentative diffractive exploration, first undertaken in the excursus. This to eventually enable an experimental diffractive rereading and revitalization of the Habermas-Derrida dialogues in relation to terror(ism), while aiming to plant these dialogues back into Continental soil, in Chapter 3.

EXCURSUS

Diffractional Musings:

Haraway's Ecophilosophy as Critical New Materialist *Avant la*

Lettre

With this diffractive excursus, I am prying open a space for diffractive reading, writing, and theorizing—an experimental exploration that will fully materialize in Chapter 3—and aim to show that there are different approaches to working diffractively. The excursus and the reading of several “minoritarian” or lesser known texts by a single author here differs from the type of diffractive reading that will take place while reading Habermas and Derrida through one another in Chapter 3. Both diffractive readings engender new critical thoughts and formerly undiscovered theoretical assemblages. However, by reading several texts by one feminist author through one another, we also get a glimpse of how theoretical canonization processes work within contemporary feminist theory.

As previously suggested, Haraway's work can be interpreted as having distinct new materialist and even critical new materialist characteristics. Haraway's philosophy exemplifies the cultivation of grounded hope within an ecofeminist framework that highlights situated reflections on fast-paced technoscientific evolutions, and their often harmful appropriation and exploitation. Constantly revisiting this topic, Haraway (1997a) focuses on the present-day reign of capitalist “technobiopower” (2), expressed via her cyborgian twist on Foucault's biopolitics, which takes the interlinkages between the state, humans, and now also the machinic

and the digital, into account. In addition to criticizing the commodification of sentient and non-sentient beings that is engendered by such bio-/necropolitics, Haraway deconstructs various boundaries and binary oppositions—a move that, as stated earlier, can be regarded as typically new materialist.

This dualism-destroying facet was already present in Haraway's (1985) ecofeminist, posthumanist¹⁴³ pamphlet "A Manifesto for Cyborgs," in which three concrete boundaries were addressed, namely, the strictly guarded borders between the human subject and animals (borders illustrative of anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism, and speciesism); humans and machines, here in the form of the cyborg (representing, again, the modern Western belief in human exceptionalism, but also the desire to exploit the earth through ever progressing science); and lastly, the boundaries between the physical and the non-physical, which also point toward other splits, such as body/mind, materialism/idealism, and the material/the virtual. These boundaries and related binaries—which all rest upon the subject/object master binary, which seems to write the code for, and upholds, all other binaries—make way for a more relational interpretation of the world and its various inhabitants, which are relabeled companion species (see Haraway 2003) and "oddkin" (see Haraway 2016), rather than passive and exploitable objects.

¹⁴³ Notably, Haraway does not appear to be a big supporter of the idea (and theory) of posthumanism. In an interview from 2006, she comments on the fact that she does not use the term posthuman(ist) in her own work: "I've stopped using it [i.e., the notion of the posthuman]. I did use it for a while, including in the 'Manifesto'. . . . Still, human/posthuman is much too easily appropriated by the blissed-out, 'Let's all be posthumanists and find our next teleological evolutionary stage in some kind of transhumanist techno enhancement.' Posthumanism is too easily appropriated to those kinds of projects for my taste. . . . Companion species is my effort to be in alliance and in tension with posthumanist projects because I think species is in question" (Gane and Haraway 2006, 140). A similar sentiment is repeated in *Staying with the Trouble*, in which Haraway invokes the existing relationalities between all beings, expressing one of the key facets of critical posthumanism: "We are humus, not Homo, not Anthropos; we are compost, not posthuman. . . . We are at stake to each other" (Haraway 2016, 55).

Haraway's rereading of second-wave feminist epistemological projects, including various standpoint theories and Harding's notions of strong objectivity and subjugated vantage points (see Chapter 1) additionally demonstrates that she is preoccupied with the new materialist methodology of thinking anew by revisiting what has come before. "Situated Knowledges" (Haraway 1988), for example, embodies the transversal rethinking of Harding's feminist standpoint theory, updating it to encompass today's technobiopolitical environment and its specific challenges. This temporality traversing re-evaluation of feminist standpoint theoretical thought can indeed be regarded as planting the seed of new materialist thought, as also claimed by Van der Tuin (2015a) in *Generational Feminism*.¹⁴⁴ Haraway's project of situated knowledges indeed has a specifically generative, affirmative character: Rather than completely doing away with Harding's epistemology—which would be a dangerous move, giving in to the temptations of often oedipalizing, antifeminist "classifixation" processes¹⁴⁵—Haraway modestly constructs her own philosophy on top of Harding's conceptual foundations. The ongoing—yet often also indirect—dialogue between Haraway and Braidotti further adds a transcontinental feminist angle to Haraway's work, exemplifying its generative and generous aspects (e.g., Braidotti 2002, 2006b, [1994] 2011, 2013;

¹⁴⁴ In *Generational Feminism*, Van der Tuin (2015a) constructs her own argument as follows: "Haraway foresaw, as it were, the feminist new materialisms when she pled for diving into the material-discursive of reality, thus traversing and fusing together the diverse materialities of feminist empiricism and feminist standpoint theory and the many discursivities of feminist post-modernism and feminist post-structuralism. In addition, Haraway in 'Situated Knowledges' demonstrated generational awareness by making references to the PhD dissertations or unpublished manuscripts of younger colleagues like Zoë Sofoulis and Katie King . . . , a practice that she has more than once reflected on afterwards" (21–22).

¹⁴⁵ For more about "classifixation," a term coined by Van der Tuin (2015a), see footnote 43 in Chapter 1.

Gane and Haraway 2006; Haraway 1997a, 2008).¹⁴⁶ Finally, the eco-ethico-political orientation of Haraway's philosophy further supports the assertion that Haraway anticipated critical new materialist undertakings.

Throughout the first two chapters of this dissertation, I have demonstrated that Haraway has set the stage for critical new materialist thought by building upon, and tweaking, Foucauldian poststructuralist philosophy and feminist standpoint theories by means of an explicit feminist ecofeminist agenda, orientated toward science studies. This excursus has been written, and is positioned as, a transgressional piece to move from the more genealogical mode of storytelling and cartographical strategies and writing styles in the first two chapters, toward a new, diffractive positionality in Chapter 3. Presenting several diffractive musings on three of Haraway's more "minoritarian" texts, I demonstrate that Haraway's eco-ethico-political attachments are noticeable throughout her oeuvre. Additionally, I will argue that the optical imagery and methodology of diffraction can enable us, not only to think outside and beyond the canon, but also to think what is currently being considered as trendsetting within the fields of contemporary feminist theory, philosophy, and science studies. As tendencies toward the genealogization and canonization of new materialist thought gather pace (albeit not always in a well-situated manner), staying self-reflexive with respect to these epistemological-political developments seems pivotal, as is remaining attentive toward the potential "slippages, craquelures, and indeterminacies" (van der Tuin 2015a, 116) that might arise when reading texts through one another. Allowing personal diffractive

¹⁴⁶ The most direct dialogue between Braidotti and Haraway took place at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam in 2017 (see Braidotti and Haraway 2017).

musings to emerge while diffracting these essays seems to be an ideal method via which to put lesser known texts on the map. At the same time, these musings create an engagement with slow thinking¹⁴⁷ as a form of anti-neoliberal theorizing from the ground up that could make visible philosophical phenomena, entangled events, and tiny textual-material details that until now have remained hidden within the “canonical cracks.”

Spotlighting Cracks (With)in the Canon: Diffractive Musings

Personal pedagogical Musings

Educating students on Haraway’s work—usually within the context of an introductory academic course on science studies, epistemology, and feminist theory—the focus commonly lies on some of her better known articles, such as “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” (1985) and “Situated Knowledges” (1988). These two canonical essays are packed with multidimensional meanings, necessitating elaborate contextualization if the reader is to fully grasp Haraway’s binary-disrupting cyberfeminist and situated knowledges project. This need for context requires students and teachers alike to sit down with the texts in question and analyze them slowly and with care. Often, there is not enough time in a single school term to unpack other, equally representative essays of Haraway’s ecofeminist philosophy, and thus syllabi tend to be limited to the two works mentioned above. Furthermore, these two essays have been heralded as the most prominent

¹⁴⁷ See footnote 64 in Chapter 1 for more information on slow thinking and science.

representatives of feminist science studies and feminist theory, rendering them indispensable in such didactic-pedagogical contexts.

Although, as an educator, I try to engage with a variety of Haraway's texts when teaching or giving public lectures, many texts remain underrepresented. For example, I have not encountered "The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order" (Haraway 1997b) since writing my research master thesis in 2012. I clearly remember how this lesser known work by Haraway—later republished in *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* (Haraway 1997a)—sparked my imagination when I accidentally encountered it on Google Scholar. I was writing a section on the various antiphallgocentric mirror symbols in Irigaray's philosophy at the time, and Haraway's feminist appropriation of the speculum proved to be an interesting metaphorical comparison. However, my engagement with the text itself was limited to a footnote, and I did not look at the piece again until 2018, while gathering research material for the first part of this dissertation. Furthermore, this re-engagement only occurred following a recommendation by one of my mentors regarding another "minoritarian" piece by Haraway, namely, "Reading Buchi Emecheta" (Haraway 1990)—a pedagogical praxis piece located very much within the "cracks of the canon," but also within the tradition of Western philosophy, literature, and feminist and anticolonial theory. Subsequently, I downloaded "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" (Haraway 1984), with the intention of collecting three less canonical texts written by Haraway that would represent different research periods, even though, at this point, I did not fully understand how I was to ultimately utilize them in the context of this dissertation.

It was only until reading snippets from each of these texts through one another that they really began to speak to me, and their philosophical entanglements fully manifested themselves. “The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order” delves right into Haraway’s critical commentary on technoscience through the usage of various puns about specula¹⁴⁸ and reproductive, justice-related cartoons. Opening with how both the earth-as-environment and human fetuses have been turned into scientific spectacles through visual technological advancements, Haraway examines the disembodied scientific eye’s objectifying tendencies, contrasting it with the almost palpable fleshiness that these images of the earth and the fetus provoke. “[S]ignifiers of touch and vision” (Haraway 1997b, 24) have been diametrically opposed in Western scientific culture, and this oppositional binary serves as the running thread of this essay on technoscience, reproductive technobiopolitics, and its visual, often gendering-racializing—and also bio-/necropolitical—technologies.

However, there is so much more going on in “The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order” than clever puns about specula and other medico-scientific

¹⁴⁸ It makes sense for Haraway to bring up the gynecological instrument of the speculum when talking about the evolution of reproductive justice. However, truly fascinating here is Haraway’s deployment of various images, symbols, and puns related to the speculum throughout her essay to denote the symbolic process of becoming-subject, all while giving a feminist twist to vision and visual technologies. This is specifically prominent in her description of how the antifeminist speculum was reappropriated by women to discover their own bodies during second-wave feminism: “Many feminists of my cohorts—largely young, white, middle-class women—‘seized the masters’ tools’ in the context of the Women’s Liberation Movement and its activist women’s health movement . . . Armed with a gynaecological speculum, a mirror, a flashlight and—most of all—each other in a consciousness-raising group, women ritually opened their bodies to their own literal view. . . . The mirror was the symbol forced on women as a signifier of our own bodies as spectacle for another in the guise of our own supposed narcissism. Vision itself seemed to be the empowering act of conquerors” (Haraway 1997b, 41). This echoes Irigaray’s feminist take on the discourses of Western philosophy and psychoanalysis, as also stated in Chapter 1. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray ([1974] 1985a) repeatedly criticizes the antifeminist appropriation and devaluing of the female body by means of the speculum, and in the end uses the speculum—now transformed into a burning mirror—to destroy phallogocentrism.

apparatuses. Diffractively read through Haraway's "Reading Buchi Emecheta"—a piece about engendering feminist pedagogical praxes that are culturally sensitive and non-colonizing—it is revealed that "The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order" carries a pedagogical message of its own, namely, to be critical of Western technoscience's exploitative tendencies, and its investment in detached, reflection-based thought. It performs diffractive thinking by means of a situated, personal writing style and a critical take on the material reality at work behind the cartoons studied. The discursive and material realms are shown to be entangled, and this entanglement immediately disturbs some of the problematic binaries addressed in Haraway's earlier work (e.g., Haraway 1985, 1988). "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" and "Reading Buchi Emecheta" carry similar pedagogical connotations: both stimulate the bringing about of a more critical consciousness, in the form of a diffractive awareness of how Western science and various theories—philosophical, scientific, feminist, etc.—are routinely mishandled to hierarchically classify subjects and politically polarize their differences.

Onto-epistemological Musings

Haraway's ecofeminist praxis, present in "Reading Buchi Emecheta," revolves around the respectful acknowledgement of differences and differently embodied beings. This is why she resists any essentialist types of identity politics. As established thus far, the ethico-political and an affirmative understanding of difference play an important role in Haraway's philosophy, and both are rooted in the combination of the ontological and epistemological in her work. The entanglements between power and the production of knowledge paradigms—

together with the new materialist idea of knowing in being (as explained in Chapter 1)—reveal themselves even more clearly when placing these three essays next to one another.

Diffracting Haraway's ideas about reproductive technobiopolitics in "The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order," and natural history in "Teddy Bear Patriarchy," first illustrates her investment in an anticipatory new materialist unravelling of the binary opposition between culture and nature by criticizing the objectification of nature. Haraway (1984) discusses the genealogy of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, which is conceptualized as the epitome of the Western modern ideal of forcing nature into submission and turning it into the Garden of Eden, and the highly gendered, racialized, and classed arts of nature photography, colonial exploration, hunting, and taxidermy that tend to go along with this process. Haraway argues that specific representations of nature and animals are not only socio-culturally, but also politically constructed. The human desire to tame and domesticate nature is even said to reflect the social order of that time. In this case, the American Museum of Natural History—the gathering place of all these representations—reflects what Haraway (1984, 23) calls the "Teddy Bear Patriarchy" of the United States' Roosevelt era. This curious reflection-representation process is said to work in multiple directions: The wild animals have been set up as hierarchically organized museum objects in the museum's African Hall with a clear prioritization of showing off the most "perfect," most human-resembling, specimen, namely, the male gorilla—a powerful, fascinating animal that, according to the Teddy Bear patriarchal logic, could have only been captured and tamed into submission by an even more perfect male human subject. These

hierarchically structured ways of representation both characterize and reify the back then socio-political and cultural understandings of gender, race, class, and societal hygiene, plus the xenophobic sentiment that exclusive citizenship was regarded as threatened by waves of immigration into the United States during the 1930s, potentially “weakening” its material makeup. The specificities of normative social relations at the time clearly found their way into these museum objects, as the laws of anthropocentric natural selection impacted how these animals, together with dehumanizing depictions of native peoples, were displayed as “lesser-than.” The “great” white male explorers of the time were literally put on pedestals in the museum, as Haraway (1984, 21ff.) also describes it, whereas the Othered Others only were there as props to support the latter’s supposed superiority.

Haraway’s technoscientific take on Foucauldian power/knowledge and biopolitics thus becomes evident here, as the museum as an institution, its objects—murdered, yet impeccably preserved animals that underline anthropocentric hubris, power, and dominance—and its natural historical dioramas function as the material expressions of technobiopower. Haraway (1984) states:

Nature is, in “fact,” constructed as a technology through social praxis. And dioramas are meaning-machines. Machines are time slices into the social organisms that made them. Machines are maps of power, arrested moments of social relations that in turn threaten to govern the living. The owners of the great machines of monopoly capital—the so-called means of production—of race, gender, and class. For them, “naked eye science” could give direct vision of social peace and progress despite the appearances of class war and decadence.

(52)

As the museum is the place where the natural, the socio-cultural, and the political come together, it plays a major role in safeguarding the immunity system of the already “endangered body politic” (53)—in this case of the American nation of the Roosevelt era. It does so by exhibiting, preserving, conserving, and via racialized eugenics. The American Museum of Natural History hosted the Second International Congress of Eugenics in 1921 and exhibited various human and animal specimens by means of a hierarchical classification method. Haraway, following Foucault and the social constructivist science studies scholars of her time, demonstrates that museums are never innocent locations in which knowledge is stored, but rather, are meaning-producing historical-material institutions. They create contextualized meanings that can be unpacked when analyzed carefully and critically. The text moreover underlines how the ways in, and with, which we define nature can actually tell us more about the human socio-political reality and history that impacted these definitions of the natural—implying the illusionary essence of the nature/culture dichotomy. Even when it comes to the natural, our vision is always culturally mediated and thus situated. The foregoing note about meaning-making aligns with Haraway’s belief that the epistemological, the scientific, and the political cannot be thought disjointly. By reading this emphasis on the museum as a situated maker of meaning and teller of truths in “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” in tandem with Haraway’s reflections in “Reading Buchi Emecheta,” a critical perspective on the technobiopolitical aspects of natural history and its objects exposed in museums and exhibitions emerges, and in doing so, gives rise to contextualized knowledges. Such knowledges are “always marked knowledges, . . . re-markings, reorientings, of the great maps that globalised the heterogeneous

body of the world in the history of masculinist capitalism and Colonialism” (Haraway 1990, 241). The process of diffractively reading both texts thus demonstrates that there are no unmarked locations from where acts of hierarchical categorization, labeling, and marking are engendered.

Ethico-politico-onto-epistemological Musings

The Foucauldian undertones in “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” are evident. Interestingly, Haraway also traverses this poststructuralist philosophy by pushing it in posthumanist—or, rather, compost-like¹⁴⁹—ecofeminist directions. By criticizing how nature is constructed as a readily exploitable “mystery and resource” (Haraway 1984, 22) in the American Museum of Natural History, Haraway pays special attention to how various bodies—e.g., those of Theodore Roosevelt Jr., the explorer-taxidermist Carl Akeley, the latter’s wives and biographers Delia Akeley and Mary Jobe Akeley, the exhibited animals, the servants and porters of the Akeley family, the natural environment of the Belgian colonized Congo, the space of the museum itself—each materialize differently, as the result of a hierarchical, preconceived system of cultural intelligibility.

This ethico-political interest in how “bodies come to matter”—following a Butlerian vocabulary (see Butler 1993)—together with her attention for how these procedures of hierarchically organizing and marking matter unfold, brings Haraway closer to contemporary critical new materialisms. This is especially clear when she brings in her own, more feminist take on processes of (de)humanization. Like

¹⁴⁹ See footnote 143 at the start of this excursus for more information with regard to Haraway’s critical take on posthumanism.

“Teddy Bear Patriarchy,” “The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order” and “Reading Buchi Emecheta” both examine difference, othering, and processes of dehumanization. In “Teddy Bear Patriarchy,” human anthropocentrism and exceptionalism are critiqued as self-aggrandizing, illusionary narratives. By doing so, Haraway unsettles the carefully constructed and guarded boundaries between the human, the animal, and those bodies that are not considered “worthy” enough of the label “human” because of certain bodily characteristics. In contrast, the other two essays address the issue of difference by inspecting the boundaries that have been drawn between various human subjects by means of gender, race, and class, to name but a few intersecting categories. In “Reading Buchi Emecheta,” Haraway explores a feminist pedagogical praxis, while touching upon issues such as the academic institutionalization of the discipline of women’s studies during the 1990s. This reading praxis could be regarded as proto-diffractive,¹⁵⁰ and further emphasizes the need for an intersectional coalitional feminist politics. She addresses these issues in relation to situated knowledges and the potential of a feminist politics of difference that is not built upon the essentialist and sometimes divisive category of “Woman.” Every embodied subject matters, and so do their lived experiences. In Haraway’s (1990) words: “The politics of difference that feminists need to articulate must be rooted in a politics of experience that searches

¹⁵⁰ Here, Haraway reads three different perspectives on the work of the Nigerian-born British novelist and academic Buchi Emecheta through one another, advancing a coalitional, perspectivist politics that could represent women’s various different lived experiences. The following quotation underlines this proto-diffractive aspect: “The goal [of this essay] was to make these critically reflexive readings open up the complexities of location and affinities in partially allied, partially oppositional drawings of maps of women’s consciousness in the local/global, personal/political webs of situated knowledges” (Haraway 1990, 247). By reading two other perspectives as well as her own through one another, Haraway hopes to paint a fuller picture of Emecheta’s oeuvre, and the possibility of such a coalitionist, situated feminist politics.

for specificity, heterogeneity, and connection through struggle, not through psychologistic, liberal appeals to each her own endless difference” (241). Constructing a perspectivist, coalitional politics that respects the plurality of embodied experiences should be the goal, meaning that we should be attentive toward “the very fine line between appropriation of another’s (never innocent) experience and the delicate construction of the just-barely possible affinities, the just-barely-possible connections that might actually make a difference in local and global histories” (Haraway 1990, 243). This attentiveness is linked to Haraway’s continuous emphasis on her own positionality—indeed, personal notes about her own intersecting identities are central to all three essays. Haraway addresses these issues without fetishizing her own positionality, or falling for what she, in “Reading Buchi Emecheta,” refers to as the dangers of playing the appropriating game of “tourism of the soul” (1990, 243) of other, more subjugated, subjects. This critical self-awareness is also a central concern in critical new materialist thought.

Amongst others, Haraway pays attention to the social identity categories that people are marked with and/or use to identify themselves and focuses on the different forms of oppression women deal with. For example, in “Reading Buchi Emecheta,” she discusses experiences of colonization and being labeled an unwelcome immigrant; in “The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order,” the scandalous lack of reproductive rights for women of color in the United States and Brazil; and it is to the impact of eugenics and scientific racism that she turns in “Teddy Bear Patriarchy.”

Simultaneously, Haraway unsettles the human/non-human boundary in the broadest sense possible, if we were to diffract the three articles again: All of the

three boundaries (i.e., the human/animal, human/machines, and the physical/non-physical boundary) highlighted in “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” are critically investigated in each of these essays, with particular consideration for the human/machine boundary in “The Virtual Speculum in the New World Order,” which again can be linked back to Haraway’s overall critique of processes of dehumanization. When addressing the aforementioned topics of reproductive justice and technobiopolitics, Haraway asks herself the following, rather new materialist-sounding question: “Whose and which bodies—human and non-human, silicon-based and carbon-based—are at stake and how, in our technoscientific dramas of origin? And what is the specific political and moral accountability attached to these not-always-human bodies?” (Haraway 1997b, 34). In our present-day technobiopolitical regime, certain bodies are being rendered less important and even killable in support of the survival of other, more “worthy” subjects. This is why Haraway touches upon various practices of technoscientific living and dying, paying particular attention to whose offspring is considered to be “reproductive wastage” (Haraway 1997b, 51). Here, the realms of ontology, epistemology, and the ethico-political clearly intersect.

From Haraway’s own situated perspective on feminist science studies, “questions about optics are inescapable” (Haraway 1997b, 51), as the same contemporary visualization technologies used to assign more meaning to certain subjects are also employed to render the lived experiences and bodies of others invisible, and consequentially insignificant. If we read this critical take on (in)visibility together with “Teddy Bear Patriarchy” and “Reading Buchi Emecheta,” it becomes clear that we, as thinkers, activists, etc., bear an enormous

responsibility for who is included in, and excluded from, our critical considerations. The stuffed animals on display in museums are often accompanied by exoticized, denigrating depictions of native peoples, neither of which have been given the opportunity to live the livable lives they should have had. Additionally, it is clear that the lived experiences of various peoples, and women in particular, have until now been purposely rendered invisible.

Haraway thus presents a situated, self-aware ecofeminist philosophy that anticipates critical new materialist thought because of its emphasis on the interconnectedness between the ontological, the epistemological, the ethical, and the political. Ethico-political questions about (in)visibility and silence, the mattering of bodies, and subjectivity, in combination with citizenship status, lie at the heart of scientific and epistemological undertakings. Feminist science studies—or “[f]eminist technoscience inquiry” (Haraway 1997b, 39)—stresses questions of “[f] and justice” (39); queries that are brought to life because of “the joinings of humans and non-humans” (39) in this world. Ethico-political accountability and responsibility—or rather, *response-ability*, as elaborated upon in Chapter 2—thus lie at the heart of Haraway’s technobiopolitical project. Her critical analyses of how we engage in, and with, boundary-making practices in science and theory demonstrate that such processes matter, as they can expose ongoing exploitations and oppressions. Precisely such processes of boundary-making were later labelled “agential cutting” by Barad (2007)—a topic that we will come back to throughout this thesis.

The aforementioned principle of response-ability becomes even more apparent when analyzing “Reading Buchi Emecheta” through the lenses of “The

Virtual Speculum in the New World Order” and “Teddy Bear Patriarchy.” For example, taken on its own, the following quotation from “Reading Buchi Emecheta” initially only seems to mention feminist reading praxes, and the need for a different kind of politics:

Inclusions and exclusions are not determined in advance by fixed categories of race, gender, sexuality, or nationality. “We” are accountable for the inclusions and exclusions, identifications and separations, produced in the highly political practices called reading fiction. To whom we are accountable is part of what is produced in the readings themselves. . . . From our very specific, non-innocent positions in the local/global and personal/political terrain of contemporary mappings of women’s consciousness, each of these readings is a pedagogic practice, working through the naming of the power-charged differences, specificities, and affinities that structure the potent, world-changing artefacts called “women’s experience.” In difference is the irretrievable loss of the illusion of the one. (Haraway 1990, 253)

However, when read diffractively with and through the other two texts, one can see Haraway is also commenting on how we need to be accountable for the theories we produce, and the cuts we make. Furthermore, the previous quotation highlights Haraway’s preference for a coalitional politics based on respect for difference. Importantly, this perspective on identity politics and difference sounds eerily new materialist, as it traverses and transcends the modern Western identity/difference model, reworking it into a more relational model in which identities and categories

are never predetermined, but co-construct one another in more fluid, open-ended ways.

Concluding, diffracting these three texts reveals that Haraway is—and apparently always has been—preoccupied with the interrelated, new materialisms-anticipating questions of the technobiopolitical, and the dangerous demarcating processes of othering and (de)humanization that carry bio-/necropolitical consequences. Moreover, it demonstrates her ongoing investment in how to critically yet affirmatively re-employ Western scientific undertakings in order to transform the immanent here and now into a potentially more just world of tomorrow.

PART 2

**CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL NEW MATERIALIST
INTERVENTIONS-IN-ACTUALIZATION**

CHAPTER 3

Critical Theory Reinvigorated: Diffractive Philosophizing in Times of Terror(ism)

What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings. Nothing else counts. Ruthless toward itself, the Enlightenment has eradicated the last remnant of its own self-awareness. Only thought which does violence to itself is hard enough to shatter myths.

—Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

The dialectic of Enlightenment has morphed out of recognition from its original, post-World War II articulation. The new global context necessarily alters conceptions—even critical ones—that have been definitive for comprehending the modern age.

—Susan Buck-Morss, *Thinking Past Terror*

We need future-oriented perspectives, which do not deny the traumas of the past but transform them into possibilities for the present. It is not the heavenly future at which we aim, but rather a more sustainable one, situated here and now.

—Rosi Braidotti, *Transpositions*

Chapter 3 of this dissertation—which at the same time forms its second and concluding part—is to be regarded as a more practical philosophical, eco-ethico-political endeavor. In the first part of this thesis, the theoretical, conceptual, and methodological foundations were explained, and the importance of hopeful yet

realistic critical new materialist philosophizing was articulated. Such a material(ist), “soil-rooted”—here used as a more poetic metaphor for “grounded” or “materially anchored”—project turned out to be an undertaking that takes the entanglements of power/knowledge seriously, and that is dissonant and boundary-pushing in nature. Moreover, like any philosophical undertaking, it risks relapsing into certain forms of epistemic violence, and thus highlights well-situated reflections to prevent, or at least counterbalance, this potential violence. A situated critical cartography of various constellations of contemporary new materialist thought was therefore mapped out, both in textual and digital form, so as to provide the reader with several impressions of what such a type of philosophizing from the ground up looks like.

Our attention will now shift toward several transformation-oriented critical new materialisms and interventions. Doing so, special consideration will be given to the contributions that these critical new materialist philosophies, in their becoming-with(in)-the-world—or, as Haraway, Barad, and Manning and Massumi respectively call it, “*sympoiesis*” (Haraway 2016, 96), “knowing in being” (Barad 2007, 185), and “thought, in the act” (Manning and Massumi 2014, vii)—could make to the analysis of a pressing, global issue, namely, terrorism. By again emphasizing becoming-with(in)-the-world, this final chapter will describe certain actualizations—or worldly “co-engenderings”—of critical new materialist thought, while simultaneously performing the actualization of grounded new materialist theorizing and the reconsidering of critical theoretical interventions in times of global interlocked crises.

Opening with the urgency of coming up with new concepts and perspectives that are compatible with the *Zeitgeist* and the complex, globalized, interconnected,

neoliberal world we are living in today, the analysis presented in Chapter 3 affirms the shared conviction of the authors quoted in the epigraphs, that is, that our times indeed have changed immeasurably since the infamous—yet perhaps also predictable—implosion of the Western Enlightenment. The horrors of the African slave trade, colonialism, imperialism, genocides fueled by xenophobia, the two World Wars and the rise of fascist regimes, and—lest we forget—today’s toxic mix of ruthless capitalism and neoliberal governmentality, supported by ideologies of white supremacy, various forms of racism, and xenophobic nationalisms, are all equally rooted in the project of Western Enlightenment. New concepts and perspectives are needed to address how certain critical new materialist philosophies—which are essentially preoccupied with thinking the world anew from within by reinvigorating philosophical schemes and analytics—could help to critically expand on the philosophical theorizing of terrorism as one of the most complex phenomena of our times. Engaging with the topic of terrorism, as well as the worldwide affectively-felt terror it produces—hence the idea of “terror(ism)”—and the multifaceted technobiopolitical and even bio-/necropolitical responses it provokes on a “glocal” level,¹⁵¹ plus the philosophizing on terrorism so far, and my own lived experiences of specific terrorist events, this chapter adds a more normative, praxis-related layer to this project by means of diffractive theorizing.

In this context, it is important for the reader to know that I will not be engaging in a detailed (new) materialist analysis of the September 11 attacks that took place in New York in 2001—throughout this chapter referred to as 9/11. Of

¹⁵¹ That is, the levels of the global, the local, and how both in this case intersect when meeting one another, leading to very specific manifestations of technobiopolitical and bio-/necropolitical nation-state responses that are locally grounded but have geopolitical implications.

course, this is not because I do not consider the topic to be significant—quite the contrary. However, as will be argued in what follows, whatever the status of 9/11 as an event is said to be, 9/11 and its political aftermath have changed both the world and the production of critical theory for good. What I will map, then, are the ways in which Derrida and Habermas have reflected upon this event, and how specific recent terrorist attacks in France and Belgium—events that I was much more personally connected to, and affected by—have impacted the Continental political situation and the production of critical theory by, often subconsciously, referring back to 9/11 and the War(s) on Terror that followed.¹⁵²

It is important to additionally note here that I did not strategically and a priori select the discussed media snippets, images, and memes that will be engaged with in what follows. Rather, I encountered these artefacts while digitally “living-through” —as I will explain in more detail later—these events while in Santa Cruz in 2015 and 2016. I kept a notebook and a folder filled with several digital files in which I documented all the above materials without fully realizing that I would eventually use them in this dissertation. Even the combination of snippets from Benjamin, Derrida, and Habermas was not thought out beforehand, but came together while analyzing and working with these materials.¹⁵³ Thus, these reflections, as well as this dissertation as a whole, came into being during what could be considered multiple affective encounters between me and my research materials—or, put in more new materialist terms, my lively archive (see also

¹⁵² I am using the plural here to underscore the original War on Terror, plus the international interventions that followed right after it.

¹⁵³ By contrast, the legal texts that are analyzed in this chapter, as well as the political commentary and more analytical articles, were intentionally selected while writing this dissertation. They did, however, only acquire their full meaning in the larger context of this project.

Tamboukou 2019, who describes archives as living entities or “events” in the Whiteheadian sense)—that, prior to these encounters, were not yet even considered research materials.¹⁵⁴

3.1. The Creation of Critical-attentive Theories, Concepts, and Stories

The epigraphs for this chapter matter, as they not only tell us more about the task of confronting post-Enlightenment critical theories, but also bring us back to Haraway’s materialist ecophilosophy, acting as one of this dissertation’s leitmotifs.¹⁵⁵ When considering these quotations, one is prompted to further reflect upon the roots of critical new materialist philosophy: What is regarded as critical theory today?¹⁵⁶ What impact is it still considered to have—a recurring question,

¹⁵⁴ This particular aspect of the encounter has been highlighted in Van der Tuin’s (2018c) oration, in which she discusses how the philosopher Ernst Cassirer already focused on this aspect of meaning-making through the encounter and cites Barad’s agential realist conceptualization of intra-action. Similarly, Ahmed (2006), whose work was referred to in the introduction, refers to the research phenomenon’s haunting powers—powers that fully reveal themselves when the researcher and research phenomenon meet. Other scholars have come up with similar ideas: Ernst (2014) for instance focuses on the so-called “dynarchive,” or a more dynamic take on the archive, which is seen as perpetually in flux, and Blackman (2019), in the larger context of digital communication, addresses how we are haunted by data in today’s digital society.

¹⁵⁵ This continuous return to Haraway’s work can be seen as an example of the transversal jumping processes that, as stated in Chapter 2, often take place in new materialist philosophies aiming to reinvigorate preceding philosophies. After all, Haraway’s philosophy was presented as setting the scene for critical new materialist thought in each of the previous chapters, among others because of its material-semiotic and transdisciplinary nature. The notion of transversality has already been addressed in Chapter 2, more specifically in section 2.3.3. The idea of transversal jumping, however, has its roots in the works of Braidotti and Van der Tuin. Whereas Braidotti (2006ab) uses the notion of transposition or “an intertextual, cross-boundary or transversal transfer” (5), rooted in genetics and music, Van der Tuin (2015a) makes use of “jumping generations” (5), critically mapping out various generations of feminist thought, as well as new materialist thought’s cross-generational movements.

¹⁵⁶ When using the notion of critical theory in this dissertation, I am not only referring to the narrow understanding of the term, namely the critical Marxist liberatory philosophies that were produced by the members and associates of the Frankfurt School, but also to contemporary thinkers that regard themselves as still operating from within this framework. Examples include the philosopher Jürgen Habermas ([1981] 1984) and the critical theorist Susan Buck-Morss ([2003] 2006). The narrower understanding of critical theory is rooted in the work of Horkheimer, who is said to have coined the term in an essay from 1937. In this essay, he notes the many differences between what he calls traditional theory or thought, which is developed to merely examine and explain society, and critical theory, which is seen as critically building upon Kantian and Marxist thought, promoting “an

for instance, in the work of Latour (2004)?¹⁵⁷ The ambiguous nature of the Western Enlightenment tradition, or its “dark” side, must be taken into consideration here. While the Enlightenment tradition is still frequently positioned as the all-encompassing reference point in Western philosophical theory, its main exponent—the alleged autonomous, hyperrational “Man”—has been undergoing a radical process of dethronement ever since the advent of the philosophies of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, urging us to critically reframe our narrative *vis-à-vis* the Enlightenment as the “ultimate” reference point.

emancipation and at an alteration of society as a whole” (Horkheimer [1937] 2002, 208) by means of transdisciplinary critique of the function of thought and society. Horkheimer’s critical theory is intended as a response to what he, together with his Frankfurt associates, considered to be the negative outcomes of scientific positivism: “The self-definition of science grows ever more abstract. However, conformism in thought and the insistence that thinking is a fixed vocation—a self-enclosed realm within society as a whole—betrays the very essence of thought” (Horkheimer [1937] 2002, 243; see also e.g., Bohman 2016).

¹⁵⁷ In “Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?” Latour (2004) tackles the impact of critical theory today in relation to climate change deniers and other conspiracy theory-believers. For critique, as undertaken by critical thinkers and philosophers of science, to win terrain again, Latour instructs us to focus on “*matters of concern*” (231) instead of on “*matters of fact*” (231). Latour wonders whether, due to their emphasis on social constructivism, science studies scholars and poststructuralist philosophers such as himself have helped these scientific fact-deniers win terrain. This discussion has surprising contemporary relevance, given the idea that we are said to be living in a post-truth society. Latour frames the problem as follows: “My argument is that a certain form of critical spirit has sent us down the wrong path, encouraging us to fight the wrong enemies and, worst of all, to be considered as friends by the wrong sort of allies because of a little mistake in the definition of its main target. The question was never to get *away* from facts but *closer* to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism” (231). We should thus not abandon social constructivism all together or ignore the entanglements between knowledge and power. Rather, we should reinvigorate critical theory by moving our focus toward an analysis of situated matters of concern. These matters of concern are assemblages, related to other sets of assemblages, of which matters of fact are merely political, filtered constructions. When it comes to the issue of, for example, global warming, Latour instructs us to look at the issue as an assemblage of socio-economic, cultural, ethico-political issues, and not merely a set of individual scientific facts—which climate change deniers would be automatically compelled to deny. Looking at things in a situated, relational manner—an undertaking that resembles Haraway’s ecophilosophy—would thus help reinvigorate critical theory.

3.1.1. Reconsidering the Enlightenment: Critical (New) Materialist Responses

Frankfurt School philosophers Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer clearly follow in the footsteps of the aforementioned philosophers of “suspicion,”¹⁵⁸ and were one of the first philosophical wartime pairs to add to this idea of the Enlightenment’s double pull, or what I call its ambiguous liberating/(re)oppressive side.¹⁵⁹ They explored the Enlightenment’s overall philosophical contributions in connection to several horrific events taking place during Enlightened, allegedly more progressive times. Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) wrote the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in the United States after having fled Nazi Germany. Describing the collapse of the German Weimar Republic—the epitome of Enlightened thinking—Adorno and Horkheimer sketch out a *Zeitgeist*-capturing analytics that accentuates the Enlightenment’s ambiguous nature. Whereas in Germany (and in other Western European countries), the Enlightenment had mostly been received as a positive, liberating, and human-centering tradition of thought, Adorno and Horkheimer, in tandem with the philosophers of suspicion, fellow Marxists, and the de/anti/postcolonial thinkers of the time, focused on the Enlightenment’s—and, consequentially, modernity’s—dark side. The modern age of Reason may have liberated “Man” from the age of myth by giving “him” (as the Enlightenment

¹⁵⁸ In *Freud and Philosophy*, philosopher Paul Ricoeur ([1965] 1970) has labeled Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud the “masters of suspicion” (33), denoting how these three thinkers unmasked some of the Enlightenment’s most precious intellectual-cultural ideals, including the illusion of the human subject as an at all times rationally motivated individual, free of unconscious motivations and desires. From feminist, queer, and critical race studies perspectives, one could of course argue that these three thinkers are still very much holding on to an equally masculine subject position when theorizing as was the case within the Enlightenment traditions they are criticizing.

¹⁵⁹ Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) are preoccupied with the Enlightenment tradition in the broadest sense of the word. Although they mostly refer to German Enlightenment philosophers, their critique is also directed at the Enlightenment traditions of other European countries. In this dissertation, in order to paint a broader philosophical picture, I have chosen not to differentiate between the different (French, German, Scottish, etc.) manifestations of the Enlightenment.

subject was solely conceptualized as male; see also Chapter 1 and Lloyd [1984]) the tools with which to objectify and control the natural environment that once dominated humanity, but it simultaneously created a vacuous, meaningless world in which everything became objectified and commodified. Furthermore, it was a world that became characterized by unanticipated contradictions, as the supposedly hyperrational Enlightenment subject turned out not to be as in charge of himself and the world as previously presumed: Ultimately, “he” would not be able to stop the aforementioned instrumentalization process. Deconstructing Francis Bacon’s (1597) motto, *Ipsa scientia potestas est* (Knowledge itself is power), and thus anticipating Foucault’s power/knowledge dynamic, Adorno and Horkheimer comment on this quest for power over nature as follows: The thirst for knowledge, and thus for power and domination, enabled the commodification of all that exists. In the age of Enlightenment, this quest for power/knowledge “knows no obstacles: neither in the enslavement of men nor in compliance with the world’s rulers” (Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 1997, 4).

So, Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) argue, whereas the Enlightenment started out as myth-defeating, aided by modern scientific progress and secularization, it disenchanting the world and finalized the Renaissance project of putting “Man” at the center of everything. Ironically, “with every step” (12) it became “more deeply engulfed in mythology” (12). The authors describe this dialectical process as inevitable: Some modern Enlightenment principles—such as the carefully constructed distinctions between the subject-as-knower and its research objects; the mind/body split; goal-oriented, disembodied reasoning; and practicing science from a supposedly neutral viewpoint—were at first regarded as

innocent and providing the Enlightenment subject with even more power over nature and humanity's destiny. Yet, the blind cultivation of these principles led to a society in which "calculating reason" (32) slowly but surely took over. This was further supported by scientific positivism and the other aforementioned dangers, such as extraction-based capitalism. The old mythic system of domination had returned once more, and did so with a vengeance: Everything and everyone within what Adorno and Horkheimer call the regime of technocratic capitalist reason, had to submit to scientific abstract thought, through which they became variously valued and labeled, so that they might be more easily controlled. Those who did not live up to modernity's "standards" of humanity—which, as noted throughout this dissertation, was a flawed concept to begin with—were pushed out of society, and ultimately discarded. Once thought starts to undermine itself by privileging an instrumental, classifying logic,¹⁶⁰ thus abandoning critical self-examination and creative, existential thinking, it relapses into the mythical, into pure brutality, and ultimately ends up destroying itself. What was once a philosophical, sociopolitical tradition intended to liberate, eventually created even more large-scale forms of oppression, fascist violence, and social misery in its need to label, categorize, and classify. Bureaucratic forms of barbarism took over, and this dire situation could only be stopped by a philosophical countermovement, in which critical thinking would be appreciated once more (Adorno and Horkheimer [1944] 1997).

The situation described in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, especially when read from within these neoliberal, sensationalist, mass media-supported, and post-truth

¹⁶⁰ For more insights into how categorization and classification schemes operate in modern Western thought, see also Bowker and Star (1999) and Foucault ([1966] 2002).

times,¹⁶¹ eerily reminds us of the critical (new) materialist analyses of today's technoscientific world: Think of the analyses developed by Rich, Cooper, Braidotti, and, of course, Haraway as presented earlier—all materialists who underscore an embodied, rather than a supposedly “pure,” top-down, and almost disassociating reason and reasoning. Moreover, their analyses warn us against the dangers of valuing beings and their environment solely on the basis of their presumed capital—a dangerous situation that under certain conditions, such as today's neoliberal, hypermarketized society, could transform every fragment of matter into disposable surplus value (see Braidotti 2013; Cooper 2008). These developments undoubtedly impact on how human subjects relate to themselves, others, and their environments: If everything revolves around total commodification and hypermarketization, including human “capital,” and we are forced—and, ironically, disciplining

¹⁶¹ The notion of post-truth was declared word of the year 2016 by the *Oxford English Dictionary* after becoming widely used by the global media in relation to Donald Trump's presidency and his often hostile responses to US news agencies. It was defined as follows on the OED's (2016) website: Post-truth relates to “circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief” (n. p.). The notion is now mostly used in the context of the so-called post-truth society, which is connoted by a type of populist politics in which citizens and/or political rulers are convinced that the media are producing so-called “fake news” to mislead people, and/or are the sources of fake news themselves by creating alternative facts. This discussion can easily be brought back to Adorno and Horkheimer's ([1944] 1997) critique of (capitalist) ideology: What they call “the culture industry” (121), propelled by a capitalist “commodity economy” (157), has made it possible for technocratic capitalist reason to further spread its ideology, in which independent thinking is no longer stimulated. If the capacity to think critically is underappreciated within society and the educational system, and social conformism is promoted instead, it becomes easier to spread lies-as-truth through mass communication systems and alternative media, and to strengthen populist and fascist beliefs. Although never officially part of the Frankfurt School, the political philosopher Hannah Arendt ([1967] 2000) also touches upon this issue in her essay “Truth and Politics” by separating the political sphere—in which truth is factual and plural—from the non-political domain, or the domain of so-called singular truth. Arendt's take on democratic politics boils down to the idea that, as a citizen, one can discuss one's opinion with others in the political domain, subsequently reaching a rational agreement on various conceptualizations of “the good life.” Because of the media's eroding powers as the gatekeepers of truth, and our apparent inability to come together and hold public debates, the ability to form judgments about what is true and what is not, becomes clouded. According to Arendt, this process already started decades ago and is finally giving rise to a society in which those with power can more easily deceive others. The philosophies of Adorno, Horkheimer, and Arendt thus accentuate the necessity of critical thought and education.

ourselves—to compete with others in every domain of life, then it cannot come as a surprise that many contemporary critical thinkers are describing these times as the neoliberal or even “borderline” era of hyperindividualism.¹⁶²

These much needed analyses, and Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique in particular, accentuate the Enlightenment’s liberating/(re)oppressive essence—or, perhaps even more accurately put, its *contradictory* essence¹⁶³—as many of the “Enlightened” philosophers of modernity who were preaching the liberation of “Man” simultaneously employed pseudo-scientific racist theories to continue to oppress all of those who were not included in this strictly defined category (see e.g., Hegel [1807] 1977; Kant [1785] 1997). On the one hand, in these post-Enlightenment times, “we”—here denoting a more inclusive “we” than the “we” consisting of the exclusivist Enlightenment subject—are undeniably all children of this tradition, due to the impact of technoscience. Yet, on the other hand, contemporary crises also demonstrate that scientific “progress,” defined in instrumentalist terms, in tandem with the phenomena of extraction-based capitalism, neoliberal governmentality, and the now combined forces of

¹⁶² The impact that neoliberal governmentality has on our ways of life and on how we understand ourselves to be subjects in charge of our own lives, has already been discussed in Chapter 1 by means of referring to Brown (2015) and Bracke (2016). In *Borderline Times*, Belgian psychoanalyst Dirk de Wachter (2012) provides a thought-provoking account of what he sees as this neoliberal age’s *condition humaine* and enforced subjectivity model—that is, a hyperindividualist borderline subjectivity, characterized by relational instability and existential loneliness, impulsive consumption, the increasing speed of life, competitiveness, and even feelings of identity loss.

¹⁶³ I wish to thank Bettina Aptheker for this particular suggestion. The Enlightenment tradition and the supposedly emancipatory philosophies it produced were indeed deeply rooted in the exclusion of many “othered others,” so that one very particular human subject could be liberated, at the cost of the continued enslavement and oppression of the rest. Both the theorization and application of this contradictory paradigm and its often deadly, othering core are criticized by Adorno and Horkheimer in the context of the Nazi state, which they both witnessed and fled as Jewish German citizens. In his follow-up work, *Negative Dialectics*, which will be touched upon in the main text shortly, Adorno ([1966] 1973) explicitly criticizes the self-continuing, all-encompassing dialectical logic through the creation of a *negative* dialectics that would be able to break free from the problematic Hegelian thesis, antithesis, and—destructive, violence-legitimizing—synthesis logic.

globalization and digitization, should not be the final goal. However, if the Enlightenment tradition can no longer be our automatic reference point, as many of its heralded notions such as autonomy, freedom, and progress are now tainted, then what kind of alternative vocabulary can we employ? How do we go about reinvigorating and thus reconsidering critical theory?

This conundrum has been repeatedly highlighted by Haraway. Consider the following passage:

Shaped as an insider and an outsider to the hegemonic powers and discourses of my European and Northern American legacies, I remember that anti-Semitism and misogyny intensified in the Renaissance and Scientific Revolution of early modern Europe, that racism and colonialism flourished in the traveling habits of the cosmopolitan Enlightenment and that the intensified misery of billions of men and women seems organically rooted in the freedoms of transnational capitalism and technoscience. But I also remember the dreams and achievements of contingent freedoms, situated knowledges, and relief of suffering that are inextricable from this contaminated triple historical heritage. I remain a child of the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and technoscience. (Haraway 1997a, 2–3)

Haraway's overall stance, like that of Adorno and Horkheimer, is a mixture of realism and materialism, and of cherishing a hope for better times in which accountability, justice, and a fairer system of distribution would be more than mere sound bites. In these post-Enlightenment times, "we," and especially those at the supposed center of theory production and the world, need to come to terms with the

immense epistemic violence and desolation that the Enlightenment has spawned. However, completely unthinking and discarding this tradition and all of its principles is unrealistic. As a scientist, Haraway is more optimistic than Adorno and Horkheimer in this regard: While we are indeed “doomed” to live with the results of various and constantly accelerating technoscientific (r)evolutions, some of these (r)evolutions could be tweaked and reused as the foundation for more just scientific praxes and accountable ways of living (Haraway 1997a)—something that Adorno and Horkheimer would probably disagree with, because of their relentless critique of scientific positivism.

One could argue that these three thinkers nonetheless present a united front when it comes to stressing the value of cultivating critical thought and grounded hope. Where Haraway puts forward the positionality of a modest witness—as also discussed in Chapter 1 in section 1.3.1.2. and footnote 57—of today’s technoscientific society, and advocates thinking via situated perspectives to create non-totalizing knowledges that embody accountability, *sympoiesis*, and response-ability, Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) push the dialectical patterns of “myth-Enlightenment-myth” into a different direction by “dialectizing” said dialectics via the Hegelian notion of “determinate negation” (18). This complex project—continued later by Adorno ([1966] 1973) in *Negative Dialectics*—intends to show that only grounded, self-reflective critical thought can combat technocratic reason. This project is largely based on conceptual work—that is, creating new conceptual frames for the here and now—to “stay with(in) the trouble,” as Haraway (2016) would put it, as the Enlightenment’s inherent contradictions ultimately led

to its self-destruction, and thus that of all so-called emancipatory philosophies of the past.

Another intersection between these three critical theorists—one that is shared by fellow materialists Rich, Cooper, and Braidotti—relates to putting this creative toolbox to work when philosophizing about, and from within, the world. Each of these thinkers pushes the almost mindless extraction-based aspect of neoliberal late capitalism to the brink; a system that is eating up all that is of matter, and all that matters. Adorno, Horkheimer, and Haraway thus tackle the worldly work at hand differently, via diverse, yet still equally materially grounded theories, while hoping for similar, oppression-reducing outcomes.

3.1.2. Reconsidering Critical Theory: A Critical (New) Materialist Toolbox

These zigzagging, transversal overlaps between the historical materialist theories associated with the Frankfurt School, and Haraway's critical new materialisms—anticipating ecophilosophy, are significant. Pushing these swirling motions further still, while moving forward in time and thus queering the arboreal logic (see Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 2005), one could say that Adorno, Horkheimer, and Haraway have a lot in common with deconstructionist Jacques Derrida. In his interviews with political philosopher Giovanna Borradori (2003), which are part of the Habermas-Derrida dialogues on terrorism and 9/11, as we will see shortly, Derrida stresses the need to continuously rethink our vocabulary, especially when confronted with an event such as 9/11.¹⁶⁴ For Derrida, this event embodies the

¹⁶⁴ As said at the start of this chapter, I will not be providing the reader with an analysis of 9/11 itself. For those interested in a critical historical and political philosophical analysis of 9/11 and its geopolitical provocation, see Holloway (2008), Shanahan (2005), and Wright ([2006] 2007).

complexity of the post-Cold War era of the early 2000s; a complexity that has only become more manifest. Or, as Derrida explains:

Such an “event” [9/11] surely calls for a philosophical response. Better, a response that calls into question, at their most fundamental level, the most deep-seated conceptual presuppositions in philosophical discourse. The concepts with which this “event” has most often been described, named, categorized, are the products of a “dogmatic slumber” from which only a new philosophical reflection can awaken us, a reflection on philosophy, most notably on political philosophy and its heritage. (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 100)

The idea of a “dogmatic slumber” refers to Kant’s ([1783] 2004, 10) take on the Enlightenment and the task of Enlightenment philosophies to liberate “Mankind” by stimulating critical and autonomous thinking. Despite having been influenced by Kantian cosmopolitanism, Derrida is much more aware of the Enlightenment’s double pull, and thinks that it is time, not only to deconstruct this paradigm, but also to replace it with another type of critical thinking that would do justice to the entangled complexities and paradoxes currently affecting the world. This need for a different critical theory is also emphasized by Buck-Morss and Braidotti. As expressed in the epigraphs for this chapter, both thinkers value the reinvigoration of critical thinking, while fabricating new conceptual vocabularies and tools to

Another interesting source is *The 9/11 Commission Report* (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States 2004), put together by an independent, bipartisan commission. The report itself details what happened on 9/11 and the four flights in question, further discussing the coming into being of Al-Qaeda and the counterterrorist responses by the American government. It also provides a detailed overview of how the United States as a state has since then been reformed to better deal with potential terrorist threats. When mapping past and present-day theories on terrorism, more references will be provided.

better map and capture a rapidly changing *Zeitgeist*—one that, nonetheless, remains deeply rooted within the Enlightenment.

For Buck-Morss ([2003] 2006), whose work I interpret as building upon that of Adorno and Horkheimer, this means taking the Enlightenment's dark colonial side into account, as also noted in Chapter 1, section 1.1.1. It also implies a renewed attention for the speed with which globalization and digitalization are expanding within an increasingly neoliberal sociopolitical climate. Additionally, it entails coming to terms with the fact that some of the values attributed to Western Enlightenment philosophies, such as “democracy and human rights” (Buck-Morss [2003] 2006, 52), should not be enforced as universally valid via mechanisms of imperialism, warfare, and the supposedly “civilizing” US- and UK-driven War(s) on Terror. Buck-Morss, together with other critical materialists, does not necessarily defend the implementation of moral and cultural relativism—something that poststructuralist, and especially feminist poststructuralist, thinkers have often been accused of. Buck-Morss simply accentuates the existence of various situated angles and knowledges—a plurality she exposes as having been erased by the Enlightenment, further underscoring its liberating/(re)oppressive ambiguity. Forcefully imposing Enlightenment values through cyclical epistemic violence is thus ultimately undesirable. What is really needed today is a critical-creative, attentive rethinking of what contemporary critical theory should comprise, and how it could make a continued and valuable impact.

Buck-Morss leads us to Braidotti's Deleuzoguattarian quotation in the epigraph. Here, Braidotti is preoccupied with developing concepts and perspectives that are sufficiently multidimensional to capture the complexity of our times, albeit

without relinquishing the connections between the here and the now, past wrongdoings, and the future. Driving home the construction of well-contextualized concepts, vocabularies, and tools for which thinkers could be held accountable, Braidotti combines critical theories with those of Deleuze and Guattari, and Haraway. Deleuze and Guattari ([1991] 1994) consider the task of philosophy to be the creation of novel concepts,¹⁶⁵ which is central to Braidotti's oeuvre as well, not least as she is interested in creating critical-affirmative concepts that can be used to gauge what is at stake, to then push for sociopolitical transformations. The Harawayan influence (whose ecophilosophy has informed Braidotti's philosophy from the outset, and vice versa, as we also saw in Chapter 2) lies in its emphasis on developing non-totalizing concepts and theories.

Haraway (2016) again refers to this in *Staying with the Trouble*, stating: "we need stories (and theories) that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections" (101). This quote is particularly thought-provoking because it not only indicates Haraway's constant accentuation of the production of situated, accountable theories, concepts, and stories, but also highlights another major aspect of grounded philosophical theorizing: namely, that there should always be space for other

¹⁶⁵ *What is Philosophy?* is Deleuze and Guattari's ([1991] 1994) final collaborative work. In contrast to Horkheimer (and Adorno), Deleuze and Guattari do not regard philosophy to be immediately antithetical to science. Rather, they see philosophy, science, and art as different modes of thought that could complement one another, with both philosophy and science having a direct relation to the actualization of the virtual. Philosophy is even defined as an art in its own right, namely, "the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts" (2). All three modes of thought share a certain level of creativity, yet only philosophy is regarded as focusing on the conceptual level and the situated subject that is involved in the processes of concept creation. Or, as Deleuze and Guattari put it: "In fact, sciences, arts, and philosophies are all equally creative, although only philosophy creates concepts in the strict sense. Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator's signature" (5). Philosophy is thus meant to be more than pure reflection. This idea of concept creation runs through most, if not all, contemporary new materialist theories.

theories, concepts, and stories, as it is exactly this multiplicity of viewpoints that offers new insights. Even more significant in this context is the idea that theories often need to be reformulated if they are to stand the test of time. All of the foregoing implies that the philosophical concept/story creator constantly needs to pay attention to, and care for, the here and now, cultivating a self-reflexive attitude, while remaining modest in her/his attempt to create stories that could interlace the past, the present, and the future. Rather than reactively, or, even worse, resignedly, claiming that contemporary critical theory and critique have run out of steam (as in the case of Latour 2004), the aforementioned critical theorists and critical new materialists are preoccupied with the development of what I refer to as a *Zeitgeist*-compatible conceptual toolbox.¹⁶⁶

This mindful, materially grounded process of conceptual creativity is exactly what this chapter on terror(ism), critical theory, and critical new materialisms is all about. Building upon the idea that complex times require *Zeitgeist*-attentive theories, concepts, and stories, this chapter continues with a broadly painted critical cartography of (at least some of) the philosophical theorizing on terrorism thus far, pointing toward the need for further critical Continental reflection. After this overview, the core of this chapter is focused on

¹⁶⁶ Of course, this does not mean that Latour is not interested in the development of new concepts and theories. In his 2004 article, he underlines the necessity of updating critical theory: “[T]here is no greater intellectual crime than to address with the equipment of an older period the challenges of the present one. Whatever the case, our critical equipment deserves as much critical scrutiny as the Pentagon budget” (Latour 2004, 231). He further elaborates on this revision of critical thought in one of his more recent works, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence* (Latour [2012] 2013). In this book, he goes back to his earlier works, such as *We Have Never Been Modern* (Latour [1991] 1993), and the questions he posed there concerning the interrelatedness between nature and culture, the idea of modernity, and the value of critique and critical theory. Latour here claims that there are many modes of existence, of which Western modern science is but one, and argues that Western thinkers should become more open to other ways of (thinking) life.

diffractive theorizing with regard to terrorism as an entangled, always already situated phenomenon and the theories produced on the latter. By diffractively reading media snippets on the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 attacks, viral hashtags, memes demonstrating the high-speed intensity and interconnectedness of these digitalized-globalized times, critical (new) materialist fragments, and particular legal texts that tell us something about the bio-/necropolitical aftermath of these events, I elaborate upon the Derrida-Habermas dialogues and the theories these two thinkers represent. This exercise in diffractive, critical new materialist theorizing from the ground up is in no way intended as an exhaustive commentary on these events. Rather, this diffractive intervention should be interpreted as a critical-affirmative exploration of the praxis of contemporary critical theory and philosophy within post-Enlightenment, neoliberal, and borderline times. Additionally, it could be seen as developing a conceptual-theoretical toolbox to place a highly politicized topic back on the intellectual-philosophical agenda.

3.2. Terror(ism) on Continental Soil: A Broadly Painted Critical Cartography

When working on a multilayered, “glocal” phenomenon such as terrorism, one is immediately confronted with a myriad of problems. First of all, contemporary philosophical, critical, and political theory on the topic is abundant. However, the phenomenon of terrorism itself is often interpreted, either from a purely moral, or a distinctly political perspective, thereby separating the domains of ethics and politics. This splitting of the ethical and political is a typical (pre-)modern route many critical new materialist thinkers do not wish to follow.

A second issue that complicates matters, is that terrorism itself has been given numerous definitions over time, leading to a degree of semantic vagueness and instability, as Derrida also puts it: “The dominant power is the one that manages to impose and, thus, to legitimate, indeed to legalize (for it is always a question of law) on a national or world stage, the terminology and thus the interpretation that best suits it in a given situation” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 105).¹⁶⁷ Moreover, this vagueness is characterized by countless geopolitical, racialized, and ethnicized power imbalances. Such imbalances are, for example, demonstrated by the frequent and overt mediatization of acts labeled as terrorist in the so-called “First World”—put between brackets here because of its neocolonial connotations—and by the racialized and gendered civilizing mission and savior narrative that characterized the War(s) on Terror following 9/11—wars that contrastingly were not automatically labeled as terrorist and terror-inducing. Incidentally, the War(s) on Terror are an excellent real-life example of how Foucault’s power/knowledge dynamic operates, and how, to put it even more concretely, geopolitical power relations and the production of knowledges and discourses of truth work within the glocal context of terrorism: One man’s patriotic freedom fighter is another man’s terrorist, and vice versa. What one nation-state conceptualizes as an intervention aimed to liberate oppressed subjects—often women, women of color, and other minority subjects—can, seen through another critical lens, easily be labeled as enforcing a neo-imperialist savior narrative that ironically often re-oppresses rather than “liberates” (see also Bracke 2012; Cooke 2002; Hirschkind and Mahmood

¹⁶⁷ A similar analysis has been made by Spivak, who not only addresses the conceptual ambiguities that are attached to the words “terror” and “terrorism,” but also reflects on how best to respond to 9/11 and the neo-imperialist war(s) it engendered (Spivak 2004).

2002; Nayak 2006; and Spivak 1988 for concrete examples of this problematic savior narrative, which is now often also exploited to “protect” LGBTQI subjects in particularly Anglo-American and European contexts).¹⁶⁸ The uneven global distribution of power, together with the heavily racialized-Orientalized ideology of the Western Enlightenment (see also Puar 2007; Puar and Rai 2002; Said 1978; da Silva 2007; Spivak 2004), as also underscored by Buck-Morss earlier, definitely play a role in defining what “terrorists,” “terrorist regimes,” and “rogue states” today are said to look like. Often, terrorists are framed as non-white, devotion-driven Muslims or other religious—deindividualized—subjects, whereas white nationalist “shooters” are mostly depicted as mentally ill or—hyperindividualized—“lone wolves.”

A third and final challenge relates to the fact that the dialogues between Habermas and Derrida—as one of the most thought-provoking intellectual debates on terrorism to date—took place amidst the mediatization of 9/11 as a global televised spectacle (as argued by Derrida, Buck-Morss,¹⁶⁹ and the French sociologist Jean Baudrillard), and the start of the first international War on Terror.

¹⁶⁸ Today, this problematic savior narrative is often part of a larger-scale phenomenon that Puar (2007, 83) in *Terrorist Assemblages* has labeled “homonationalism,” or the idea that certain patriotism-promoting nation-states, and specifically right-winged political parties, defend and exploit LGBTQI rights discourses to justify their own anti-immigrant, and mostly Islamophobic sentiments and positions, further underlining the assumptions that non-Western immigrants are “automatically” homophobic. Furthermore, homonationalism also comprises the participation of LGBTQI subjects in this political discourse. The notion of homonationalism has since 2007 morphed into a “traveling concept,” and has especially resonated with Continent-based critical theorists and critical race studies scholars. Examples include Wekker (2016, 108), who uses the concept in combination with “homo nostalgia,” or the xenophobic, neo-imperialist desire of some LGBTQI subjects in the Netherlands for the “good old” immigrant-free days; El-Tayeb (2012), who uses the concept in relation to the multiple othering processes that queer Muslims experience on the Continent; and Bracke (2012), who critically addresses the interlinkages between women-focused and LGBTQI-focused savior narratives from within the Dutch context.

¹⁶⁹ For this particular claim, see Buck-Morss ([2003] 2006). I will come back to Baudrillard’s ideas shortly in both the main text and footnotes.

Rooted in the Continent, but held in the United States, these dialogues are in need of a critical-creative re-evaluation, as our times have rapidly changed since then. Moreover, the Derrida-Habermas debate, as we will soon see, never made it back to the Continent—and this has to be problematized, exactly because of the contemporary Continental need for more critical theory production on the topic of terrorism.

3.2.1. Some Notes on Semantics and “Mapping”/“Tracing” Processes

The semantic vagueness of the notion of terrorism makes it a difficult topic to research. Almost all of the existing examinations start out with a detailed, yet often divergent definition of what terrorism is supposed to consist of, which proves that there is not one universally applicable definition readily available. When mapping the phenomenon of terrorism, one thus has to keep in mind that the power of definition matters, and that most definitions are highly dependent on existing power relations and their wider contexts.

The above necessarily brings us to the issue of mapping itself, and to why I have chosen to focus on recent terrorist attacks that took place on the Continent. The same methodologies of diffraction and critical cartography as applied to new materialist thought (see Chapters 1 and 2), can be put to work in this chapter when examining the constantly mutating phenomenon of contemporary terrorism. Yet I am not necessarily interested in pinning down the phenomenon of terrorism on the basis of its historical-conceptual roots to descriptively sketch out what has been, and is, at stake. Simultaneously, it must be noted that earlier philosophical theories on the matter definitely play an important role in philosophizing contemporary

terrorist events and their aftermath, especially as the two methodologies used in this dissertation are both characterized by affirmatively building upon what has come before to intellectually and ethico-politically orientate ourselves toward the future. However, the “pinning down” of phenomena, which is present in a lot of other methodologies, such as that of historical tracing, or even in a more genealogical Foucauldian methodology related to critical cartography, is to be avoided, as it is too similar to what Deleuze and Guattari ([1980] 2005) see as processes of theoretical tracing or partaking in more fixating, classifying ways of philosophizing. This stands in sharp contrast to designing critical cartographies that are meant to revolve around conceptual creativity, fluidity, and accountability. Moreover, as such mappings tend to put different phenomena, elements, ideas, concepts, etc., in relation and dialogue with one another, the either/or logic of oppositional differentiation—previously rather common in modern philosophizing, and therefore criticized throughout Deleuze’s and Guattari’s oeuvre—is traversed.

What matters in this context, is Deleuze and Guattari’s constant refusal of an atomistic, oppositional logic,¹⁷⁰ which brings the praxes of mapping and diffraction into close proximity. In addition to being critical of mere representationalist classification processes, both methods escape the rigidity that characterizes oppositional classificatory schemes. In mapping and diffracting, something that *is* (A), is not merely represented in opposition to something that *is not* (-A) or *is different from* (B). Rather, it is seen as co-engendering and co-

¹⁷⁰ This refusal of an oppositional logic is also central to Derrida’s oeuvre, which is not to say that Deleuzoguattarian thought and Derridean deconstructionist philosophy are the same. One could argue that, seen through a Deleuzoguattarian perspective, the way in which Derrida’s plays with binaries remains confined to representation(alism). For the differences between Derrida and Deleuze, see also Patton (2011), and Patton and Protevi (2003).

constituting that which is being mapped.¹⁷¹ As we will now see, this adds a layer of creativity to both mapping and diffraction.

In *The Machinic Unconscious*, Guattari ([1979] 2011) summarizes the experimental-creative power of mapping as follows:

Within tracings, figures of expression are treated as the primary matters of an experimentation bearing upon abstract machines. Maps themselves are like laboratories where experimentations on tracings are set in interaction. Thus, here the map is opposed to the structure; it can open itself in all its dimensions; it can also be ripped apart; it can be adapted to all kinds of assemblies. (172)

As becomes evident here, tracing consists of obediently following predefined routes via firmly fixed reference points and end goals, whereas the praxis of mapping corresponds to realizing that any map has multiple entry points, depending on the mapmakers and users concerned. In addition, Guattari emphasizes that the process of mapping/traveling itself matters more than reaching a certain predefined end point. Mapping is meant to be non-sedentary and open-ended. All of these aspects were also mentioned when discussing the Braidottian take on critical cartography (1.2.) and, similar to the emphasis on accountable, situated knowledge production in diffractive theorizing (1.3.), accountability is a key feature of mapping in both its Deleuzoguattarian and Braidottian forms. Even the most basic of maps include a

¹⁷¹ These aspects of “co-engendering” and “co-constituting” are also expressed via media and performance studies scholar Nanna Verhoeff’s (2012) notion of a “performative cartography” (13). Conceptualizing the map as an event in flux—which is very Deleuzoguattarian in nature—Verhoeff also claims that these mapping processes can be seen as “a particular form of interactive navigation” (145), thus involving the mapmaker and reader/follower from the outset.

citation portion, in which the map's metadata is explained, informing us about its geopolitical spatiality.

In combination with the accentuation of accountable mapping/knowledge production, the experimental-creative feature is crucial here, as we—in support of the aforementioned introductory musings on post-Enlightenment theorizing—wish to come up with *Zeitgeist*-compatible concepts and theories that could capture today's spirit and transform the world for the better. One way to more carefully—that is, with situated attention, care, and accountability—attend to the intricate matter(s) of contemporary terror(ism) and the affective and bio-/necropolitical repercussions it often engenders, is to take on the role of mapmaker once again, zooming in on concrete events and their aftermaths, which I, along with many others, indirectly witnessed.

3.2.2. Cartographically Attending to (Philosophies on) Terror(ism)

3.2.2.1. Mapping some of the existing literature

When cartographically attending to the matter(s) of present-day terror(ism), it is first of all noteworthy that the literature on the topic is vast, but also limited in scope. Most of the existing literature within the fields of philosophy, political theory, and intellectual history consists of conceptual definitions of terrorism, usually conceptualized as some form of politically and/or religiously motivated unlawful violence, carried out by or against a nation-state and/or regime.¹⁷² Often,

¹⁷² The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2019) presents us with the following definition: “The unlawful use of violence and intimidation, especially against civilians, in the pursuit of political aims” (n. p.). The unlawful aspect matters here, as it underlines the idea that something is “amiss” with terrorism, on a moral and political level. Interestingly, the dictionary relates the origins of the term to the Jacobin regime in late eighteenth-century France, as will be addressed in the main text shortly.

the focus lies on the (im)morality and evilness of terrorist perpetrators and acts, or on their more political characteristics—the motivations behind such acts, their (geo)political implications, and so forth. Moreover—and adding still more complexity—most well-known philosophical works on terrorism were written during or immediately after very specific periods of historical instability, rendering them untranslatable to the current context. While the illicit violence accompanying terrorism is common conceptual ground in all of the available definitions, it is obvious that the scale and intensity of the violence and damage that can be produced in today's technologically advanced times is incomparable to early and late modern terrorist acts. While they might be similar in nature, the effects, as well as the corresponding bodily affects—among others, apprehension, disgust, anger, and paranoia—that are provoked seem more widely disseminated now than in earlier times because of live global media reporting and the high-speed telecommunication networks they are carried by. The impact of terrorist acts around the world is thus felt more widely and more instantaneously than ever before.

Taking terrorism's conceptual vagueness, its often divergent ethical/political interpretations, and its situated, changing manifestations into account, a couple of critical cartographical broad strokes would paint the following, albeit necessarily incomplete, picture: Most literary sources link the emergence of terrorism as both a concept and a praxis to the violent reign of the Jacobins—

Primoratz's 2018 entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* mentions the increase in philosophical interest in terrorism after 9/11, and connects it to the bloody Jacobin regime, while coming up with a definition that connects terrorism to goal-oriented violence that "aims at intimidation and at some further political, social, or religious goal or, more broadly, at coercion" (n. p.). For an analysis of various definitions of terrorism in relation to the phenomenon's conceptual vagueness, see also Weinberg, Pedahzur, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2004).

nicknamed “*La Terreur*”—led by Robespierre during the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century. The Jacobins personify the double pull of the Enlightenment, as touched upon at the beginning of this chapter. They used terror as a governmental instrument, executing via the guillotine all those who opposed the Revolution, which had come to a head during the storming of the Bastille on July 14, 1789. The Jacobins wanted to create an egalitarian society in accordance with revolutionary Enlightenment values, but ended up installing yet another brutally oppressive regime, instilling fear and pure terror in almost any citizen of the French state. Further to this, in France and across Europe brutal imperialist and colonial horrors were committed in the name of “Enlightenment.”

Firmly rooted within this context, the notion of terrorism was later used to denote the structural oppression and politically motivated violence of totalitarian states used against both their citizens and opponents, as well as the often equally violent counteractions of said opponents. Conceptually, terrorism can thus be linked, both to systematic repressive political violence by the state, and revolutionary violence. This also becomes clear when mapping some of the most important philosophical accounts of this phenomenon and its countless evolutions and iterations.

3.2.2.1.1. Modern, critical theoretical, and de/anti/postcolonial philosophical reflections

Justifying the excesses of the modern Enlightened regimes of his time, Hegel’s reflections cannot be overlooked. Living at the time of both the French and the Haitian Revolutions, the German idealist philosopher analyzed the horrors of the

French Revolution in *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Hegel ([1807] 1977) observes how the revolution only brought about “death, and indeed a death that has no inner depth or fulfillment; . . . the coldest, shallowest of deaths, with no more significance than cleaving a cabbage head or swallowing a gulp of water” (360). Hegel defended these acts of terror, as well as other kinds of counterrevolutionary and extermination-based violence, all in the name of the modern German state and his own philosophy of the *Geist*, or reason.¹⁷³

Later, more materialist reflections paint a different picture. During and after the horrors of World War II, Adorno and Horkheimer, together with psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich and political philosopher Hannah Arendt, linked the terror and political violence inherent in terrorism to the terrible acts of cruelty committed by the fascist German Nazi state apparatus. While all of these thinkers strongly disapproved of those barbaric acts, their argumentation differs: Whereas Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) stick to their critique of technocratic reason, Reich ([1933] 1946) explains the appeal of fascist populism in Germany in the 1930s by means of a thesis of sexual repression. Meanwhile, in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt (1951) introduces a much needed political analyses of European scientific racism, anti-Semitism, and colonial domination as supporting fascist thought.

¹⁷³ In order for the *Geist*—personifying real freedom, rationality, and progress—to materialize itself, every instance of violence, war, domination, and tyranny in this world are but a logical step in its realization. This becomes especially clear in Hegel’s ([1837] 1988) *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, in which he rethinks the whole of history from the perspective of the externalization of the *Geist*, while presenting what could be seen as a modern, secular theodicy. For Hegel, ultimately, history is a mere “slaughter bench, upon which the happiness of nations, the wisdom of states, and the virtues of individuals were sacrificed” (24). This means that the evils of terrorism and all sorts of other political violence are part of humanity’s dialectical progression. Although he legitimizes this kind of violence, it is clear Hegel would consider most contemporary terrorists outlaws for not operating within the political and legal boundaries of the nation-state.

As my aim is to map those critical theorists who connect modern political violence to the ambivalence of Enlightened modernity itself, de/anti/postcolonial activists and thinkers who have addressed the Enlightenment's dark side and its linkage with political violence have to be included here. In this regard, the French West-Indian psychoanalyst and philosopher Frantz Fanon ([1961] 1963)—specifically his analysis of counterterrorism as a decolonial tool in *The Wretched of the Earth*—has been incredibly influential. Furthermore, it matters to this particular critical cartography, as Fanon's book demonstrates how modern power relations and colonial, often Orientalizing discourse¹⁷⁴ co-construct the actual phenomenon of terrorism, and label what is to be seen as terrorist and what it is not. Fanon unmasks the racism-fueled settler colonial occupation of Algeria by France, the Algerian struggle for decolonization, and the excessive violence used by both the colonizers and those fighting for an independent Algeria. Similar to the aforementioned critical theorists, he accentuates the use of terror by the colonial regime to oppress and control the colonized, while making a case for breaking through “the circle of hate” (89) that consists of “[t]error, counter-terror, violence, counter-violence” (89). Again, this repetitive dialectical pattern is supported by the Enlightenment's self-contradictory essence, liberating the “happy few,” founded on the gendered/racialized/sexualized/classed/etc. enslavement, oppression, and exploitation of the many others. This can only be overcome by also interpreting colonial violence as terrorism,¹⁷⁵ and by subsequently supporting the sometimes

¹⁷⁴ For a commentary on how heavily Orientalist American neo-imperialist discourse creates the idea of certain subjects (in this case, Palestinians) as terrorist by nature, see also Said (1988).

¹⁷⁵ It is interesting to note that, for Fanon, terrorism has been used by European colonizers to establish political rule and sovereignty. Moreover, the terror enacted by those in power is said to completely divide the worlds of the colonizers and the colonized. Or, as Fanon ([1961] 1963) puts

necessarily violent strategies of the resistance to restore the pre-colonial order and construct a new, more just society (Fanon [1961] 1963).

3.2.2.1.2. Homegrown terrorism, 9/11 as an “exceptional” event, and the power of definition

After various philosophical analyses of (de)colonial violence during the 1950s and the 1970s, there was another upsurge in the philosophical interest in what could be called homegrown terrorism in Europe during the late 1970s. This was due to the many radical anarchist and separatist groups causing terror in Europe at the time, such as the RAF, the Brigade Rosse, ETA, the IRA, and more internationally oriented groups committing terrorist acts on Continental soil, such as the Palestinian PFLP-GC and the ANO.

Three major authors who brought terrorism back on the critical theoretical map need to be referenced here: political scientist David C. Rapoport (2004), mostly known for his wave theory; philosopher Michael Walzer, and his work *Just and*

it: “The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression” (38). Politically motivated, terror-inducing violence is thus crucial for understanding European colonialism. This idea has later been elaborated upon by philosopher Achille Mbembe in his article “Necropolitics” (see Mbembe and Meintjes 2003). In addition to proposing the idea of colonial necropolitical population management, Mbembe reflects on anti-colonial violence as a response to a violent colonial regime. It is noteworthy that Derrida—himself part of the colonial Algerian structures, born in Algeria and drafted for military service, although at the same time also a victim of the anti-Semitic Vichy government—underlines Fanon’s critique of the framing of settler colonial violence in his conversation with Borradori. When attempting to distinguish regular violence from terrorist violence, Derrida stated the following regarding France’s presence in Algeria and the Algerian War: “No one can deny that there was state terrorism during the French repression in Algeria from 1954 to 1962. The terrorism carried out by the Algerian rebellion was long considered a domestic phenomenon insofar as Algeria was supposed to be an integral part of French national territory, and the French terrorism of the time (carried out by the state) was presented as a police operation for internal security” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 105). Derrida thus explicitly criticizes the fact that the terrorist violence enacted by the French colonial state was framed as non-terrorist by those in power.

Unjust Wars ([1977] 2015); and historian Walter Laqueur, with his work *A History of Terrorism* ([1977] 2016). Although Laqueur's ([1977] 2016) book mostly provides us with socio-historical insights into the terror(ism) taking place both in Europe and globally during the 1970s, his claims about the cyclical repetition and inevitability of the use of terror come across as primarily philosophical. Contrastingly, Walzer ([1977] 2015) puts terrorism on the moral and political philosophical map again, bypassing earlier sporadic, mostly conceptual reflections. While his book is not fully devoted to the topic as such, it does address terrorism as the complete opposite of international humanitarian law dedicated to protecting civilians and innocents. Calling it the worst political violence imaginable, among others, Walzer brings up questions regarding (im)morality and the potential justification of terrorism.

Rapoport is considered to be one of the founding fathers of the field of terrorism studies.¹⁷⁶ His works include an edited volume from 1982 on the morality of terrorism, co-authored by Yonah Alexander; his well-known work “The Four

¹⁷⁶ Due to the complex nature of modern and contemporary terrorism, the field of terrorism studies has always consisted of multidisciplinary perspectives (see e.g., Horgan and Braddock 2012). This multidisciplinary nature is noticeable when examining the most important academic journals within the field, such as *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (accentuating theoretical-empirical research, specifically on the topic of twenty-first-century political conflicts); *Terrorism and Political Violence* (focusing on a multidisciplinary and comparative approach); and *Critical Studies on Terrorism* (a self-declared interdisciplinary journal combining empirical and policy-focused research from various disciplines). The term “founding fathers” has been consciously selected here: Although there are now more female researchers working on the topic of terrorism (see e.g. de Graaf 2011; Karcher 2017), those who are considered to have laid the foundations of the field of terrorism studies have been men. It would be interesting to further research this aspect and see whether there are any “forgotten mothers” of the field in question. It is important to note here that there is now also such a thing as *critical* terrorism studies; a field that adds a critical theoretical lens, clearly rooted in Frankfurt School-approaches, to this multidisciplinary field, starting from the idea that terrorism is, similar to the counterterrorist responses it provokes, a socially constructed phenomenon. Furthermore, the discipline is critical of the othering processes that tend to be inherent in more standard terrorism studies approaches. For some concrete examples, see e.g., Jackson, Smyth, and Gunning (2009), and Jarvis (2006).

Waves of Modern Terrorism” (2004); and his multivolume book *Terrorism: Critical Concepts in Political Science* (2005). Especially his work of 2004 is of interest here, as Rapoport divides up modern terrorism into the four following waves: the Anarchist (1878–1919); the Anti-Colonial (1920s–early 1960s); the New Left (mid-1960s–1990s); and the Religious (starting with the Iranian Revolution; 1979–present). He argues that terrorism has become so engrained in modern global culture that it cannot be undone. Although Rapoport’s wave-based analysis is structuralist and very American-centered, it is remarkable how he already touches upon the global effects terrorism has on the modern nation-state’s organization, its police and security forces, and international relations as a whole (Rapoport 2004).

However, it was only after 9/11 that terrorism became a contemporary global cultural phenomenon, resulting in an increase in political philosophical literature on the topic. Al-Qaeda’s attack on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11 in 2001 killed close to three thousand people, injuring thousands, and indirectly causing harm to thousands more because of the toxins that were present on Ground Zero. The attack was followed by other urban terror attacks in Madrid, 2004, and in London, 2005. The attacks of 9/11 became a global media event, subsequently becoming engrained as an exceptional event, especially so in the West’s sociopolitical imaginary of (urban) terrorism.¹⁷⁷ Its “exceptional” status

¹⁷⁷ For a critical geographical analysis of terrorism in urban cities around the world, see Savitch (2008). Savitch (2008) describes urban terror as something extremely contemporary, and labels 9/11 as the “emblem of urban” (27) and “catalytic terrorism” (27), defined by the huge amount of public fear, debates, and expenditure it has led to. Similar to Rapoport, Savitch claims that the progression from modern to contemporary urban terrorism implies a switch from secular to religiously motivated terrorism. Another important aspect is the fact that terrorist organizations, such as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), now also have the capacity to use the digital realm and social media as a means to spread propaganda, build their “brand,” raise funds, and so forth. Hence terrorism

meant that it was perceived as unrepeatable (because of the subsequent War on Terror and counterterror measures), and never-to-be-repeated-again (due to the fact that the United States as a global world power had been hit, and has since then become highly invested in preventive counterterrorist measures). Engagement with 9/11 ranged from philosophical books on the legal and/or political conceptualization of terrorism (see Asad 2010; Crimmins and de Vriese 2006; Imre, Mooney, and Clarke 2008; Lee 2007); to works on the question of (im)morality (see Held 2008); more critical theoretical books focusing on the necessity of dismantling the dialectics between terrorism and counterterrorism (Buck-Morss [2003] 2006); the interconnected sexualization and racialization of the potential terrorist subject (Puar 2007; Puar and Rai 2002); and terrorism seen through both religious and secular perspectives (Asad 2007). Terrorism, together with the terror, political violence, and counteractions it produces, rapidly became a hotly debated topic once more.

The exceptional attention that 9/11 received, and continues to receive today, yet again underwrites the importance of the power of definition. As a result of the unique power held by the United States following the Cold War, as well as its cultural hegemony, one could argue that 9/11 had twice the impact. The self-proclaimed “Leader of the Free World” had been struck, not only in its capitalist heart, but also in its supposedly unchallengeable sovereignty, prompting former President George W. Bush to declare a national emergency, also assuming extra

scholars are currently also talking about mass-mediated terrorism and even e-terrorism, not least as social media and the Web 2.0/3.0 have become viewed as digital playgrounds for terrorists (see e.g., Awan 2017; Nacos 2016). I will come back to the subject of Web 2.0/3.0 later in this chapter.

executive powers (Bush 2001a).¹⁷⁸ During a press conference a few days after 9/11, Bush made the now famous and polarized statement (based on the Bible) that no nation could remain neutral in the international War on Terror; from now on, they were “either with” the United States in “the fight of all who believe in progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom,” or “with the terrorists” (Bush 2001b, n. p.). The position of the United States as a neo-imperialist nation led to a very specific post-9/11 branding of those it considered “enemies of the state.” Moreover, together with other geopolitically powerful nations, such as the United Kingdom and France, the United States had the power to frame 9/11 as a terrorist attack in its “purest” form. Simultaneously, the War on Terror was “sold” as a preventive (and thus legitimate) international intervention. This crucial issue—the power to define and frame—demonstrates something that cannot be underestimated when examining the topic of contemporary terror(ism), namely, that the epistemological, the ethical, and the political are indeed interconnected domains. Definitions have clear ethico-political implications, both for those who have the power to actively frame such phenomena, and for those who are subjugated to (and often also simultaneously resisting) such acts of framing.

¹⁷⁸ The United States is still held captive by this 2001 declaration, whose legality has since often been the topic of debate. The declaration itself has been renewed every year since 2001, most recently by former President Obama and current President Trump (see Trump 2017), giving rise to a so-called American national security state amid a now permanent emergency situation (for more detailed analyses, see Masferrer 2012; Michaels 2002). Michaels’s (2002) analysis is of particular interest here: Contrasting the United States with the national security states of the Nazi and Soviet regimes, Michaels aptly demonstrates that the United States is evolving toward a national security state, which is characterized by the desire to unite citizens under one patriotic banner and mission; an inability to deal with political opponents, critique, and dissent; consolidating military power; and increasing surveillance and control over its citizens. For critical examinations of the implications of a mass surveillance state and world that is permanently in a state of high alert, see also Kroker and Kroker (2015).

With its careful attention for the entanglements between the epistemological, the ethical, and the political, Butler's (2009) *Frames of War* is of significant interest here. It was written as a follow-up to *Precarious Life* (Butler [2004] 2006), which linked earlier explored topics from *Bodies that Matter* (Butler 1993), such as a study of the ruling sociocultural norms of intelligibility and normalcy in relation to differently embodied and therefore differently valued embodied subjects, to how Islamophobic and anti-Semitic hate speech, driven by racialization and dehumanization processes, took a new flight after 9/11. In *Frames of War*, Butler (2009) expands on these topics, this time concentrating even more on the constructed "non-grievability" of certain lives. Ungrievable lives—or, as writer Teju Cole (2015) put it even more poetically in *The New Yorker*, "unmournable bodies"¹⁷⁹—have been framed as not mattering in the eyes of specific nation-states and their citizens. Here, Butler's work reminds us of two (previously

¹⁷⁹ Cole's 2015 essay beautifully accompanies Butler's ideas about intelligibility, why and how certain embodied subjects come to matter more than others, and framing. Published only a couple of days after the Paris attacks in January 2015, and the sudden popularity of #JeSuisCharlie, Cole tackles the narrative of the killed *Charlie Hebdo* cartoonists as the true defenders of free speech, and criticizes how European and American societies tend to see themselves as the ultimate defenders of Western Enlightenment values, and freedom of speech in particular. Cole correctly states that reality is way more complex than the foregoing narrative: "Western societies are not, even now, the paradise of skepticism and rationalism that they believe themselves to be. The West is a variegated space, in which both freedom of thought and tightly regulated speech exist, and in which disavowals of deadly violence happen at the same time as clandestine torture. But, at moments when Western societies consider themselves under attack, the discourse is quickly dominated by an ahistorical fantasy of long-suffering serenity and fortitude in the face of provocation. Yet European and American history are so strongly marked by efforts to control speech that the persecution of rebellious thought must be considered among the foundational buttresses of these societies. Witch burnings, heresy trials, and the untiring work of the Inquisition shaped Europe, and these ideas extended into American history and took on American modes, from the breaking of slaves to the censoring of critics of Operation Iraqi Freedom" (n. p.). In addition to tackling this unnuanced narrative about free speech, Cole also points to the imbalance between *Charlie Hebdo's* right to offend—leading to the publication of stereotyped, racialized cartoons, bordering on Islamophobia and anti-Semitism—and the limited, controlled liberties many of France's minority populations have. Taking the foregoing into account, as well as the frequent limitations of such solidarity narratives, Cole concludes that "certain violent deaths are more meaningful, and more worthy of commemoration, than others" (n. p.), urging us to further reflect upon why these imbalances persist.

mentioned) critical new materialist sensitivities, namely, the exploration of why certain beings come to matter more than others, and the radical application of the concept of power/knowledge. These ideas have been underlined most clearly by Derrida—a source of philosophical inspiration to Butler—when reflecting upon 9/11:

[A]ll this must not only be analyzed as a speculative disorder, a conceptual chaos or zone of passing turbulence in public or political language. We must also recognize here strategies and relations of force. The dominant power is the one that manages to impose and, thus, to legitimate, indeed to legalize (for it is always a question of law) on a national or world stage, the terminology and thus the interpretation that best suits it in a given situation. (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 105)

Noting the essential conceptual vagueness of terrorism, Derrida demonstrates how important it is to analyze the term from within its particular context, as international relations influence the terrorism narrative.¹⁸⁰

I now return to Butler. Framing, or the way in which we think about things, phenomena, and subjects (and consequently approach, name, and label them)

¹⁸⁰ Later, this is again accentuated by Derrida when bringing up the Algerian fight for independence—an issue he was well acquainted with, having been born in the former French colony of Algeria. Derrida states the following with regard to this issue: “No one can deny that there was state terrorism during the French repression in Algeria from 1954 to 1962. The terrorism carried out by the Algerian rebellion was long considered a domestic phenomenon insofar as Algeria was supposed to be an integral part of French national territory, and the French terrorism of the time (carried out by the state) was presented as a police operation for internal security” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 104). Whereas the actions of the French state were considered legitimate, seen through the lens of colonial occupation, the Algerian rebellion was immediately labeled illegitimate terrorism. This is something that Fanon also pointed to, as noted earlier. Framing—and who has the power to frame—thus matters tremendously and is an important mechanism that always needs to be analyzed with care.

matters. If certain embodied subjects are epistemologically branded as enemies of the state from the outset and, more often than not, profiled on their intersecting identities and bodily markers, then their lives will come to matter less. If the dominant group constructs another group as not mattering at all, fueled by political and ideological motivations, and this eventually becomes ingrained in the sociocultural reality as the norm and a standard pattern of behavior, the result will exert a rapid and profound impact on the concrete lifeworlds of that other(ed) group. Butler (2009) describes the process and consequences of framing as follows:

[T]he frames through which we apprehend, or, indeed, fail to apprehend the lives of others as lost or injured (lose-able or injurable) are politically saturated. They are themselves operations of power. They do not unilaterally decide the conditions of appearance but their aim is nevertheless to delimit the sphere of appearance itself. . . . [T]he problem is [also] ontological, since the question at issue is: *What is a life?* The “being” of life is itself constituted through selective means; as a result, we cannot refer to this “being” outside of the operations of power, and we must make more precise the specific mechanisms of power through which life is produced. (1)

Here, Butler not only advocates a more situated ethico-political understanding of the framing of the lives of those that are made to matter so little that their loss is not even recorded, but also adamantly stresses the importance of approaching our contemporary world in a more holistic (i.e., epistemological, ethical, and political) manner so as to fully represent it in all of its complexity.

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler (1990) already looked into the complexities of these mattering/materialization processes, however, she did so while allegedly overaccentuating the power of the linguistic/discursive. In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993) continued this exploration by means of a lens that was more attentive to material-discursive interactions. However, several new materialist commentators (see Barad 2007; Grosz 2005; Kirby 2002)¹⁸¹ continued to criticize Butler for her ongoing investment in a Foucauldian model of bodily imprinting that supposedly stifles the liveliness of bodily matter.

The previous quotation, together with other passages from *Frames of War*, however, shows us that Butler has subsequently pushed her understanding of bodily materialization processes into what could potentially be seen as more discursive-material—but not necessarily posthumanist—directions. Butler’s ontology of bodily vulnerability is clearly a social, interactive ontology, as it focuses on how bodily matter is “exposed to socially and politically articulated forces as well as to claims of sociality—including language, work and desire—that make possible the body’s persisting and flourishing” (Butler 2009, 3). There is definitely room for resisting denigrating acts of framing, and consequently, imprinting, in Butler’s later

¹⁸¹ In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, following an article from 2003, Barad (2007) affirmatively elaborates on Butler’s theory of gender performativity. By diffractively reading both Foucault’s and Butler’s theories of embodied subjectivity, Barad redirects the focus toward the biological body—of all beings—which is entangled with the processes of meaning-making, valuing, and (ab)normalization that Foucault and Butler so adequately describe. Barad comments on this as follows: “How might we understand not only how human bodily contours are constituted through psychic processes but also how even the very atoms that make up the biological body come to matter, and more generally how matter makes itself felt? It is difficult to imagine how psychic and sociohistorical forces alone could account for the production of matter. . . . What is needed is a robust account of the materialization of *all* bodies—‘human’ and ‘nonhuman’—including the agential contributions of all material forces (both ‘social’ and ‘natural’). This will require an understanding of the nature of the relationship between discursive practices and material phenomena; an accounting of ‘nonhuman’ as well as ‘human’ forms of agency; and an understanding of the precise causal nature of productive practices that take account of the fullness of matter’s implication in its ongoing historicity” (66). Barad’s emphasis on the posthumanist and materiality, is evident here.

work—something that clearly reactivates the bodily matter of the subject. However, it must also be noted that Butler prefers a more macropolitical model of recognition and rights over a micropolitics that adds to the latter model via affective encounters, forces, and flows.¹⁸²

The foregoing discussion of framing demonstrates how the ontological, epistemological, ethical, and political realms co-create one another. With the aforementioned works and claims, Butler injects a much needed critical perspective into the literature on contemporary terrorism and the violence with which it is associated. In doing so, Butler anticipates several critical new materialist sensitivities, highlighting the Enlightenment's double pull: The United States and its Western allies employed a civilization narrative based on polarizing Enlightenment values, not just to “frame” whole populations, but also to “save” them from allegedly terrorist, undemocratic regimes, through the means of

¹⁸² In *Frames of War*, Butler (2009) is critical of the Spinozist view of the body, in which “bodily persistence” (30) is connected to an alleged constantly positive, affirmative articulation of the *conatus* or strivings driving the embodied subject. Butler here addresses the Spinozist-Deleuzoguattarian thinkers that do not pay enough attention to the suffering of the body. Or, as Butler’s critique states: “The *conatus* can be and is undercut by any number of sources: we are bound to others not only through networks of libidinal connection, but also through modes of unwilling dependency and proximity that may well entail ambivalent psychic consequences, including binds of aggression and desire” (30). In *Transpositions*, Braidotti (2006b) picks up on this debate by conceptualizing such a persisting body by affirming life. Braidotti’s Spinozist-Deleuzoguattarian micropolitical model of both the human and the non-human body acknowledges that affirming life is far from easy, and that there are bodily limits of persistence, but that the pushing of what the body can take also matters when it comes to a “[n]omadic sustainable ethics” (254). Although Butler and Braidotti each present a similar take on the embodiment and mortality of the subject, their takes on the body’s vulnerability, and what the ethico-political response to that should be, clearly differs. Braidotti (2006a, 2010) prefers a relational Spinozist ethics that does not rest upon a traditional modern self/other distinction, and the notion of affirmation itself. Furthermore, this nomadic “ethics of joy or affirmation” (Braidotti in Braidotti and Hlavajova 2018, 221) is conceptualized as an ethico-political model. This is important to note here, as the lack of separation between the ethical and the political underlines the critical element in contemporary critical new materialist theory. Butler’s (2014) essay on Braidotti’s philosophy reopens this debate via the notion of the assemblage. Although in this chapter Butler is more affirmative versus Braidotti’s oeuvre as a whole, she still maintains her conceptualization of vulnerability.

“legitimate” military interventions in Afghanistan, and subsequently, Iraq (Butler 2009).

3.2.2.1.3. The Habermas-Derrida dialogues: Re-rooting the debate

This broadly painted critical cartography would not be complete without the aforementioned Habermas-Derrida debate, especially as these two philosophers seem to have fueled the above critical theoretical interventions with their thoughts about terror(ism) as a multilayered phenomenon with ethico-political connotations, and its roots in the Enlightenment tradition and modernity. In philosopher Giovanna Borradori’s (2003) *Philosophy in a Time of Terror*, Habermas and Derrida both describe terrorism as “an elusive concept” (xii) that escapes definition, even though terrorism has left a substantial mark on the disciplines of philosophy and critical theory, and the humanities in general, especially in its 9/11, overmediatized form.¹⁸³ Although Habermas and Derrida agree when it comes to these two aspects, their perspectives are definitely not one and the same. Habermas, for instance, does not attribute instantaneous political significance to terrorist acts and defends a pacifist model of liberal democracy, in which state emergency declarations and counterterrorist actions would not be so easily legitimated. Conversely, Derrida’s philosophical agenda consists of the careful deconstruction of the notion of terrorism, in order to destabilize its supposedly fixed political-religious agenda. Both philosophers refuse to attach decontextualized, fixed meanings to acts of

¹⁸³ This has also been underscored by critical thinkers Jeffrey Di Leo and Uppinder Mehan (2012), who claim that 9/11 woke philosophy from its “dogmatic slumber” (16) by becoming “theory’s ‘ground zero’” (16), giving critical thinkers the food for thought needed to reflect upon other contemporary tragedies, such as the environmental destruction brought about by extractive capitalism, and other economic and educational crises.

terror, thus accentuating the necessity of self-examining the Enlightenment tradition to capture our now globalized—or, in the words of Derrida, “mondialized” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 98)—political existence. They also provide us with two different genealogical-historical interventions: a Frankfurt School-based intervention that slowly but surely morphs into a defense of an updated liberal democracy model (Habermas); and a more deconstructionist approach that takes nothing for granted (Derrida). These two divergent views on terrorism, and on practicing philosophy in times of terror(ism), are both rooted in Continental philosophy. Both Habermas and Derrida share an interest in rethinking our political *condition humaine* in the context of an interconnected world with ever fluctuating power relations. They thus provide ideal starting points for a critical-affirmative elaboration upon such matters.

For a multitude of reasons, the Habermas-Derrida dialogues need to be highlighted once more in this present day and age, while being pushed into Continental, critical directions that take the tangled levels of the ontological, the epistemological, the ethical, and the political into account. Even though 9/11 and its sociopolitical aftermath undoubtedly left a global impression on our social imaginary and theory-making praxes, I am not sure whether the Habermas-Derrida dialogues themselves have found their way to the Continent yet. We could even talk about a type of transatlantic disconnection (see also Stanton 1980) in this case: The critical theoretical and deconstructionist viewpoints of Habermas and Derrida are indeed rooted in Continental philosophy,¹⁸⁴ and traveled to the United States in the

¹⁸⁴ This is not to say that the lives and philosophies of Habermas and Derrida have not been impacted by non-Continental events and milieus. Theory, as noted when reflecting upon feminist standpoint theories and critical new materialisms, is never produced in a vacuum, and the European Continent as such has never been a self-contained, closed off entity. Furthermore, both Derrida and Habermas were personally confronted with the consequences of various (non-)Continental affairs, such as

immediate aftermath of 9/11. This was partially because of Derrida's actual presence, together with the popularity of deconstructionism, in the United States during the 1990s and early 2000s. However, the United States was exactly where the dialogues remained, seemingly completely entangled with the exceptional event that was 9/11.¹⁸⁵ As there has been a resurgence of terrorist attacks, and specifically terrorist attacks in—often highly urbanized metropolitan—cities all over the world during the last two decades or so, in addition to homegrown terrorism on Continental soil, I suggest it could be valuable to return the dialogues to the Continent.

Rather than the philosophical reflections of Habermas and Derrida, in which terrorism is regarded as a multilayered, glocal phenomenon with roots in the Enlightenment, the debates that are currently held in countries like Belgium, France, and Germany tend to be heavily politicized and sensationalist, therefore reducing the complexity of both the phenomenon, and the debate. Moreover, if we were to look at these debates from a Nietzschean-Deleuzian (and also Braidottian) perspective, they are often characterized by a problematic, polarizing reactiveness.

French colonialism (Derrida was born in former French Algeria as the son of a Sephardic Jewish family), World War II, the installment of the anti-Semitic French Vichy regime (forcing Derrida to drop out of school in French Algeria as a teenager), the German Nazi state (which Habermas's father apparently supported), and the horrors and diaspora that World War II engendered, as well as later wars. Derrida was also affected by the Algerian War of Independence, for which he avoided the draft. Both thinkers were influenced by stays in the United States for research and other academic activities. Taking all of this into account, it is nonetheless still remarkable to see how underappreciated these dialogues are in the contemporary debates concerning terror(ism) in European academic, intellectual, and political circles.

¹⁸⁵ Of course, I am not implying here that Borradori's book has not been read: By the start of June 2019, the 2003 edition had been cited 1674 times (see Google Scholar 2019b). Closely examining the first ten pages of articles citing the book in question on Google Scholar, however, reveals that most pieces use the book as a more general reference to 9/11, geopolitics, human rights politics, and international relations, thus not immediately linking the debate to modern Enlightenment-related issues, or the terrorist acts that have recently taken place on the Continent. This demonstrates that a reintroduction of the dialogues could provide us with an interesting starting point for Continental—and transcontinental—reflections.

This reactivity stands in sharp contrast to the affirmative critiques in which contemporary critical new materialist scholars are invested. Such a reactivity does not help us articulate the complex political challenges and questions that need to be addressed regarding contemporary terror(ism). Rather, it ends up fueling already existing populist hate speech and xenophobic othering processes, now rooted in a particular blend of Continental anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, anti-immigration sentiments, and racism.¹⁸⁶ In addition, the intellectual and academic debates on (counter)terrorism increasingly appear to be dominated by security studies scholars,¹⁸⁷ often in cooperation with local and international security agencies, policy-makers, and crisis managers, who approach terrorism as a neoliberal problem in need of management.¹⁸⁸ Hence, a Continental transplant of this debate via a critical-affirmative elaboration on the perspectives of Habermas and Derrida could prove to be fruitful, both on the Continental and the transcontinental level.

¹⁸⁶ For an analysis of these interlocked phenomena, see also e.g., Balibar ([1997] 2002), and Balibar and Wallerstein ([1988] 1991).

¹⁸⁷ Security studies is regarded as a subfield of international relations, and, consequently, of political theory. The field is multidisciplinary, but has a particular Anglo-American angle, as it originates in Cold War politics. Security studies approaches are now often spotlighted in debates on terrorism and the War on Terror. For theoretical developments in this field, see e.g., Hughes and Meng Lai (2011), and Williams (2008). Similar to the perspective of critical terrorism studies on more traditional terrorism studies, the field of critical security studies (see Peoples and Vaughan-Williams 2015) is critical of more traditional security studies approaches, in which many problematic, unwarranted counterterrorist responses to terrorist acts are justified in the name of global security. International relations scholar Beatrice de Graaf's work—which is often referred to in the Dutch and Belgian academic contexts—also deserves to be mentioned here, as it occupies the conceptual space between critical and regular security studies. De Graaf conceptualizes (counter)terrorism as a performance of power (see de Graaf 2011), but also champions an approach favoring a greater emphasis on risk management (see Bakker and de Graaf 2014; de Goede and de Graaf 2013).

¹⁸⁸ See for instance the latest EU Terrorism Situation and Trend report (TE-SAT) by Europol (2018). In this report, contemporary terrorism is split into four different “types-to-be-managed,” namely, Jihadist terrorism; ethno-nationalist and separatist terrorism; left-wing and anarchist terrorism; and right-wing terrorism. Moreover, a particular neoliberal managerial inflection is used throughout the report, together with vocabularies of security and human suffering, which are also central to today's human rights discourse (see Meister 2011) and risk management.

One way to begin such critical-affirmative Continental philosophizing about terror(ism) from the ground up, is by bringing the Habermas-Derrida dialogues back to European soil, diffractively rereading these often oppositional philosophical viewpoints. Moreover, I will read the dialogues in tandem with artistic, cultural, political, and legal artefacts that express what took place during two particular events of terror(ism) and their aftermath, namely the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 attacks. A diffractive reading—but also thinking and writing—strategy might help us escape the so often paralyzing “either/or” frameworks that are frequently applied, not only to the philosophies of Habermas and Derrida, but also to the narratives surrounding actual terrorist attacks and their political consequences. Furthermore, such a diffractive exercise might provide us with the opportunity to let Habermas and Derrida speak to one another, instead of merely “speaking-through” Borradori as their mutual interview partner.

3.3. Affectively “Feeling-thinking-through” the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 Attacks

Before doing so, however, another set of musings come to mind, which express the very tangible reasons for selecting the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 attacks. So far, my situated positionality has been corporealized in the interlinked appearances of a “paperless philosophy”-refusing feminist philosopher *à la* Ahmed (2006), a critical cartographer, and a reader, writer, thinker, and teacher interested in the potential of a diffraction-based methodology. This positionality is very much part of this dissertation, as these events, as also explained in the introduction, haunted me long before I could even grasp what this project was going to be about. Driven by these

events and the problematic political reactions they engendered, this thesis materializes the idea of soil-connected, grounded philosophizing already presented and does so in a very particular manner. I was not actually physically present in either France or Belgium when the attacks took place. Nonetheless, I, like so many others, “felt-through”¹⁸⁹ these events with every fiber of my bodily being, first, via disrupted digital conversations, live-streamed reporting, and online analyses, reflections and cartoons, all of which were actualized in the (post)digital realm. Later, I felt-through the attacks via televised national memorial services, as well as an encounter with a memorial artwork. It is the latter chance meeting that, as we will soon see, not only made me feel-through these events generally, but also brought about the impulse to “think-through” them, instilling in me a Harawayan-like necessity of facing what was at stake. Let me explain this in more detail in what follows, in a swirling writing style that morphs from a critical cartographical approach into a diffractive one.

Similar to—and at the same time prepared by¹⁹⁰—critical cartography, a diffractive methodology implies a creative attitude and approach that remains open to future actualizations, possibilities, and sudden interruptions that could lead one down unexpected pathways. Rooted in Harawayan-Baradian feminist philosophy, as we saw in Chapter 1 (section 1.3.), diffractive reading, writing, and theorizing is meant to be a generous-generative practice that differs strongly from tracing-,

¹⁸⁹ Inspired by Haraway’s (2016) notion of “making-with,” I hyphenate this term to emphasize the relationality with that which is “being felt-with,” and do so throughout the text.

¹⁹⁰ I would like to emphasize the aspect of anticipation here, as the critical cartographical sketches undertaken in this project—the mapping of contemporary new materialist thought, and that of the literature on modern and present-day terror(ism)—have paved the way for the diffractive theorizing that occurs in this chapter. Because of critical cartography’s non-linear, spacetime queering characteristics, and its focus on formerly unseen connections, a momentum is created to think diffractively, to think differently, and thus also to rethink critical theory as a praxis.

reflecting-, and comparison-based ways of thinking, all of which center an oppositional, fixed logic. Strongly tied to the previously explored agential realist idea of knowing in being (see Chapter 1, sections 1.3. and 1.4.), thinking diffractively—or, thinking *differently*—about the world via a transcendence of the difference-erasing mechanisms of reflection, means approaching the canon, conceptual genealogies, material-semiotic praxes, and artefacts while taking into account our own positions as producers of knowledge. The diffractive reader/writer/thinker is not, as Van der Tuin (2016) suggests, “a bounded human who has made up his or her mind about two different texts and their origin” (n. p.), leading to neatly classifiable, preconceived considerations and conclusions. When engaging with a diffractive methodology, one is urged to remain open to the fact that “diffractions happen” (van der Tuin 2016, n. p.), and that these diffractions often push us into different, unexpected directions. Furthermore—and this is of particular interest to us here—they often bear witness to what Van der Tuin (2016), paraphrasing Barad’s 2010 article on Derridean thought and hauntology, calls “sudden rememberings” (n. p.).¹⁹¹ In my own words, such rememberings suddenly arise, as if out of nowhere, meaning that we have to constantly be prepared to re-

¹⁹¹ Barad (2015) later follows up on her agential realist theory of memory and rememberings as follows: “Memory is not the recording of events held by a mind but marked historicalities ingrained in the world’s becoming. Memory is a field of enfolded patterns of differentiating-entangling. Remembering is not a process of recollection, of the reproduction of what was, of assembling and ordering events like puzzle pieces fit together by fixing where each has its place. Rather, it is a matter of re-membering, of tracing entanglements, responding to yearnings for connection, materialized into fields of longing/belonging, of regenerating what never was but might yet have been” (406–407). It is noteworthy that Barad’s conceptualization of memory and what could be called “tracing-memories-via-entanglements” in history comes across as historical materialist in a Benjaminian sense. See also Chapter 2, specifically section 2.1.2.1., in which I explore Benjamin’s historical materialist take on history.

orient ourselves toward the present, taking a new perspective on, and approach to, what has been, could eventually be, or might bloom once more.

Diffraction thus suggests a certain openness toward unexpected interruptions and feelings of disjointedness—as forces that give the more traditional conceptualization of memory and the act of remembering of certain events a creative, disruptive twist.¹⁹² This twist could be best described in Barad’s (2010) agential realist framework, inspired by quantum physics and its particular take on space, time, and matter, or “*spacetime mattering* of the universe” (261). Barad notes that “[p]ast’ and ‘future’ are iteratively reconfigured and enfolded through the world’s ongoing intra-activity” (261) and are thus not fixed. Just like phenomena are not fixed in space and time, the act of remembering does not consist of a single predetermined, reflection-based moment. In Barad’s more fluid, relational framework, memory itself is “*the pattern of sedimented enfoldings of iterative intra-activity*” (261). Thus, remembering is a performative event that is rooted in materiality, and can—through seeing or witnessing something affectively—take us back to the past and relive it in the here and now. It is this more processual, unfolding act of interruptive reliving, guided by Barad’s agential realism and Harawayan-Baradian diffraction, with which I now engage.

¹⁹² It is only after diffractively (re)reading Derrida’s and Barad’s philosophies—both thinkers inspired by Levinas and Benjamin—that I realized that the Harawayan-Baradian methodology of diffraction contains a Benjaminian-Levinasian touch of messianic interruption. Just think of Benjamin’s ([1974] 2009) ruptures in the present, and Levinas’s ([1961] 2015) focus on how encountering the “Other” (always capitalized by Levinas) face-to-face interrupts the subject in her/his way of living. The interruptive quality of a diffractive methodology is also described by Van der Tuin (2017), who states that working diffractively “implies a certain suddenness. Suddenly having entered a new idea owing to an impression that ‘disturb[s] my whole consciousness like a stone which falls into the water of a pond’ (Bergson [1889] 1913, 168). This new idea, then, comes about when, being immersed in the reading of text A (the water of a pond), I am interpellated by text B (the stone). Both stone and new idea arrive unexpectedly, by way of a disturbance” (112).

3.3.1. Paris, Santa Cruz, and Brussels—Diffracted: (Post)digitally Mediated Affects-in-materialization

*Mapping coordinates—queered:*¹⁹³ **April, 2019** (Helsinki, Finland—my writing retreat at the University of Helsinki starts with a thorough rereading of Braidotti’s *Transpositions and Derrida’s Adieu*) / diffracted through **April, 2015** (Santa Cruz, United States—my first Spring quarter at the University of California, Santa Cruz, where I am enrolled in a graduate seminar on feminist science studies with Prof. Karen Barad, learning the ins and outs of diffraction as a physical phenomenon and methodology) / diffracted through **June, 2009** (Antwerp, Belgium—I am wrapping up my BA in philosophy at the University of Antwerp, thinking about selecting an MA thesis topic for next year. I decide to continue with my research on Irigaray, and I am particularly curious about the Deleuzian and queer reconceptualizations of Irigaray’s philosophy by Braidotti and Butler) / diffracted through **July, 2016** (Brussels, Belgium—I am stopped in my tracks while passing through the Maalbeek metro station) / diffracted through **April, 2012** (Merksem, Belgium—I am finalizing my research MA thesis on the diffractive rereading of De Beauvoir and Irigaray, when I discover that Deleuze and Guattari’s anti-Oedipal thinking overlaps with Haraway’s ecophilosophy and Barad’s relationality-focused and queering agential realism) / diffracted through **November, 2015** (Santa Cruz-Paris, France—I am typing up a response paper for a graduate seminar on feminist pedagogies with Prof. Bettina Aptheker in Santa

¹⁹³ This introductory diffracted/diffractive timespace vignette has been influenced by the writing styles of both Barad (2010) and Braidotti (2013).

Cruz, when my friend, Vincent, who is in Paris, digitally informs me about the terrorist attacks that are taking place there) / diffracted through April, 2010 (Utrecht, the Netherlands—I am being interviewed for the Gender and Ethnicity Studies research MA at Utrecht University, hoping to be accepted so that I can spend the next two years researching the oeuvre of Irigaray through a Braidottian lens) / diffracted through April, 2016 (Santa Cruz-Brussels, Belgium—after just having met Katie King by chance in a downtown bar in Santa Cruz and being academically starstruck, I am Whatsapping with a friend in the Netherlands and about to go to bed. My De Morgen news app suddenly starts pingging, I open it, and see a picture of what appears to be Brussels Airport’s shattered front windows . . .

In contrast to my vague recollections of 9/11—all I remember is being at high school in Belgium at the time, and seeing our English teacher running out of one of the classrooms, yelling that the whole world as we knew it was coming to an end—I vividly recall the still surroundings I was in, the emptiness, and subsequently, intense emotions that engulfed me when I heard that the Paris November and Brussels attacks were taking place. These acts of remembering and actively recalling impactful events—that is, allowing them to materialize themselves once more through recalling them—connects me to Habermas and Derrida, and, consequently, links the events of Paris and Brussels that I was more closely and personally affected by, back to 9/11 and its particular aftermath.

Habermas starts his discussion with Borradori by noting how, right after 9/11, there was a “widespread awareness of living at a turning point in history”

(Habermas in Borradori 2003, 26)—something he had only really started relating to on an affective level when he came to the United States at the beginning of October 2001. The interactions between the human passengers and the hijackers, the planes they were in, and the fuel these planes contained, became interacting destructive assemblages, targeting the symbolic WTC Towers, and later, the Pentagon, and the targeted (although not hit) Capitol Building.¹⁹⁴ While pointing at the “newness” of the terror attack, Habermas is nonetheless wary of labeling 9/11 as instantaneously unique. Comparing the event to the impact of the French Revolution, he claims that it is still too early to tell what 9/11, and the subsequent War on Terror, might lead to.

This is instantly underlined by Derrida, who opens his conversation with Borradori with a deconstructionist reflection on the act of “recalling” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 85) by date-giving as something that only happens to ““major”” (90) events that need to be made memorable and become part of our cultural memory by temporally marking them.¹⁹⁵ Derrida claims that 9/11 received a certain citational value that is constantly reiterated. This claim is completely in line with his ideas about iterability, or the idea that every iteration leads to another reiteration (in order for linguistic entities, such as words, to be seen as such, they need to possess such an iterative quality). Eternally linked to a date, the more 9/11 gets cited as “9/11,” the stronger its reference and thus renewed presence becomes. Precisely

¹⁹⁴ In contrast to Habermas, Derrida later claims that the use of planes in terror attacks is not new at all. Habermas’s perspective appears to be slightly more thought-provoking here, as he accentuates the human and non-human entanglements during 9/11, which is the novelty element that Derrida does not spot.

¹⁹⁵ Or, as Derrida put it: “When you say ‘September 11’ you are already citing, are you not? You are inviting me to speak here by recalling, as if in quotation marks, a date or a dating that has taken over our public space and our private lives for five weeks now” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 85).

what “9/11” is supposed to be referring to, however, complicates matters even more: As Derrida notes, now “an ineffaceable event in the shared archive of a universal calendar” (86), it is not just a happening that can no longer be unthought. The fact that we use a concrete date to refer to the event in question, also implies that we “have no concept and no meaning available” (86) to really describe and explain 9/11. Something of this particular event thus escapes our understanding of it completely.

Diffracting Habermas through Derrida, and vice versa, produces the following insights: Although both thinkers agree that the power of 9/11 could not be fully felt and measured, at the time of these interviews, their ideas about the “newness” of the event differ. That the attack was directed at undermining the (up to that point) “untouchable” United States, and that the provocation was globally televised, is something that Habermas and Derrida both regard as novel. The “symbolic force of the targets struck” (Habermas in Borradori 2003, 28) and the position that the towers and other buildings held in both the American and the global imaginary, contributed to this “newness” label. This is also accentuated by Derrida, who claims that “9/11” was the performance of a “double *crash*,” effecting not just material damage, but also the symbolic destabilization of a “superpower” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 93). The presence of international media and television adds yet another novel layer to this analysis.

Yet, a paradox arises here as well, seen through Derrida’s perspective: Apparently, 9/11 has an interruptive quality, as the metonymic naming-by-date of “9/11” “points out the unqualifiable by recognizing that we do not recognize or even cognize, that we do not yet know how to qualify, that we do not know what we are

talking about” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 86). “9/11” was immediately constructed and interpreted as an interruptive turning point, or to put it in Borradori’s and then Derrida’s words, constructed as a “‘major’ event” (90) in a qualitative sense, because of the ways in which the violence was executed and directed against the only existing post-Cold War superpower. Another reason for the “major” status attributed to 9/11 relates to how, according to both Habermas and Derrida, the event itself was instantly transformed into an object of mass consumption through global news broadcasting. Made possible by the technological interconnectedness of the world at the time, this interconnectedness has only increased since the arrival of the more interactive Web 2.0, and even more advanced Web 3.0.¹⁹⁶

However, its future ramifications—as part of the actualization of the process driving 9/11 and its aftermath—are, for both authors, not clear yet at the end of 2001 and at the start of 2002. The way in which this terror attack/global spectacle revealed the existence of certain limits was obvious: in the eyes of Derrida, the limits of language and naming,¹⁹⁷ and for Habermas, the limits of rational

¹⁹⁶ As addressed earlier, Buck-Morss ([2003] 2006) has also highlighted 9/11 as a global spectacle. Jean Baudrillard ([2002] 2003), Derrida’s postmodernist contemporary, also wrote about 9/11 as a spectacle or, in his own words, as “the absolute event, the ‘mother’ of all events, the pure event uniting within itself all events that have never taken place” (3). Baudrillard’s analysis of the event is mixed with critiques of late liberal capitalism, mass media, and US imperialism, and partially overlaps with that of Derrida: Whereas Derrida talks about Western democracy’s autoimmunity condition and sees 9/11 as a symptom of the latter (Derrida in Borradori 2003), Baudrillard ([2002] 2003) claims that 9/11 is a manifestation of the West’s own suicidal behavior. The crux of Baudrillard’s ([2002] 2003) analysis in *The Spirit of Terrorism* revolves around the idea that Western societies focus on expelling death from their socio-symbolic system, meaning that terrorists have the opportunity to use this fear of death to disrupt the system: “They have succeeded in turning their own death into an absolute weapon against a system that operates on the basis of the exclusion of death, a system whose ideal is the ideal of zero deaths . . . The zero-death system” (16). The death of terrorists is not only a material weapon; it is also a symbolic one. Terrorists “bring about an excess of reality, and have the system collapse beneath that excess of reality” (18). Terrorism’s spirit revolves around pushing the system to commit suicide, as only the death of the system (and the West) would be equally intense. However, at the same time, it also a death that can never be pursued. It is this paradoxical aspect that unites Derrida and Baudrillard.

¹⁹⁷ Derrida’s whole philosophy can be read as the exploration of limits, margins, and boundaries. Derrida’s ([1972] 1982) *Margins of Philosophy*—a book that was also addressed in Chapter 1—

communication and potentially also of liberal democracy as we know it. There is something extraordinary about 9/11; it unfolded itself so suddenly and abruptly, destabilizing our normal ways of being and living. The constant reciting of 9/11 as “9/11” brings that interruption back to life with every reiteration (Derrida in Borradori 2003).

Diffractionally reading Habermas and Derrida, it becomes clear that they agree on this particular “newness” aspect. However, Derrida—a playful deconstructionist at heart—still remains critical of the idea of 9/11 being a completely novel and unique event in the Heideggerian sense of the word.¹⁹⁸ For Derrida, 9/11 was not that unpredictable, as the possibility of such a disruptive attack has been part of Western democracy’s constitution from the start. Rather, the event was *constructed* as something totally unique by the global media apparatus. The “construction” of “9/11”—i.e., the narrative that was built around it, its

underlines his claims about the limits of language and philosophical thought, which are connected to alterity and difference, or what philosophy is not. Other important Derridean concepts and ideas, such as the opposition between speech and writing, his critique of Western philosophical metaphysics, in which the presence of Being is prioritized (Derrida’s Levinasian critique of Heidegger’s ontology included), and deconstruction as “overturning and displacing a conceptual order, as well as the nonconceptual order” (329) are analyzed as well in *Margins of Philosophy* and indirectly play a role in the Habermas-Derrida dialogues.

¹⁹⁸ This is explained in the following passage from Borradori’s conversation with Derrida: “The event is what comes and, incoming, comes to surprise me, to surprise and to suspend comprehension: the event is first of all that which I do not first of all comprehend. Better, the event is first of all that I do not comprehend. It consists in that, that I do not comprehend: that which I do not comprehend and first of all that I do not comprehend, the fact that I do not comprehend: my incomprehension. That is the limit, at once internal and external, on which I would like to insist here: although the experience of an event, the mode according to which it affects us, calls for a movement of appropriation (comprehension, recognition, identification, description, determination, interpretation on the basis of a horizon of anticipation, knowledge, naming, and so on), although this movement of appropriation is irreducible and ineluctable, there is no event worthy of its name except insofar as this appropriation falters at some border or frontier” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 90). Derrida here refers to Heidegger’s ([1989] 1999) *Contributions to Philosophy* and his idea of the event or *Ereignis*, which is often translated as “something that is coming into being.” The event in Heideggerian philosophy relates to how *Dasein* tries to understand the world through sense-making practices; through appropriating. What is interesting here, is that Derrida is moving beyond Heidegger’s notion of the event, claiming that 9/11 actually moves beyond the possibility of appropriation. Events, in the Derridean sense of the word, are more like happenings with which we are unexpectedly confronted.

performative citational powers, and the War(s) on Terror and other counterterrorist measures it produced—again underlines how power, knowledge, and discourses of truth operate.¹⁹⁹ Delving deeper into Derrida’s thoughts here, he seems to perceive 9/11 as something liminal, operating both *at* and *against* the limits of language, power, democracy, philosophy, etc. Habermas thus interprets 9/11 as an event that disrupted the world order and, reread through such a Habermasian perspective, Derrida does too. However, in contrast, Derrida then also immediately complicates things by venturing forward in “timespace” (see also Barad 2007) and nuancing this event’s “majorness” and “newness.” It appears to be the constant reiteration of “9/11” that has turned 9/11 into something “truly” major (Derrida in Borradori 2003).

Before going back to 2001 to think-with Derrida and the paradox he is presenting us with here, we first need to engage in some timespace-jumping of our own: Jumping to January and November 2015, and March 2016, to then move back to 9/11, 2001, and subsequently back to 2015 and 2016, reveals that there is a particular connection to be made between 9/11, the Paris 2015 attacks, and the Brussels 2016 attacks. Although both of the Paris attacks (i.e., those of January and November 2015) have not been “marked” with particular dates, they have been linked to the months in which they took place. The Brussels attacks, contrastingly, in the Belgian media at least, are referred to by the exact date on which they

¹⁹⁹ Of course, Derrida is intentionally complicating matters here. Although it is tricky to pinpoint Derrida’s claim here—as his philosophizing is at times rather elusive—he is not suggesting that the terrorist act of 9/11 is fully socially constructed by, and via, the global media apparatus. As explained in the main text, “9/11” is a construct, whereas the act of 9/11 itself, of course was not. Rather, Derrida seems to follow the path of Adorno and Horkheimer here, pointing to the contradictory essence of Enlightenment values, and, in this case, the so-called Western democratic nation-state it engendered. Paradoxically, the state will always keep failing, as its democratic principles are driven by an inclusion/exclusion paradigm that in a way thus always excludes some.

happened, namely March 22 or “22/3.” This difference in annotating and dating probably has to do with terrorism’s reoccurrence on the Continent during the last two decades or so, and again reveals how 9/11 was constructed and became enshrined as an extraordinary, preceding major event.

The November 13, 2015 and March 22, 2016 terrorist attacks, which left so many on the Continent and elsewhere in shock, were claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as acts of retaliation for France’s and Belgium’s involvement in the United States-led coalition against ISIL in Iraq. The attacks were thus entangled with “9/11” and its aftermath, as a reaction to the disproportionate displays of military power, repressive violence, and surveillance installed by both France and Belgium immediately after. The November Paris 2015 terrorist attacks that took place after the January 2015 assault on the offices of the notorious French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* and a Jewish supermarket in Paris, killed one hundred and thirty people in total, and were the deadliest coordinated attacks to happen in peacetime on French soil since World War II (Ray 2018). The attacks comprised a coordinated series of assaults, starting with suicide bombers striking the entrances of the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, various mass shootings and another suicide bombing of nearby cafés, and the gruesome Bataclan theater attack, during which many hostages were killed, either by being shot, or by the self-detonation of the suicide belts worn by the assailants. These attacks have been etched into many people’s minds due to the immediate and widespread international media coverage they attracted. The same could be said about the Brussels Airport suicide bombing attacks in Zaventem, and the Maalbeek metro explosion in Brussels on the morning of March 22. Another example of homegrown terrorism,

the highly coordinated attacks on Belgium's national airport, and one of Brussel's busiest metro stations—located close to several major EU governmental buildings—left thirty-five people dead and more than three hundred injured (Walt 2016). Notably, many official news sources only reported thirty-two deaths, leaving out the three perpetrators who died during the suicide attacks. Such omissions are apparently common when reporting on terrorist attacks, revealing something about how (de)humanization processes operate in media reporting.

If we were to diffract Brussels 2016 through Paris 2015, and vice versa, then it would become clear that the incident on March 22, 2016 was eerily intertwined with the Paris November 2015 attacks. The attacks on March 22 had been preceded by an unprecedented lockdown of Brussels, which took place right after the Paris November attacks in 2015. During the lockdown, the Belgian Army, special counterterrorism forces, and police searched Brussels for the perpetrators of the Paris attacks. A couple of days before the March 22 event took place, one of the accomplices of the Paris attacks, Salah Abdeslam, was finally captured in Molenbeek, an impoverished part of Brussels. Since then, the arrest in question is said to most likely have hastened the eventual March 22 attack and made the already existing links between the two events even more manifest.

Returning to the idea of feeling-through these events, and queering spacetime even more: When the Paris attacks happened in November 2015, I was at home in Santa Cruz, writing an essay about the importance of Freirean pedagogy while chatting with a Parisian friend via Facebook Messenger. As the reports of a potential attack on Stade de France and assaults directed at various restaurants and bars in the tenth arrondissement of Paris erupted online, my friend anxiously tried

to contact his brothers, who were in the vicinity of the attacks. Meanwhile, we kept messaging one another, attempting to make sense of what was going on. Only a little later, the Bataclan attack took place, of which shocking uncensored video footage was instantly broadcasted on France 24—an international news channel that I had switched on via my iPhone, in addition to the already running live streams on CNN and the Belgian VRT NWS channel on my laptop. The afternoon and evening in Santa Cruz turned into a seemingly never-ending night, consisting of me collecting and reading as many media reports as I could and digesting multiple continuous streams of online information. I turned out to be in a strange in-between space and state of being; stuck between Santa Cruz-Paris-Santa Cruz. Reliving that spacetime-traversing event while sitting behind my temporary writing desk at the University of Helsinki, Finland, and diffractively looking back at Paris-through-Santa Cruz-through-Helsinki, I can instantly recall the face of the former French President François Hollande popping up in an online video on France 24, the morning after the attacks—for me, late at night, because of the time difference between the United States and France. Hollande addressed the French nation, claiming that dark events of abhorrent terror had taken place in the self-proclaimed Enlightened City of Lights (see Sharma 2015). While these lights may have been dimmed by the attacks, one could question whether they had been shining that brightly in the first place: France’s violent colonial past and its collaboration with the Nazi occupiers under the Vichy regime during World War II are just two illustrations of a more localized double pull of the Enlightenment (and its philosophies), as discussed earlier in this thesis.



*©Still taken from the original live video in Sharma 2015
Image 1: Hollande addressing the French nation*

The reason I remember Hollande’s face so vividly, exactly as depicted in the above video still (see Image 1), is because of the terrifying words his lips were forming, while the flags of the European Union and France were staged in such a manner—namely, right behind Hollande—that he appeared to already have the necessary political backup for his proposed measures. The framing and depiction of Hollande’s translated words also caught my attention, as if the English subtitles written in white made everything even more serious, echoing his words, giving them a stronger performative-affective impact as they had now materialized into written form. A war-fueled rhetoric, filled with a clear geopolitical interventionist message that brought back memories of 9/11—another interruption by “sudden rememberings”—such as “neutralization,” “state of emergency,” “closing all of France’s borders,” together with other proposals prefiguring a suspension of (inter)national law, was spewed, sharply contrasting with the more reasonable, diplomatic speech I had expected from France’s left-wing socialist leader.

Reliving that moment from behind my desk in Helsinki in 2019, I am suddenly thrown back to that exact moment in Santa Cruz, November 2015. My body goes completely numb as I try to make sense of everything in a mixture of French and English. While reading the subtitles that accompany Hollande's broadcast, and later on, its French transcription, the already subconsciously felt intensities that had been flowing through my body materialize into a form of intellectual paralysis. I intuitively feel where this is all heading, yet cannot but let these affects take hold for now. By construing these attacks—together with those of January 2015—as attacks against the freedom of the individual, liberty, freedom of speech, and other alleged Western and specifically French democratic values, Hollande's rhetoric was not only militarist, but also resembled aforementioned post-9/11 speeches of former President Bush, albeit without the religiously connoted hint of American exceptionalism. Another unexpected, yet familiar entanglement thus arose, bringing France much closer to the United States than I had ever imagined possible.

In addition to Hollande's face and multiplied—both audibly and visually—utterings, I recall the pinging sound effects of Facebook Messenger taking over my otherwise so quiet Santa Cruz night; synesthesia-provoking noises that vibrated through my whole body as flowing waves, subsequently transforming into tiny pinpricks, leaving marks on my disoriented, exhausted body. These beeps-turned-into-pinpricks not only created an intense level of fatigue, but eventually ended up depleting the battery of my iPhone—a lifeworlds-uniting smart phone that for me,

similar to other popular contemporary wearable technological devices, such as a Fitbit or Apple Watch, was already an extension of my embodied being.²⁰⁰

Put in more posthumanist, new materialist terms, the foregoing entanglements point toward the ways in which everyday non-human objects affectively impact and alter human subjects, other objects, and the environments in which they are all co-constituting each other. These objects break down the boundaries between the human, and what is considered to be non-human. In addition, both the iPhone and aforementioned apps carry a certain agentic power, as they are in a relationality of co-engendering affects and interactions with us, and frequently demand our undivided attention. These constructed, yet material objects allow us to be in a process of becoming with a (post)digital lifeworld. Not only are they symbolic-affective carriers, but they are also profoundly material objects, of which even the smallest components are earth-mined. Access to the digital, and even the digital itself, can ultimately be brought back to physical servers located in, for instance, Silicon Valley, taking up actual material space and resources—an important consideration, when philosophizing from the ground up. The altered state in which I found myself, diffracting Helsinki-through-Santa Cruz-though-Paris, was not only caused by the event that had taken place, but was equally impacted by an affects-laden and affects-provoking, manmade device that has the capacity to make our human lifeworld simultaneously smaller (i.e., by projecting the whole

²⁰⁰ For a critical new materialist examination of the self-disciplining impact these wearable and digital health technologies have on the neoliberal subject today, see Lupton (2014, 2019). New materialist theories are increasingly applied to the field of health studies and, if we were to push the above analysis of the iPhone and digitally embedded media culture a bit further, new materialist philosophy is obviously also speaking to the fields of cultural and media studies, so much so that scholars are currently speaking of a (new) materialist turn. For more information on this topic, see Casemajor (2015), and Parikka (2012, 2015).

world onto a tiny screen and consequently allowing us to hold the “whole” represented world in the palms of our hands) and larger (i.e., by bridging and bringing together different lifeworlds, lived experiences, and historical-material events).

We have jumped out of a more traditional analytical framework here by accentuating the agentic powers of these “objects,” or actors, thus leaving a sole focus on objects and their representations behind. This need for a different kind of theorizing our now our now simultaneously digitally and materially immersed *condition humaine* has not only been underlined by the aforementioned feminist science studies scholars, but also by Derrida. It is noteworthy that, during the heydays of postmodernity, he already called for a reconsideration of critical theory. In a paragraph that reminds us of Haraway’s and Braidotti’s critique of technoscience, Derrida says the following about the “mondialized,” interconnected future that awaits us:

The relationship between earth, terra, territory, and terror has changed, and it is necessary to know that this is because of knowledge, that is, because of techno science. . . . In this regard, when compared to the possibilities for destruction and chaotic disorder that are in reserve, for the future, in the computerized networks of the world, “September 11” is still part of the archaic theater of violence aimed at striking the imagination. One will be able to do even worse tomorrow, invisibly, in silence, more quickly and without any bloodshed, by attacking the computer and informational networks on which the entire life (social, economic, military, and so on) of a “great nation,” of the greatest power on earth, depends. One day it might be said: “September 11”—those were the (“good”) old days of

the last war. Things were still of the order of the gigantic: visible and enormous!

(Derrida in Borradori 2003, 101–102)

Derrida's statement could be read as queering the timespace of the early 2000s, predicting the arrival of an altered world; a geopolitical space that is hyperadvanced due to ever progressing technoscientific developments—something that Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) already warned us about. Derrida predicts that in this future world, the usage of planes to commit acts of terrorism will seem completely outdated. Accentuating the future antiquity of 9/11—a temporalities-mixing act—Derrida again stresses the paradox that is 9/11: Looked at from within the early 2000s, 9/11 as an event is indeed characterized by a certain originality, due to its geopolitical status and impact. However, at the same time, it can already be labeled a remnant of a modern logic and time; as something that took place at the crossroads between the old and the new, and therefore performs a liminal function. Ultimately, Derrida has uncovered the many paradoxes attached to 9/11: On the one hand, we cannot deny its major impact, yet, on the other hand, its ungraspable character does not allow us to really define it as a major event. We can only “date-name” 9/11, and keep referring to it by means of citation, as its “true” meaning will continue to escape definition. Last but not least, these terror attacks themselves were completely novel, yet also revealed themselves to be part of the past, targeting a global superpower that was already partly on its retreat due to geopolitical changes. Moreover, one could argue they were not that novel to begin with, as 9/11, together with the War(s) on Terror it engendered, were symptoms of the West's autoimmunity system and its undermining—“suicidal,” as Baudrillard

([2002] 2003) would call it—logic. This interpretation again brings Derrida and Habermas closer together: No matter how packed with paradoxes and ambiguities 9/11 may be, it is clear that Al-Qaeda did not merely attack the global power structures at the time, but also hit the philosophical structures and conceptual vocabularies that support them, such as “sovereignty,” “democracy,” and so forth. Post-2001, we were apparently not only at a loss *for* words, but also deprived *of* words.

Returning now to 2015 and 2016, and jumping from a macro to a micro level, while taking into account these diffractive outcomes, which point toward a need to rethink theory, the world has indeed transformed substantially over the last two decades. Ultimately, the multidirectional entanglements between the aforementioned November Paris attacks, my agency-demonstrating iPhone and its attention-seeking applications, and myself, physically located thousands of miles away from these attacks, yet digitally very much present, created all of the affects and my almost indescribable presence-through-absence described above. These entanglements were made possible by the advance of Web 2.0—an interconnected, interactive World Wide Web that supports direct global communication (and even political uprisings and activism) via social media and networking, and provides us with multidirectional, interactive websites, rather than the basic, HTML-coded pages of the internet’s early days. Various contemporary digital media scholars claim that we are currently in the midst of another digital transformational, moving from a Web 2.0 toward a more complex Web 3.0. This globally interconnected sphere may still be about cooperation and interaction between human users, and between the web and the user in question (see Barassi and Treré 2012; Fuchs et al.

2010; Macnamara 2010). However, unlike Web 2.0, it also seems increasingly driven by big data, as profit-focused companies and most governments now also have the technological tools to mine their already self-disciplining subjects for “raw” digital data.²⁰¹

This transition from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0 also has an impact on how we, as subjects, experience this digital interconnectedness. I would like to claim that social media today still play an important role as tools that enable affective interconnectedness between subjects, events, and phenomena (for example, the sharing of memes, which will be discussed in section 3.4.1.1., is driven by social media networks and groups of people willing to share them). However, at the same time, it is also evident that algorithms, the mining of big data, and deep learning processes driven by artificial intelligence are, more than ever, co-engendering both our online and offline behaviors and presence. This has prompted several digital studies scholars to reconsider the digital era we are currently said to be living in, as described in for instance Nicholas Negroponte’s (1995) techno-utopian *Being Digital*, which spotlights a very Harawayan deconstruction of the human/machine binary. On the brink of entering the “postdigital” era—an era in which Web 3.0 is becoming more dominant, and the merging of human subjects and digital technologies is normalized, to the extent that we have all, in a way, become cyborgs—critique of the until now rather techno-optimistic appreciation of the Web is articulated louder than ever.²⁰² Leaving aside the issue of whether we have

²⁰¹ For a conceptualization of activist new media, and more detailed information about Web 3.0 and its relation to activist new media, see Lievrouw (2011, 2016).

²⁰² For more information about the postdigital and postdigitalism, see Peters and Besley (2019) and Swartz (2019). Peters and Besley (2019) accentuate a certain form of affirmative critique, as we can see in the following quote: “The postdigital does not describe a situation, condition or event after

already fully entered the postdigital realm or not, it is clear we are dealing with ever-evolving matters of technoscience and particularly a form of technobiopolitics that is stronger, more globally accessible, and travelling faster than ever before.

Remembering these entanglements, engendered via the Web 2.0/3.0, between Paris, Brussels, and Santa Cruz from behind my Helsinki “writing table” (see Ahmed 2006, 3ff.), I can say that the morning of March 22, 2016 did not differ that much from the aforementioned evening and night in 2015. I had just come home from downtown Santa Cruz when a Dutch friend contacted me on WhatsApp—another digitally mediated, yet very physically felt encounter—as she was taking her regular train from Amsterdam to get to work. As I was catching up with her, one of my news applications, in this case the app of the Belgian newspaper *De Morgen*, started flickering on my iPhone screen, sending me various notifications in a row. Because the app itself kept demanding my attention, I finally gave in, opened it, and landed on the newspaper’s front page, right about at the same time as my friend was checking the latest news on her phone.

the digital. It is not a chronological term but rather a critical attitude (or philosophy) that inquires into the digital world, examining and critiquing its constitution, its theoretical orientation and its consequences. In particular, it addresses the conditions of digitality and the ideology of digitalism, the idea that everything can be understood without loss of meaning in digital terms” (Peters and Besley 2019, n. p.). Referring to quantum computing and bio-informational capitalism—the latter similar to critiques of the commodification of living matter made by Braidotti (2013) and Cooper (2008)—the authors explain present shifts in computing, cybernetics, and what they call cybernetic capitalism, in which everything is becoming increasingly abstract. I will be using the (post)digital throughout the remainder of this dissertation, to point to the ambiguous present-day situation, in which we are still in the midst of moving from the digital to the postdigital, and from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0.



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Image 2: People walking away from Brussels Airport

I recall that, upon doing so, I came across a picture of what looked like the shattered windows of Brussels Airport, almost identical to the picture above (see Image 2). While it took me a while to consciously register the implications of these broken windows and collapsed exterior walls, subconsciously, I was already able to attribute meaning to this occurrence, as I felt instantly queasy. Then the numerous news updates started streaming in, bringing Brussels eerily close to Santa Cruz. As everything began to unfold, and the suspected terror attack was followed by an explosion in the metro system of Brussels, I instantly tried to call my family and friends, who were going about their daily morning commutes in Belgium. I started with my mother, as she works at a Chassidic school right in the middle of Antwerp's Jewish neighborhood; an already well-guarded, high risk area due to previous attacks in Antwerp and Brussels in 1980, 1981, 1989, and 2014, connected to

Palestinian liberation organizations, but also to general anti-Semitic violence (van den Berghe and Decré 2019).²⁰³ My nausea worsened, as I could not get through to anyone. The only sounds I could hear in the first two hours or so were those of my international phone calls being rejected over and over again, as the main telephone networks in Belgium were apparently overloaded. Flat tones once more morphed into bodily felt stings and pangs that I can still easily feel when writing this passage in 2019. Some of my WhatsApp-messages did eventually get through, and that night my room was soon filled with extraordinarily affective flows of social media beeps, hasty, often interrupted phone calls, live commentary in Flemish, French, and English. These snippets of commentary each had their own flavor to them, because of the linguistic specificities of their delivery, and the ways in which they created their distinct views of the event in question. Moreover, various “marked safe” messages on Facebook from family, friends, and colleagues who had either been witnesses to the event, or were in the capital that day, soon started to fill my timeline.

The contrast between the usually so stimuli-free environment of my studio on Laurent Street in Santa Cruz and the constantly beeping—now fully flesh-felt—sounds was so sharp that the materially entangled “now-ness” and “here-ness” of this event hit me even harder than in 2015. Recalling the there-made connections between Paris, Brussels, and Santa Cruz: By being thousands of miles away, only witnessing these events through iPhone and laptop screens, and later on, through the hastily written messages of friends and colleagues, opinion pieces, and

²⁰³ It is important to accentuate here that terrorism has very much been part of Continental culture since modernity, as we also saw when reviewing some of the philosophical theories so far, even though its manifestations have changed dramatically.

television debates, my affective bodily responses increased even more. Especially during the events in Belgium, I really felt as if I was *there* in person; as if my bodily being was completely intertwined with this digitally represented world and continuously unfolding state of affairs. My fleshy, actively remembering body had already been imprinted by various affective real-life impressions of waiting at the American Airlines counter at Brussels Airport in the past; ordering a Starbucks coffee at the (now attacked) entrance of the airport before checking in; taking the metro in Brussels to attend meetings in the European district; and so forth. Memories, as Barad (2010) also states, indeed are “written into the fabric of the world” (261) and materially imprinted upon our bodies; bodies that, through their intra-action with past material actions and recollections, also impact the actions they perform and their implications. Through these previous and now digital entanglements with this particular terrorized environment, I remained in this strange state of presence-through-absence for a couple of weeks in the spring of 2016, feeling-through all that was happening, mostly via the internet. Even today, I can still feel the disjointedness that accompanied that strange in-between state of being, thrown back into that now radically changed environment. Later, these feelings were followed by more conscious, articulable emotions of utter disgust, disbelief, and despair, but also irrational anger and irritation, which took hold of me in the weeks and months that followed. These feelings arose because of the horror that was inflicted upon innocent people; people with whom I could apparently—and by my own admission, somewhat shockingly—more easily connect with, because of something as trivial and contingent as a shared passport and a physically familiar environment. Yet my feelings also arose as a result of the manifest Anglo-American

and Eurocentric foci of the global media apparatus, and the divisive speeches made by French and Belgian politicians following the attacks.²⁰⁴

There is an ongoing, problematic tendency to overaccentuate and dramatically mediatize so-called terrorist assaults on, and in, the West, while the brutal and for many constant, inescapable terror that takes place around the world every single day remains underreported. This type of media frenzy—driven by Islamophobic, racializing, and ethnicizing perspectives—was already noticeable right after the attack on *Charlie Hebdo*, and in a sense was a repetition of the “media typhoon” (Blommaert 2015) that followed 9/11. The attacks gave rise to a constant stream of sensationalist, subjective, and often unverified media commentary, newspaper covers reminiscent of a Hollywood action movie, slogans, images, and cartoons. This media typhoon was accompanied by even more unfounded hysteria, panic, and political division—something Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997) would definitely have criticized as the outcome of an overinvestment in technocratic mass media culture.²⁰⁵ This process repeated itself after the Paris and Brussels

²⁰⁴ This affective sense of attachment also explains why I am focusing on these French and Belgian events and their political aftermaths, rather than on other contemporary terrorist events or even 9/11 (whereas this event, too, left a material-affective imprint on me, this imprint was different, as I was not that “relationally” attached and connected to it). Furthermore, by focusing on two terrorist events, one could criticize this chapter and project for potentially playing into a certain narrative of terror(ism). Then again, the main aim of this dissertation is to establish an argument to reconsider critical theory as a whole through a critical new materialist perspective, rather than commenting on the phenomenon of terror(ism) as such. Seen through a critical cartographical perspective, it seemed appropriate to focus on events I have been personally affected by, as both critical cartographies and philosophizing from the ground up are about the production of situated knowledges (see also Haraway 1988).

²⁰⁵ Ten years after 9/11, *The Telegraph* published an online overview of the various sensationalist newspaper covers from September 12, 2001. See Quilty-Harper (2011), including the following link to directly access these covers: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/september-11-attacks/8745304/911-Newspaper-front-pages-the-day-after-September-11.html>. Parks (2018) offers a thorough analysis of 9/11 as a mediatized spectacle, the media typhoon it caused, and how contemporary media cultures and (increasingly digitalized) media technologies provided the United States with what she calls “vertical *hegemony*” (2), or “dominance or control over the *vertical field*,” which here includes combinations of terrestrial, aerial, spectral, and/or orbital domains” (2). This can be read as a more cultural type of geopolitical hegemony.

attacks, this time supported by already existing populist and fascist sentiments, as I will specify in the following section.

3.3.2. Paris, Santa Cruz, and Brussels—Diffracted: “Feeling-thinking-through” via Artistic Encounters

The complex phenomena described above unfolded all over again after the entangled events in 2015 and 2016. This time, however, they did so amidst an increasingly self-isolating Fortress Europe,²⁰⁶ which received an extra fortification impulse under the influence of populist, right-wing, nationalist, fascist responses to the various global refugee and migrant crises that have unfolded since 2007, peaking in 2015 due the Syrian Civil War.²⁰⁷ Looking at the current state of the

²⁰⁶ The idea of “Fortress Europe” originates in World War II and was used by Hitler as a reference to further fortify Europe upon bringing various European nation-states under his rule. Today, the notion is used to denote the ways in which the European Union is guarding its economy and its borders. This discussion has intensified in the wake of the recent global refugee and migrant crises, leading several European nation-states to criticize the existing Schengen Agreement, demanding more effective regional border control. Yet this is not something new: European border zones and border control areas, such as those in Ceuta and Melilla (autonomous Spanish cities located in the north of Morocco), or the Italian island of Lampedusa, have been in the news for decades. These places symbolize the cruel act of deciding who gets to be seen as a human subject—in this case, as a potential European citizen—and who remains an abject, nameless immigrant or refugee. The boundaries of human subjectivity are constantly renegotiated in these zones; processes that are increasingly taking place on the Greek islands and the Western Balkans. For a critical take on the neoliberalization of Europe and its impact on the European Union’s response to migration, see Cafruny and Ryner (2003); for assemblage-based theoretical thoughts concerning (inter)national law and citizenship rights with a focus on Europe, see Sassen (2006); for an analysis of some of the most recent migrant and refugee crises, and the humanitarian disasters that are happening at Europe’s borders, see Carr (2016); and, for a thought-provoking vignette on Fortress Europe and Lampedusa, analyzed through a new materialist perspective, see Mezzadra and Neilson (2018).

²⁰⁷ A significant amount of data on the recent global migrant and refugee crises have been made available by EuroStat, the UN Refugee Agency, and UNdata—data that is often manipulated or misrepresented. A well contextualized infographic of the migrant and refugee crises between 2011–2017 and the European Union’s response to the latter can be found on the website of the European Parliament (2017). When clicking on the infographic (http://www.europarl.europa.eu/external/html/welcomingeurope/default_en.htm), one can see the impact of the Syrian Civil War, and the outcome of the *Wir Schaffen das*-speech by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, welcoming refugees to Germany. The number of asylum applicants in Germany rose from 202645 in 2014, to 476510 in 2015, to 745155 applicants in 2016 (European Parliament 2017). Whereas this hospitality might be undermining the idea of Fortress Europe, at the same time, the borders of Europe have never been more policed than they are today. In addition, one

world through 9/11, and vice versa, the sensationalist media typhoon has only drawn more attention to the constructed, stereotyped entanglements between immigration and terrorism. For example, immediately after the November 2015 assaults in Paris, news stories claimed that ISIL soldiers²⁰⁸ were making constant use of Europe's porous borders, smuggling routes, and the often problematic lines of communication between different countries in the Schengen zone in order to (re-)enter Europe anonymously, further bolstering the popularity of nationalist anti-immigration parties.²⁰⁹ Arguably, border zones will always attract illegal activity, and rather than fueling the increasing vilification of refugees and migrants, Europe may do better focusing on the roots of the problem at hand. Specifically Western

should not forget that many Syrian refugees are still living in refugee camps in Lebanon and Turkey. Further, we are not even addressing the number of refugees and immigrants that never make it to Europe, due to incredibly unsafe traveling circumstances, violent human trafficking organizations, and often equally violent border security patrols.

²⁰⁸ For a more nuanced report on this matter, see Ball (2015), and Faiola and Mekhennet (2016). This is not to say that there is not some truth to these stories: Two of the Paris 2015 attackers appear to have re-entered Europe by disguising themselves as refugees. The Syrian passport that was found near the body of one of the Stade de France-attackers nonetheless appeared to be a fake, meaning that perhaps, the attackers intended this passport to be found.

²⁰⁹ In the French and Belgian contexts, the polarized political climate is clearly fueled by the fear that has been caused by the 2015 and 2016 attacks. There are plenty of other reasons French and Belgian citizens are voting for more (extreme) right-wing parties today, such as geopolitical and economic instability, the slowing down of the economy, the rise of neoliberal governmental measures, and so forth. However, many populist parties are using recent terrorist attacks and threats to their advantage, and handily combine them with the issue of immigration. The fact that the current, centrist French President Emmanuel Macron was going up against Marine Le Pen of the extreme right Front National in the 2017 presidential elections, is revealing France's turn to the Right (see Burn-Murdoch et al. 2017). Although the recent Belgian electoral results are more complex—given the country's multi-governmental structure, and the typical divisions between the country's more socialist-oriented Walloon side, and the conservative Flemish side—the results of these 2019 European, federal, and regional elections in Belgium were very similar: Although across Belgium the Greens and the far-left Workers' Party are on the rise, the results of the Flemish and federal elections resulted in huge gains for the right-wing New Flemish Alliance (N-VA), which was already in power, and the far-right party Vlaams Belang, which has, until now, not been allowed to govern because of a *cordon sanitaire*—literally meaning “protective barrier”—installed against them in 1989 (see van Dorpe, Cerulus, and Cokelaere 2019). Both the N-VA and Vlaams Belang have successfully used terrorism and immigration issues in their favor, and their electoral gains will most likely result in either a potential cancellation of the *cordon sanitaire*, allowing an anti-democratic party that has been legally convicted for actively promoting racism to govern; an inability to federally govern the country as a whole for years to come; a further hollowing out of the Belgian federal government's powers; or a combination thereof. As a general conclusion, the extreme right in both France and Belgium is arguably on the rise.

European countries such as Belgium, France, Germany, and the Netherlands, which have indeed been targeted by terrorism, but also produce foreign terrorist fighters, should perhaps consider what is causing their own citizens to commit these acts, only leading to more division on a global scale. This problematic divisiveness is only likely to increase in the future: After the most recent set of European elections—elections that I witnessed not only in Finland, but also in Belgium, to queer the spacetime continuum yet a bit more—the allure of a heavily secured, regionalist Fortress Europe seems to have increased once more. Or, perhaps, diffractively reading the Continent of today through that of a Europe afflicted by World Wars I and II, the idea of Europe as a strong fortress has always haunted the European imagery? The narrative of a closed-off Continent with well-guarded borders, immigrant detention centers, a centralized security center, and a border police appears to prevail once more over another possible Europe-in-the-making—that is, one of compassion, care, and the realization of interconnectedness.

Of course, this is not to say that the possibility of such a more cosmopolitan, accountable, world-facing Europe—essentially the ideal Continent that the forefathers of the European Union, after two bloody World Wars, had envisaged—has been foreclosed. Reading the past that has materialized itself through agential realist, but also Deleuzoguattarian lines, one could say that the present holds many not-yet-actualized past plans for the future. Although there are many reasons to be pessimistic about the direction in which the Continent is currently heading, I have witnessed many glimpses of hope for a better, less divisive future, both in

educational environments, and activist and political spaces all over Europe.²¹⁰ My affective feeling-through process did not restrict itself to one set of precise spacetime coordinates, nor to the (post)digital sphere—although the critical new materialist musings above hopefully demonstrate that there are no uncontaminated (post)digital spaces out there, and that iPhones, smart phone applications, the digital broadcasting of news reports, events themselves, and their witnesses, are thus linked to one another in complex material assemblages.

Returning now to my positionality as a mapmaker, my feeling-through process took yet another turn after spending the summer of 2016 in Belgium. Diffracting Helsinki 2019 through Antwerp and Brussels 2016: I had already started thinking-through the event of March 2016 while putting together a summer school, together with the Belgian antiracist organization *Kif Kif* (2019) in Antwerp, Flanders. This meant that my affect-rooted impressions were slowly but surely transforming into intellectual-pedagogical praxes. Nonetheless, I only fully started feeling-through and thinking-through, or “*feeling-thinking-through*,” the unthinkable horrors of March 2016 and the impact it had while traveling to Brussels to give a lecture at the end of that summer. Without having given it much thought, I took the metro, passing by the Maalbeek station where one set of attacks took place. This being my stop, I exited the metro carriage in a bit of a rush, double-

²¹⁰ There are many examples of grassroots initiatives appearing all over the Continent that are going against these hyped up feelings of anger, divisiveness, and fear, trying to instill intercultural dialogue and solidarity instead. One example is the Belgian initiative *A Seat at the Table* (2019), founded by two Belgian entrepreneurs of Moroccan descent. With this leadership-stimulating initiative, they help young Belgians of various migration backgrounds, often from impoverished neighborhoods, to gain employment. Another local initiative is Mohamed El Bachiri’s (2016) *Jihad of Love*. Originally delivered as a TED talk, in which he talks about his wife, a Belgian Muslim, who died during the Brussels 2016 attacks, El Bachiri calls for more intercultural understanding and sympathy, embodying a different, more open kind of Europe.

checking the route I had to take to get to my final destination. Then, as I was about to exit, something stopped me in my tracks, forcing me to put my iPhone away, and look up.



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Image 3: Tribute to the March 22 victims

The above wall (see Image 3), located in the Maalbeek metro station and previously part of an artwork destroyed in the attack, slowly started taking shape in front of me, demanding my attention. I felt compelled to just stand there, pondering what had happened on that day of March 22, 2016. Not only was I thrown back in time, but also into space, as my memories were now completely intertwined with how I had experienced the attacks from my tiny studio in Santa Cruz. A first inspection of the wall revealed a multitude of scribbles, written by the family members of the deceased victims, but also by emergency services officers, politicians, locals, and passers-by. They were all tributes that displayed a mixture of shock, anger, loss, and sadness, but also compassion, unity, and hope, as depicted by the “*Tous*

Ensemble” (All together) tag, jotted at the top in bold black. In addition to these messages, the wall-turned-into-impromptu-memorial—or, in more agential realist terms, materialized-memories-and-remembrances—also revealed a bright red heart, filled with iconic Belgian symbols, further accentuating Belgium’s official “*L’union fait la force*” (Unity makes strength) motto. In a way, one could say that this wall in Maalbeek joins a long tradition of memorial artworks, erected in memory of events of major historical importance. Here one may think of *The Sphere* ([1971] 2002) by artist Fritz Koenig, a former centerpiece of the World Trade Center that survived the 9/11 attack and was turned into a memorial artwork in 2002; the American artist Jeff Koons’s multicolored, steel *Bouquet of Tulips* (2019), meant as an homage to American-French friendship after the November 2015 attacks; and the two official commemorative Brussels 2016 memorial artworks, namely, Jean-Henri Compere’s sculpture, entitled *Wounded But Still Standing in Front of the Inconceivable* (2017), and a natural, more posthumanist memorial comprised of thirty-three trees planted for each victim in the Sonian Forest of Brussels, and created by Bas Smets (2018). However, the memorial wall I encountered differs from those above, as it is not a consciously constructed artwork, filled with artistic intent by a particular creator. Rather, the Maalbeek memorial wall is the materialization of the affects and more conscious emotions of those whose lives were affected by the Brussels 2016 attacks. More so than the memorial artworks previously mentioned, this mural grew out of various affect-laden encounters with people who were desperate to find an emotional outlet; a material object to attest to what had happened. It is in this space between the wall-morphed-into-mural and these attestors that the contrasting levels of the representable (the

semiotic and the symbolic, used to grasp what had taken place) and that which cannot be represented (every stream of affect and emotion; the eruption of violence in the moment itself; the screams and shrills that it caused; the lingering trauma and injuries; and everything else that transcends the semiotic-symbolic) were brought together.

Viewed through a new materialist lens that moves beyond the semiotic-symbolic, this memorial mural escapes the purely representationalist logic (in which some art is said to be trapped) as it revolves around unrepresentable horrors and the material, concrete remembering of the latter. With each new encounter, including the transformative encounter I experienced myself,²¹¹ another layer of material-symbolic-affective meaning reveals itself, not only transforming the viewer, but also adding to the overall signification of the piece. In front of this mural, I was moved to tears for the first time since I had digitally witnessed the aftermath of the Brussels 2016 attacks. I now better grasped the finitude of life. Furthermore, I felt how the processes of feeling-through and thinking-through finally became integrated, morphing into feeling-thinking-through, after I had processed the initial, yet long-lingering affect-laden shock, forcing me to start reflecting on what could be done on an activist-political level to help prevent these outbursts of terror, and mitigate the political repercussions of said event that were already ongoing. As I exited the metro station to continue my journey through

²¹¹ For a new materialist commentary on so-called collisional encounters between the “bodies” of memorial artworks and those of the subjects viewing them, see Golańska (2017b). Golańska’s (2017b) article neatly underlines the impact of new materialist theorizing on art research and theory, in combination with trauma studies. Golańska’s (2017a) *Affective Encounters* also provides a good overview of how a Deleuzoguattarian conceptualization of affect could help stimulate research at the crossroads of new materialisms, affect theory, and trauma and memory studies.

Brussels, I remember bumping into three Belgian army officers patrolling the nearby area in full military dress, their automatic guns tightly and rather nervously clenched in their hands—a sight that, by mid-2019, has become common all over the country.²¹²



©Bogaerts 2016

Image 4: Two army officers patrolling in the Maalbeek metro station

These two completely unexpected and extraordinary encounters, and the contrast between me encountering the artwork and subsequently, the military patrol, made me feel even more affectively disjointed than when witnessing the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 events from afar. Would this be Belgium’s future, and perhaps even the future of the Continent as a whole, for the years to come—a quasi-surveillance

²¹² Subsequently, the Belgian federal government created an investigative commission to analyze the March 22 attacks. The report itself contains extensive information about what precisely happened on that day, as well as several counterterrorist measures and (some rather stereotyped) commentary to prevent religious radicalization (see Dienst Beknopt Verslag van de Kamer van volksvertegenwoordigers 2018).

state characterized by a strong military and police presence; something that goes directly against Belgium's political neutrality and pacifist attitude since its foundation as a buffer zone to help limit the powers of its neighboring European countries in 1830?²¹³

3.4. Fragments and Artefacts—Diffracted. The Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 Attacks: A Critical New Materialist Intervention

The above encounter in the summer of 2016, and the sharp contrast between the hope that was instilled in me while feeling-thinking-through the Maalbeek memorial wall, and the way in which reality hit me when seeing the overt deployment of soldiers right after, haunts me to this day. Additionally, this occurrence has been followed by dozens of subsequent encounters with heavily armed Army officers, special ops, and policemen since my move back to Belgium in April 2017. Although the terror threat level had been lowered to two (out of four levels, with four indicating the highest level) at the start of 2018 by Belgium's Coordinating Unit for Threat Analysis (OCAM; see VRT NWS 2018), today (June 2019) one can still notice a strong military presence near important governmental buildings, airports, train and metro stations, and other high risk areas—especially in Antwerp and Brussels. While the majority of the soldiers may now have been

²¹³ Of course, the double pull of the Enlightenment cannot be forgotten in this context: Despite Belgium's pacifist stance, it also profited enormously from being a colonial power. Under the rule of King Leopold II, in the mid-nineteenth century, Belgium violently acquired the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. Leopold II, and later the Belgian government, ruled, exploited, and destroyed these territories with an unprecedented level of brutality, leaving behind a legacy of "scientific," racist ethnic classification and an extraction-based capitalist framework that continues to destabilize the region to this day. For an overview of Belgium's problematic and still underreported colonial legacy, see Hochschild (1998).

replaced by policemen, as a local who is well aware of the current security debate and associated measures, I can sense the edgy, tense atmosphere every time I commute to the Netherlands and back via Antwerp Central Station.

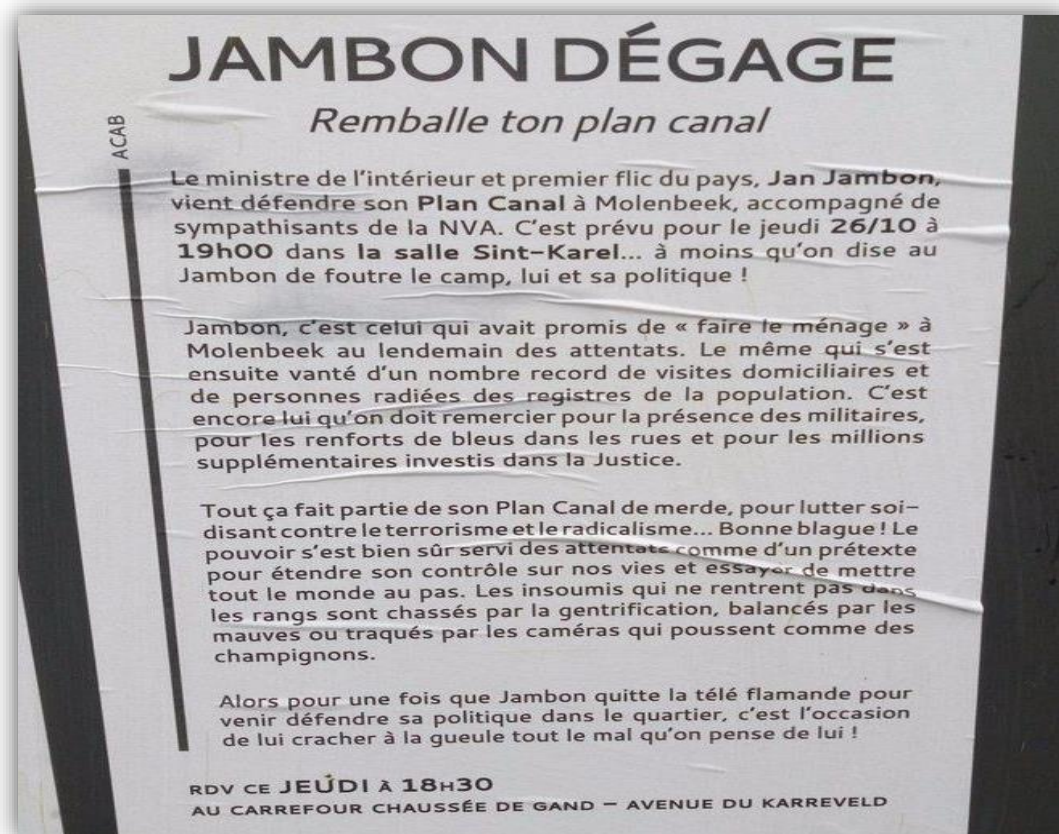
It is noteworthy that this initial extreme and still highly visible military and police presence was not the direct outcome of a locally adapted Belgian Patriot Act. Bart de Wever, leader of the pro-separatist Flemish N-VA party and mayor of Antwerp, which is often regarded as the N-VA's "bastion," already proposed the installment of such an act immediately after the terrorist attacks in France in 2015 (see Huyghebaert 2015), arguing for it again after the attacks in Brussels, 2016 (Bennett 2016). Fellow N-VA politician and Deputy Prime Minister Jan Jambon (Minister of Security and the Interior, until December 2018, and since October 2019, the Minister-President of Flanders) argued for similar security plans, long before the attacks in Brussels took place. Jambon advocated the so-called Level V plan (N-VA 2016) and the Channel Plan (*Kanaalplan*), referring in particular to the channel zone surrounding Brussels, and Molenbeek and Vilvoorde—which both have a relatively high number of terrorist fighters who left for Syria. Both plans were directed against terror and radicalization as a response to the attacks in France (Commissie 2016). Level V, packed with counterterrorist war and security speak, mentions various measures that strongly resemble De Wever's suggestions, such as redrafting the Belgian Constitution so that a state of emergency declaration would become legally possible; a complete redrawing of the Belgian juridical and executive governmental powers, which would endanger the currently well-balanced separation of powers; more operational power for several intelligence, security, and

secret services; and a centralized counterterrorism-focused DNA-databank.²¹⁴ This new plan provoked concerned responses from almost all Michel I’s oppositional parties—the federal government at the time, with a large neoliberal MR and N-VA presence.²¹⁵ Whereas the Channel Plan designed by Jambon was supposed to be the legal outcome of the temporary measures taken during the Brussels lockdown, it proposed immediate “ground-level” interventions to “clean up” Brussels. The proposed interventions included greater cooperation between the several governmental levels in Belgium and specifically between the multiple police zones in Brussels; door-to-door police checks to assess whether inhabitants are registered or not (a measure that is clearly not only part of counterterrorism operations, but also impacts, for example, asylum seekers who have exhausted all procedures); and the monitoring of mosques, thus specifically targeting Belgium’s Muslim minority. The proposed measures immediately led police unions to go on strike, and evoked outspoken commentaries from the mostly French-speaking—often rather anti-N-VA—mayors of Brussels (there are nineteen of them, one for each borough,

²¹⁴ For the plan itself, see N-VA (2016). For a direct link to the document, see https://www.n-va.be/sites/default/files/generated/files/news-attachment/niveau_v - 10092016.pdf.

²¹⁵ One example of such a proposal is “Twelve Measures Against Radicalism and Terror,” which was posted as an infographic on the N-VA’s website in 2015, specifically when Bart de Wever put forward his Patriot Act (which also included the suggested measures; N-VA 2015). These measures have since been repeatedly discussed at various governmental levels, and include ideas such as a stricter antiterrorism law, the possibility of depriving suspected terrorists of their Belgian passport and nationality, and the suspension of the bank accounts of suspected terrorists. Many of these measures were temporarily implemented after the attacks in Brussels, 2016. The permanent implementation of some of these measures, remains a topic of debate. Many progressive local lawyers’ organizations, politicians, international humanitarian watch organizations, and even the United Nations have criticized, not only De Wever’s Patriot Act, but also the temporary implementation of the foregoing measures during moments of crisis. Ironically, the federal government, under the leadership of Charles Michel, put forward eighteen so-called measures against terrorism on November 19, 2015—a few days before the Brussels lockdown. These measures were very similar to those proposed by De Wever, as well as Jambon’s Channel Plan. For the full document in Dutch, see Michel (2015). Of the eighteen suggestions, various measures were implemented, such as the cancellation of anonymous prepaid cell phone cards, the screening of religious hate preachers, jailing former Syria fighters, and increased border control.

overlooking their own police corps, further complicating federal and regional administrative matters), anti-N-VA murals, and angry pamphlets, such as the one below (see Image 5).²¹⁶



©Creator Unknown 2017

Image 5: Pamphlet against Jambon's Channel Plan²¹⁷

²¹⁶ For more information about the results of the Channel Plan, see Avh & mju (2016), and EB (2017). A little more information about the complex structure of Belgium as a nation-state seems justified here: Because of Belgium's complex governmental structure (consisting of six governments, namely, the federal, Flemish, Walloon Region, French community, German-speaking community, and the Brussels-Capital governments, each with their own parliaments); the different languages employed in both proposals and reports thereof; the fact that there were already counterterrorist measures implemented after the Paris attacks and during the consequent Brussels lockdown; and the consequent confusion about the measures proposed by De Wever, Michel, and Jambon, it is currently incredibly difficult to assess which measures and actions have actually been implemented. Furthermore, the reporting on said measures is not always correct, as some of the more populist Flemish media maintains a degree of animosity toward some of the political parties and politicians on the Walloon and Brussels sides. The same can be said about the Walloon media toward the N-VA in particular. Arguably, this exemplifies the often surrealist nature of Belgian politics.

²¹⁷ The pamphlet above is written in quite an angry, sarcastic tone, calling Jambon the "number one cop" in Belgium and referring to his Channel Plan as "shit." It also suggests that, if Jambon dares to show his face during the planned N-VA meeting in a borough of Brussels, he will be "spat in the face." This pamphlet shows how Belgium's complicated linguistic politics (in this case relating to a

So far, no such fully sketched out plan resembling a Patriot Act has been ratified. However, this is more likely to be due to the ongoing political instability of the Belgian federal government, than to public opinion, as there has been another evident surge to the Right since the attacks in Brussels, 2016.²¹⁸ The aforementioned Channel Plan was implemented and continued prior to March 22, and a special meeting of ministers was held on the topic of security, approximately six weeks after the March 22 attacks. The suggested measures included, among others: the issuing of biometric Belgian ID cards (which now seems inevitable); increased monitoring of the income of several Belgium mosques; and increased control of pilots and airline passengers (see Wauters, de Boeck, and Bauwens 2017). The measures that have been implemented in Belgium after the attacks in France in 2015 and post-22/3 have been constantly underreported. The legality of the original lockdown measures that eventually became the Channel Plan, remains open to serious question. The Belgian federal government currently seems to be operating within a sphere of enforced silence and informational chaos, and, following in the footsteps of France, is closer than ever to a Belgian Patriot Act and the accompanying status of becoming a security state. This explains the complaints

Flemish minister from a Flemish separatist party telling its often French-speaking citizens and leaders of Brussels what to do) has also impacted Belgian (counter)terrorism measures.

²¹⁸ The Belgian federal governmental coalition Michel I, of which the N-VA was a part, was constantly destabilized by the decisions taken in the N-VA's headquarters. As the N-VA still aims to further confederate Belgium, eventually turning Flanders into an autonomous region, the party has consistently contested federal decisions. Michel I eventually fell due to the N-VA's incessant focus on terrorism and migration issues, and specifically because two of the N-VA's federal ministers, namely, Jambon and the Minister of Asylum and Migration, Theo Francken, did not want to sign the UN's Global Compact on Migration. As a result, the Belgian government fell in December 2018. Jambon and Francken were replaced, and the government continued without the N-VA under the name of Michel II (see Cerulus and Wheaton 2018). Unsurprisingly, the latest results of the federal, regional, and European elections in May 2019 in Belgium—with the N-VA still firmly gaining the most Flemish votes—have caused plenty of difficulties during federal talks, which are still ongoing while finalizing this dissertation in November 2019. The N-VA is nonetheless still trying to implement their safety measures on a regional level.

made by the Human Rights Watch (HRW 2016a) and other organizations. It is important to note that, even after causing the collapse of Michel I and despite their former absence in Michel II, the N-VA is still the most powerful political party, both on the Flemish regional and—theoretically (as this eventually depends on future coalitions formed)—the federal level.²¹⁹ It is because of their power, and their continuously hyped media presence in relation to migration, security, and (counter)terrorism, that their politicians are still spawning proposals that would give the executive powers more tools to act against suspected “radicalized” subjects and potential terrorists. This has resulted in various critical responses from opposition parties, local law specialists, and even international human rights organizations.²²⁰ Right before the May 2019 elections, Jambon presented yet another so-called security measure plan (see N-VA 2019), completely in line with the previous drafts, although he and his party had willingly stepped out of the federal government just a few months earlier, because of a dispute concerning the UN’s 2018 Global Compact for Migration. Also known as the “Marrakech Compact” (see UN Refugees and Migrants 2019), the N-VA strongly opposed signing the agreement, even though it is not legally binding (see N-VA 2018).²²¹

²¹⁹ Since the Belgian elections in May 2019, negotiations concerning the formation of the Belgian federal government have been ongoing. This was still the case when finalizing this dissertation in November 2019.

²²⁰ For an interview with Raf Jaspers, a representative of the Progress Lawyers Network, see Raspoet (2016). Jaspers is adamantly against the drafting of such a Patriot Act, as it would erode civil and humanitarian rights. See also the Human Rights Watch’s (2016a) press release, in which HRW officials state that many of the temporarily installed measures are already in conflict with international human rights law. For more information with regard to the recent UN-led investigation concerning Belgium’s counterterrorism measures, see the report by the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights (OHCHR 2018).

²²¹ The agreement can be accessed directly by following the link to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) / Global Compact for Migration: https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf. The compact itself contains many preambles, one of them noting that all countries worldwide should respect the fact that refugees and migrants possess the same human rights as any

Former Prime Minister Charles Michel from the MR party in the end did go to Morocco to sign the compact in the name of the Belgian nation-state, which led to the widely publicized departure of the N-VA from the federal government and their subsequent joining of the opposition. This gave the N-VA the opportunity to “jump-start” their promotional campaign for the May 2019 elections, demonstrating that they were the only party that was truly concerned with migration-related issues. Jambon put forward an even more anti-migration-focused electoral campaign, with which the N-VA tried (albeit unsuccessfully) to lure back potential voters from the even more radical, far-right party Vlaams Belang. Both parties (at least on paper) won the Flemish regional elections in May 2019, meaning that the N-VA, and potentially even Vlaams Belang (if they were not excluded from governing, as they have been since their inception as a political party in the 1990s), will most likely have a large federal presence and enough power to draft their proposed federal security and anti-migration bills. It is feared by the political opposition—but also by those that are working for local and international NGOs and civil society—that these bills will hollow out the Belgian federal Constitution and its legal framework, which is currently in line with the UN-Human Rights Conventions.

Together with the Paris 2015 and Brussels 2016 events, this complex Belgian political terrain forms the ideal starting point to delve even deeper into diffractive philosophizing, as this suspension of (inter)national law has happened

other individual. Furthermore, it is meant to be a more positive, holistic compact, looking at all aspects related to migration. Even though the compact is not legally binding, the N-VA still opposed it on grounds of sovereignty (Belgium should be able to make its own decisions with regard to issues of migration), and because the compact (albeit vaguely) claims that illegal immigrants should receive social benefits and family reunification should be made easier. With this move, N-VA basically followed in the footsteps of the United States and Australia, who also refused to sign the compact.

many times before, not only denoting the liberating/(re)oppressing self-contradictory qualities of the Enlightenment and its impact on the modern Western democratic nation-state, but also the very concretely felt horrors that it led to.

3.4.1. (Re/de)constructing Terrorism, the Digital-materiality of Hashtags and Memes, and States of Emergency

The foregoing contrasts and their personal affective consequences instantly direct me toward the examination of another striking associated contrast, namely, that between the 2015 Brussels lockdown and the online calls for solidarity with France on the one hand, and the overtly sarcastic Twitter responses from Belgian locals to the lockdown on the other.

3.4.1.1. (Re/de)constructing terrorism: #JeSuisCharlie, geomapping, and the citationality of “9/11”

Let us travel back to this particular timespace setting for a moment: By November 2015, the internet and, more specifically, interactive social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were packed with cartoon images, drawings, and pictures with mottos, slogans, and/or hashtags in solidarity with the victims of the Paris January 2015 attacks.²²² The January attacks were mainly directed against the satirical French magazine *Charlie Hebdo* for publishing cartoons that flirted with the ambiguous boundaries of French and international free speech, demonstrating

²²² Whereas hashtags were originally spread via Twitter only, today they also work on Facebook, Instagram, and other social media platforms, thereby increasing the interconnectedness of such platforms and their users.

yet again the Enlightenment’s double pull.²²³ Immediately following the attacks, social media users all over the world were called upon to proclaim their support, not just for France, but also for *Charlie Hebdo* and the cartoonists’ radical, Enlightened, free speech principles. They could do so by sharing a message of support, accompanied by a simple hashtag: #JeSuisCharlie. To this day, the tag is still actively used,²²⁴ and at the time was often accompanied by the logo created by the French art director Joachim Roncin (see Image 6).



©Roncin 2016

Image 6: The “Je Suis Charlie” logo that went viral

²²³ The satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* has long been considered to be a product of the humanist French Republic and its values of free speech, equality, and *laïcité* (a specific French type of antireligious secularism). Preceded by the libertarian, more left-wing *Hara-Kiri Hebdo*, *Charlie Hebdo* slowly but surely morphed from an anticlerical magazine into a neoconservative one. Some of the cartoonists had already received death threats due to the republication of the Danish *Jyllands Posten*’s Mohammed cartoons (see McGrogan 2017). *Charlie Hebdo* has, for instance, been a strong defender of France’s general ban on religious symbols in schools and the more recent burka and niqab bans—stances that are often accompanied by stereotyped depictions of Muslim women. In a way, *Charlie Hebdo* underlines the Enlightenment’s double pull: protecting certain Enlightened values, such as free thinking and free speech at all costs, while not taking into account the often large groups of dehumanized minorities whose right to free speech and freedom of religion have not been automatically granted. See also Cole (2015).

²²⁴ See the latest reporting on Twitter via the following link: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/jesuisccharlie>.

This image could easily be interpreted as an internet meme, laden with socio-political commentary that is trying to provoke a particular affective response. Through the sharing process, the image is slightly altered each time, thus combining memetic and mimetic functions.²²⁵ I will come back to #JeSuisCharlie's memetic function shortly, as it is this aspect that relates to the digital-material nature of this particular hashtag and meme, and the remembering and remembrances it represents.

Interestingly, and underlining its viral impact, only a few days after #JeSuisCharlie began circulating, the hashtag was already considered to be the most popular, re-Tweeted hashtag in Twitter's history (see e.g., Guynn 2015; Wendling 2015). It would be beneficial here to jump back to our earlier new materialist viewpoint on digital-material culture, smartphones and their applications, and the relationalities with their embodied users that they are constantly co-engendered, to more closely examine #JeSuisCharlie. When using such a framework to analyze this particular hashtag in its socio-cultural "becoming-with," three thought-provoking considerations come to mind, namely: its material groundedness—yet also alienating effects; its memetic entanglement with 9/11; and the polarizing

²²⁵ The origins of memes can be traced back to evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins's combining of mimesis and gene, denoting something that is transmitting something else. An internet meme also transmits data; in this case a particular message with sociocultural meaning, often mixed with humorous elements, and subsequently repeated over and over again, being reworked by members of particular online communities, and going viral. Today, memes are a popular research topic, as they are linked to the alt-right community, which uses memes to oppose what they call "political correctness" (PC) culture, or social justice warriors (also known as SJWs). Being somewhat obsessed with the making of memes myself (see *Subversive Philosophy Memes* 2019), they can indeed be employed to serve the status quo, but also possess subversive power. See also Nooney and Portwood-Stacer's (2014) special issue of the *Journal for Visual Culture*, revealing the political potential of memes. Shifman (2015) also provides a good overview of meme culture and the different meme genres that exist, such as photo fads, flash mobs, LOLCats, and memes that engender political participation. Last but not least, Lovink (2017) provides us with some thought-provoking reflections on the contemporality of memes, and how they exhibit issues such as media (il)literacy, a culture of fragmentation and narcissism, and post-truth times.

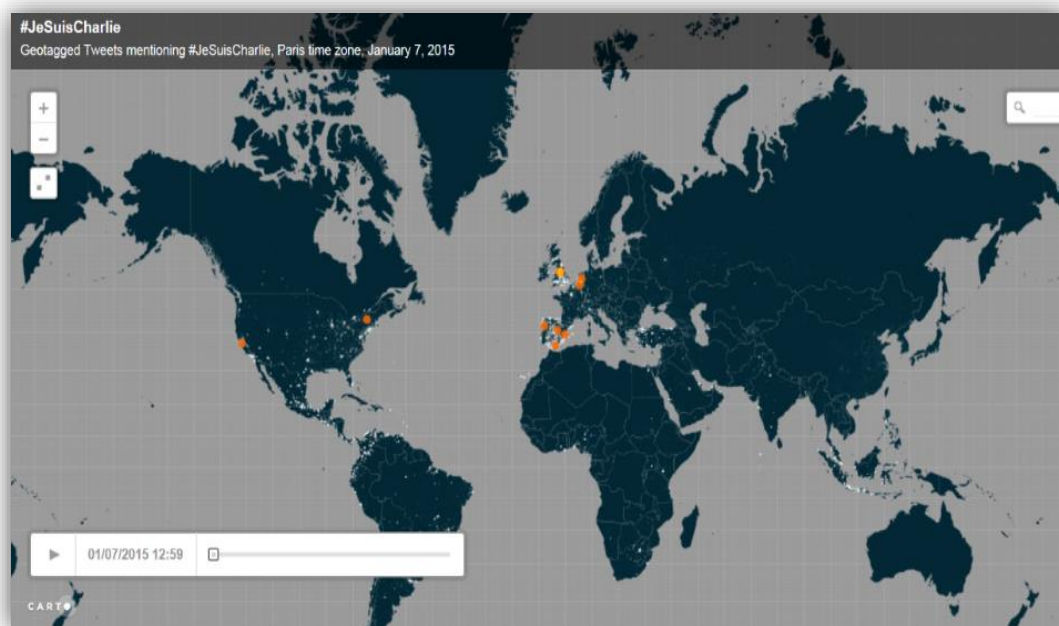
framework through which it was narrated. These important considerations require a more detailed elaboration, as our diffractive theorization of the Paris and Brussels attacks is being developed from within the world and from the ground up.

First, even though we are talking about a hashtag-meme, it is clear that the viral quality of #JeSuisCharlie is not purely a digital matter—or, put differently, solely *of* digital matter. Both hashtags and the Tweets by which they are framed are created by real-life subjects. There is an actual material environment operating behind the user in question, the digital object used, and the meaning-creating entanglements that emerge between them. When examined from a critical new materialist viewpoint, this milieu should always be taken into account. Closely examining this hashtag's original milieu then, namely, Twitter, it is clear that this social media platform—which is used by global news channels, but also by opinion makers, celebrities, and influencers—collects various sorts of user data, further revealing the increasing entanglement of the digital-material, and of how the environment of the user interacts with the application. The platform automatically saves two types of geographical metadata, namely, the location that is shared by the user, due to the GPS function installed on smartphones,²²⁶ expressed as a point coordinate; and the home location of the registered account itself. These metadata are of interest to big data companies—proving that we are on the verge of entering the Web 3.0 era—but also to, for example, influencers who want to measure their

²²⁶ The sharing of one's actual location can be disabled, which means that most of the data that is collected through scraping is incomplete. However, some users are not aware of this—hence, the many privacy-related discussions attached to the coming into being of Web 2.0 and now Web 3.0, smart phone applications, and geoweb services. One's every digital move can now be tracked, and this has led to a whole new digital-material meaning and understanding of surveillance, trackable metadata, and biometrics, and a more digital-materiality-based bio-/necropolitics. For more information on this topic, big data, and biometrics-based identity and security systems, see Ajana (2013).

audience's breath. There are now several data visualization programs, such as Octoparse and CARTO, via which it is possible to scrape Twitter metadata.²²⁷

While researching #JeSuisCharlie's digital-materiality, I found the following CARTO-designed heat map. This heat map—a way of visualizing and mapping data by means of color grading²²⁸—shows the exact locations of the Twitter users Tweeting about the January 2015 attack, as well as the hashtag's processual, almost geo-transversal flare-ups in the hours following the attack. On January 7, 2015 at 12:59hrs Paris time, only about thirty minutes after the attack, people were already Tweeting, mostly from within densely populated Western cities. One hour later, the hashtag expanded, creating a substantial amount of Twitter heat (see Images 7 and 8 below).

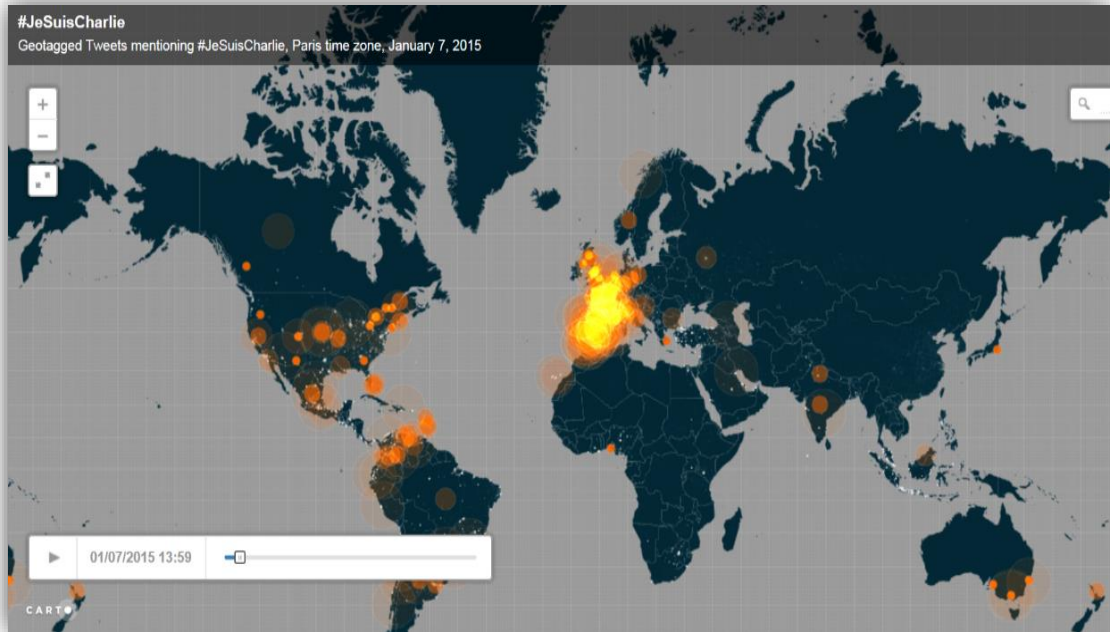


©srogers 2015

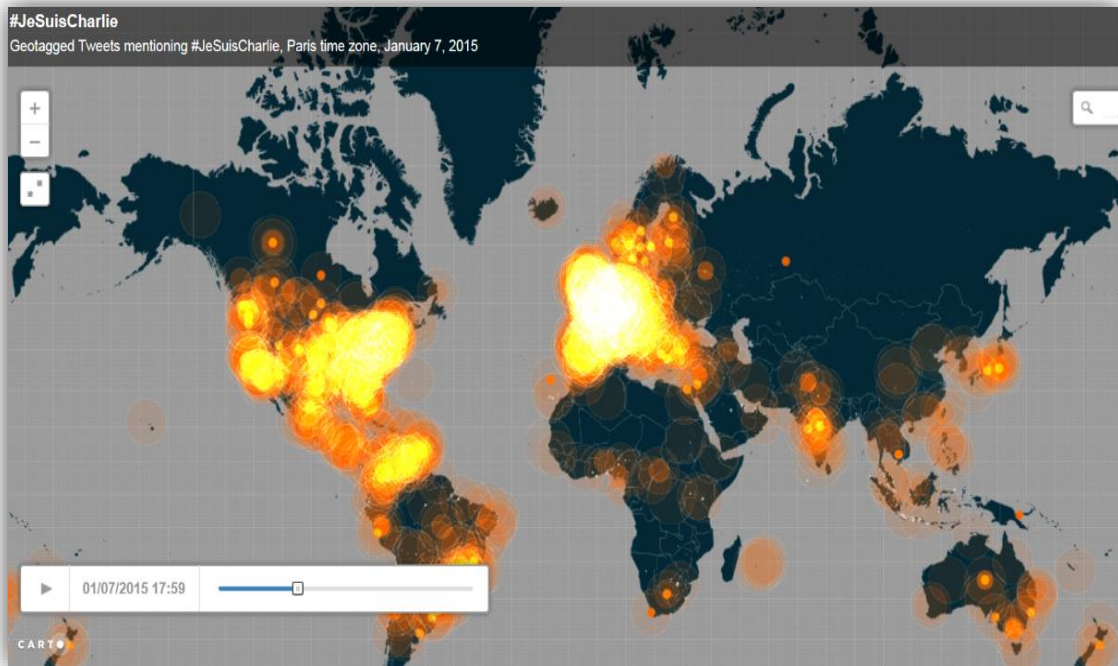
Image 7: Twitter heat at 12:59hrs

²²⁷ For an example of scraping via Python coding, see Brunila (2017).

²²⁸ See srogers 2015's live video, accessible via the following link: https://srogers.carto.com/viz/123be814-96bb-11e4-aec1-0e9d821ea90d/embed_map. I tried to create a data map myself, which turned out to be a very time-consuming and complex process. In the end, it proved to be too difficult for me to gather Twitter data on the basis of an event that happened more than four years ago.

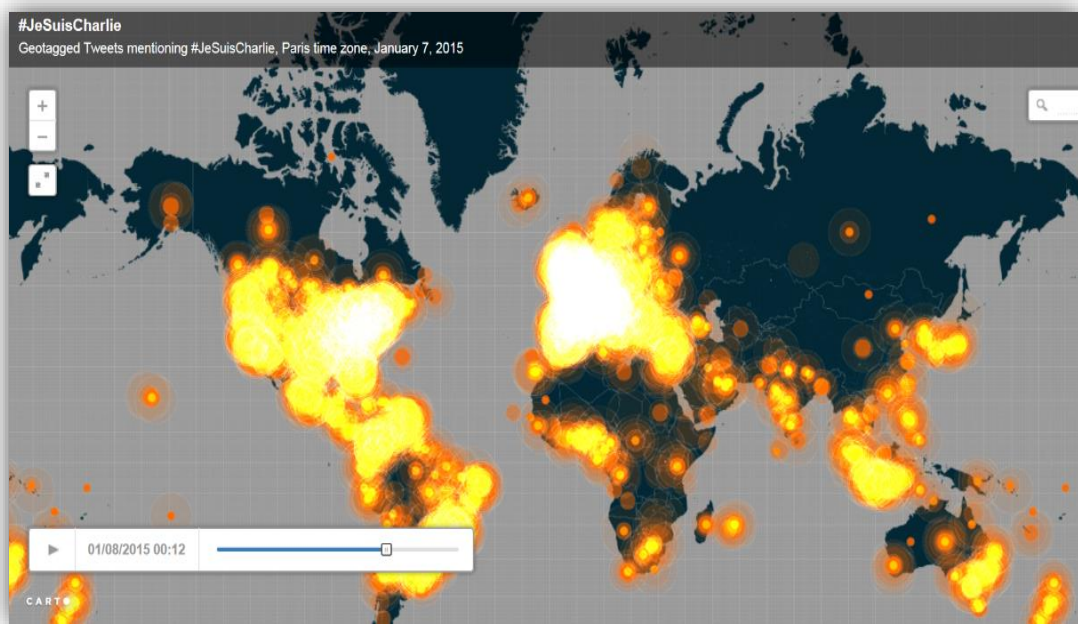


©srogers 2015
Image 8: Twitter heat at 13:59hrs



©srogers 2015
Image 9: Twitter heat at 17:59hrs

At 17:59hrs, the hashtag is “on fire” (see Image 9 above). Although it is hard to say when the hashtag created the most heat that day, and thus received viral media attention, based on this map alone and without an analysis of the corresponding data, at twelve minutes past midnight (see Image 10), the hashtag has gone global, impacting densely populated, digitally connected areas all over the world.²²⁹



©srogers 2015
Image 10: Twitter heat at 00:12hrs

We are presented with a digital-material cartography, in and with which the hashtag and accompanying meme have engendered a set of interlinked global assemblages. These assemblages in turn consist of smaller interlinkages between human, non-human, and environmental agents, revealing #JeSuisCharlie’s geopolitical material groundedness. This lively digital-material cartography clearly differs from more

²²⁹ Notably, China, the Russian Federation, several parts of the African continent, and Greenland (except for a few urbanized cities in these regions) are not shown as directly impacted. They are depicted as not being part of the viral assemblage that was created via and through #JeSuisCharlie. This probably has to do with infrastructural reasons (i.e., limited access to the internet and Western media), as well as governmental internet restrictions and censorship.

classic, ancient, premodern, and modern hand-drawn maps used for traveling, mercantile, and colonial purposes. Lacking advanced metadata and not based upon GPS-supported digital technologies, such maps also brought the world into our hands, together with ways of seeing, thinking, and making the world. However, they did so without the effect of extreme alienation that present-day technologies might provoke, as the geographical distances are only bridged through visual representations. Even though the above digital-material heat map also materializes and brings together various embodied memories of the Paris January 2015 attacks by Tweeting a simple hashtag, there appears to be a paradox at work here: On the one hand, such heat maps express embodied affects through digital-materiality, whereas on the other hand, they could also fall prey to a logic that disables the full realization of such an affective involvement. In a similar way to that in which Google maps help us to get from A to B as expediently as possible, heat maps expedite the visualization of big data. This all happens through the use of digital devices, such as a computer, tablet, or smartphone—instruments that bring the world closer to us through representation but can simultaneously alienate and re-create distance. Arguably, a new abstraction-based universalizing logic is at work here that stands in contrast to often incredibly detailed hand-drawn maps, and perhaps even resemble what Haraway (1988) refers to as “the god trick” (582). These technologies seem to make us simultaneously more entangled and disentangled—or removed and alienated from reality.²³⁰

²³⁰ This paradoxical analysis reminds me of Arendt’s ([1958] 1988) analysis of modernity in *The Human Condition*: Distinguishing *vita activa* (consisting of labor, work, and action) from *vita contemplativa*, Arendt, like her Frankfurt School contemporaries Adorno and Horkheimer, analyzes human existence from a critical perspective. Whereas Adorno and Horkheimer link modern feelings of alienation to capitalist exploitation, positivist science, and the consumption of mass media, Arendt

The times of—and operating behind—terror(ism) have changed indeed, as Derrida correctly predicted. The speed at which Web 3.0 operates continues to accelerate, driven by various technoscientific advancements. Moreover, this is not the only jumping back to Derrida’s thoughts about 9/11 that we can perform here: When inspecting the mimetic and memetic functions of #JeSuisCharlie more closely in relation to its citational powers, more spacetime-jumping entanglements between 9/11 and the Paris January attacks reveal themselves, as the meme in question has been cited over and over again. However, in contrast to the paradoxical “unthinkable” and “unspeakable” content of “9/11,” the message of the #JeSuisCharlie meme was clear from the outset: Apart from garnering support and (inter)national solidarity, #JeSuisCharlie was clearly also about the protection and support of the French republican value of free speech.

As the original meme continued to reproduce itself and virally spreading itself, slightly changing with each repetition and reproduction, it gained an even more pronounced focus on free speech, thus realizing its full mimetic potential.²³¹

mourns the loss of the contemplative life, in which critical thinking, and not economic, instrumentalist laboring, was the focal point. Modernity concerns, first the creating subject, and, later, the laboring subject. For Arendt, the invention of the telescope during the Renaissance was one of the key events that helped shape modernity. Arendt describes the importance of the telescope as follows: “What Galileo did and what nobody had done before was to use the telescope in such a way that the secrets of the universe were delivered to human cognition ‘with the certainty of sense-perception’; that is, he put within the grasp of an earth-bound creature and its body-bound senses what had seemed forever beyond his reach, at best open to the uncertainties of speculation and imagination” (259–60). Modern positivist science rests upon this instrument; an instrument that, like the aforementioned digital devices, brought the world closer to us, but also created “world alienation” (264) and “earth alienation” (264) because of its totalizing, globalizing viewpoint. For Arendt, it is no wonder that modern philosophy started with the Cartesian cogito, which was completely thrown back onto itself, as everything else in the world from that moment onward appeared to be uncertain. Thus, as attributed by Arendt to the modern telescope, digital devices seem to be performing a similar dual function.

²³¹ This mimetic function is worthy of a brief further exploration, as mimicry has been a central topic in philosophy, postcolonial studies, and feminist theory. Postcolonial scholar Homi K. Bhabha has provided us with the most detailed analysis of mimicry’s subversive potential. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha (1994) addresses the double function of mimicry: For him, “colonial mimicry is the desire for a recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite”

This is demonstrated by the altered cartoons-becoming-memes, such as the meme depicting a bloodstained hand holding a crayon (see Image 11), or a more stylized tribute to Paris, the self-proclaimed City of Light (see Image 12). A later example is the meme drawn by the Belgian cartoonist Marec as a tribute to the Brussels 2016 attacks—hence the symbolic Belgian fries (see Image 13). This meme concretely brings memories of the *Charlie Hebdo* attack to life, as it was drawn in a similar style as #JeSuisCharlie. Yet it also carries references to 9/11 and the Statue of Liberty, as the image itself seems to cite the event in question by depicting what could be interpreted as a defense of free speech.



©Sécheresse 2015
Image 11: Bloody hand
holding a pen, symbolizing
freedom of speech

(122). It is “at once resemblance and menace” (123). The colonized subject is forced to repeat the colonizer’s ways of life, but because she/he occupies the space between identity and difference, and can thus never fully replicate the colonizer’s behavior and norms, there is always an opportunity to subvert the colonizer/colonized relationship through the act of mimicry. The colonial subject thus (mostly unconsciously) challenges the system of colonialism, as there is always an element of “slippage” (123) or “excess” (123) present in these required acts of mimicking. Another theorist worth naming here is Irigaray, who turned mimicry into a weapon against phallogocentrism in *Speculum of the Other Woman* ([1974] 1985a) and *This Sex Which Is Not One* ([1977] 1985b). Irigaray ([1977] 1985b) states: “There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one ‘path,’ the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of mimicry. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it” (76). Having been silenced by phallogocentrism, there is only one way for the female subject to assert itself, and that is by slyly copying the original roles of the mute, hysterical woman, subsequently tweaking these roles and turning the internal structure of phallogocentrism against itself. Irigaray uses this hysterical mimicry strategy as a reading methodology in *Speculum of the Other Woman* with which to reread Freud and various Western philosophers. Memes operate in a similar manner, as they are meant to be copies of the original and materialize a specific memory. Yet, by being disseminated online and continuously acquiring new layers of meaning, old meanings get tweaked, and new layers of signification reveal themselves.

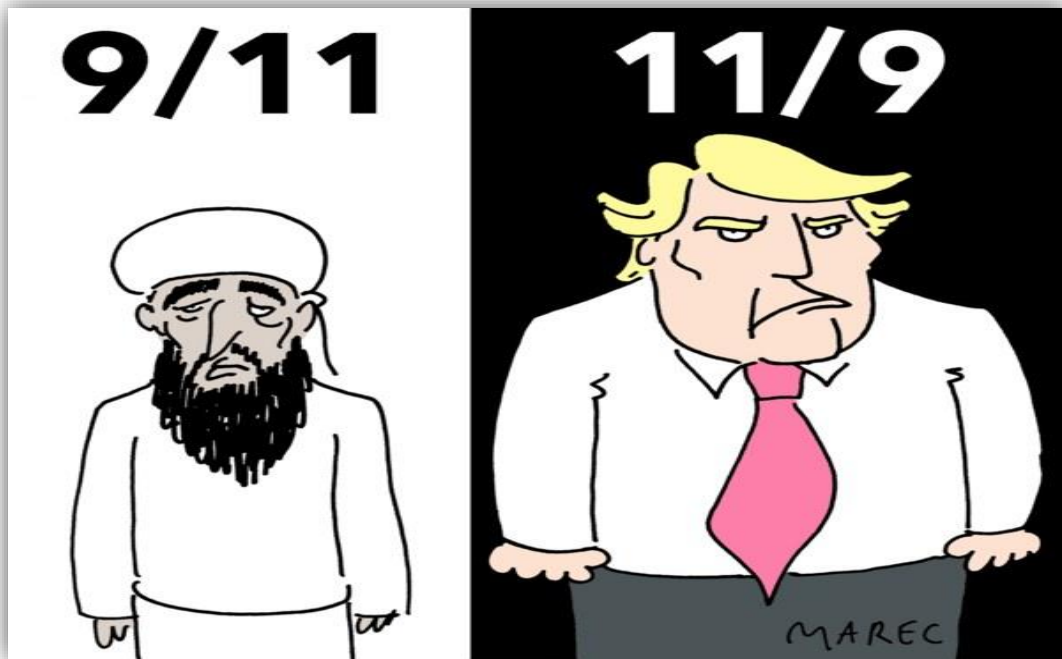


©Creator Unknown 2015a
Image 12: The “Je Suis Paris”
logo



©Marec 2016
Image 13: “Je Suis
Bruxelles” cartoon, depicting
an arm of the Statue of
Liberty, holding Belgian fries

Marec is known for tongue-in-cheek cartoons with a touch of Belgian surrealist humor. The cartoon presented in Image 14 below was created on the night of the US presidential election in 2016, depicting Trump’s victory as the mirror image of the catastrophe of 9/11. Marec’s cartoon again underscores the continued citationality of “9/11,” whereas the meme presented in Image 13 above touches upon #JeSuisCharlie’s free speech narrative, to which 9/11 was also connected.

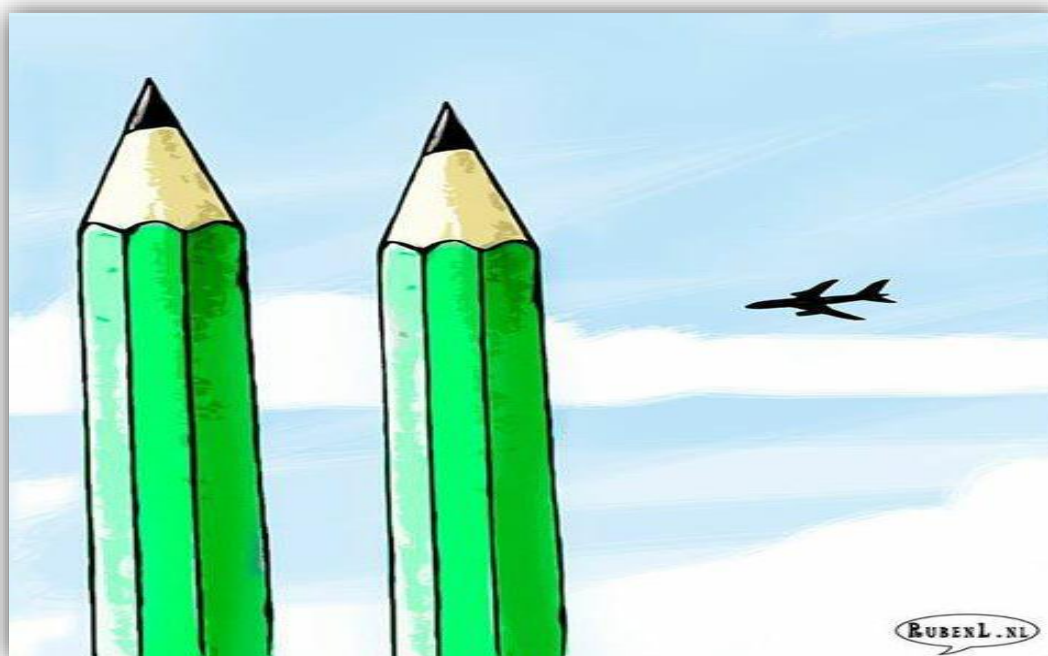


©Marec 2016

Image 14: Cartoon depicting the alleged similarities between 9/11 and 11/9

These cartoons-turned-into-memes are certainly affect-inducing. However, instead of being humorous, sarcastic provocations, they tackle a much wider range of emotions that support the original hashtag-meme’s commemorative function. The original #JeSuisCharlie meme has thus been remixed, trying to provoke similar affective responses while traversing continents. It is noteworthy that most of these remixed memes not only cite the Paris January 2015 attacks, but in doing so, also reference “9/11” through the principles of free speech and freedom. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the original meme was already spacetime-jumping, and memetic in nature: It has been said that #JeSuisCharlie refers to the phrase “*Ce soir, nous sommes tous Américains*” (Tonight, we are all Americans), which was uttered by a French television reporter on the evening of 9/11 (see A. D. and AFP 2015), and subsequently reprinted, both as the headline of the French newspaper *Le Monde* on

September 12, 2001, and in its editorial on September 13.²³² The constructed links between #JeSuisCharlie and “9/11” revolve around the protection of freedom of speech as an Enlightenment ideal that has always been at the heart of the French and the American nations. This debatable narrative was highlighted again in another cartoon-transformed-into-meme published after the *Charlie Hebdo* event (see Image 15 below), in which a relation was created between the defense of free speech (represented by the two pencils) and 9/11 (the two pencils representing the Twin Towers).



©RLOppenheimer

Image 15: 9/11, the *Charlie Hebdo* event, and freedom of speech

²³² For a digitalized version of the original French editorial, see Colombani ([2001] 2007). This piece adds another mimetic-memetic layer to #JeSuisCharlie, as this meme refers to both “9/11” and the statement that “We are all Americans.” This phrase was uttered by the French right after 9/11 and is said to refer to John F. Kennedy’s “*Ich Bin ein Berliner*”-speech during the Cold War. All of these entanglements refer to the ideals of liberty and freedom of speech in one way or another. Colombani’s editorial piece is not only notable for this idea, however: In yet another spacetime-queering move, the author anticipates a few ideas that Derrida would later conceptualize in his interview with Borradori, namely, that a new technologically advanced era had begun following the events of 9/11; that bin Laden was trained by the CIA, and that the United States had thus been caught up in a self-undermining logic; and a reference to a suicidal logic, leading to a potentially warfare-focused geopolitical environment in which only “either/or” options would be politically available.

The #JeSuisCharlie hashtag-meme thus possesses mimetic and memetic functions, allowing it to materialize the *Charlie Hebdo* event over and over again in different manifestations and shades. However, while being virtually shared, the meme also reinforces the citationality of “9/11,” proving that all of the events discussed are far more entangled than might first be expected. While the paradoxical characteristics of “9/11” outlined by Derrida are definitely present, its continued citational impact almost two decades after the event, in contrast to Derrida’s claims, suggests that it was more than merely a *constructed* major event; it definitely left an everlasting imprint on the global socio-cultural imagery.



©Creator Unknown 2015b
Image 16 (left): “Je Suis Pas Charlie”



©Roncin 2016
Image 17 (right): “Je Suis Charlie”

A third and last characteristic of #JeSuisCharlie that I would like to focus on here, relates to the polarizing logic via which it was framed. #JeSuisCharlie immediately brought about its negative mirror image, or direct countermeme, under the hashtag #JeSuisPasCharlie or #JeNeSuisPasCharlie (see Images 16 and 17 above). Opponents and critics assembled themselves under the banner of an anti-campaign

with these negating hashtags, either criticizing the French nation-state's selective defense of free speech and *Charlie Hebdo's* at times openly racist, Islamophobic, and anti-Semitic undertones, or spewing hatred and anti-establishment rhetoric against the French state.²³³ It is fascinating to see how overmediatized events and phenomena often get trapped into such stifling, oppositional logic, as if there is no way out of this either/or paradigm. Even Hollande's response after the second set of attacks in November 2015 focused on the idea that it was "us," represented by France and its freedom-protecting citizens, the United States, and other secular countries, versus "them"—i.e., terrorists and those who oppose Western democratic values. In light of the reflections of both Habermas and Derrida on 9/11, this statement is not only reminiscent of Bush's own polarizing speech, but also yet again accentuates the citationality of "9/11." This "us" versus "them" logic has thus far been repeated with the arrival of every new terrorist event in the West. There is apparently no room for critical thought outside the opposites of utter compliance versus outward defiance.

Jumping back to the Habermas-Derrida dialogues to round up this subsection, it has to be noted that this oppositional structure has been mirrored in the conversations between these two thinkers and Borradori as well. This is perhaps unsurprising, as the reception histories of Habermas's and Derrida's philosophies have frequently been constructed as diametrically oppositional. This can be gleaned from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (see Bohman and Rehg 2017), which positions Habermas as a philosopher interested in conceiving a theory of rationality

²³³ For an examination of the different communication patterns and intentions of the #Je(Ne)SuisPasCharlie supporters, see Giglietto and Lee (2017).

and communicative action, whereas Derrida is defined as a more playful deconstructionist, who is critical of the Enlightenment-rooted paradigm of rationality (see Lawlor 2018). A quick search via Google Scholar (2019a) confirms this opposition: The first result for “Derrida AND Habermas,” is a book that starts by examining the claim that both philosophers have been put in conflicting theoretical camps. Arguably, there are indeed intellectual-philosophical differences between the more Enlightenment-affirming critical theory of Habermas on the one hand, and the equally Enlightenment-rooted, yet also Enlightenment-subverting deconstructionism of Derrida on the other. However, as also articulated earlier, it might be more productive to read Habermas and Derrida *through* one another, rather than reading them through such an overaccentuated oppositional lens. Borradori’s (2003) *Philosophy in a Time of Terror* also falls prey to this logic, affirming Habermas as a universalist, and Derrida as a particularist bordering on relativism. This has partly to do with the binary setup of the book, first presenting us with a conversation between Borradori and Habermas, followed by a dialogue between Borradori and Derrida, turning Borradori into the intermediary agent between two philosophers of supposedly oppositional intellectual traditions. Although at the end of her book, Borradori concludes that Habermas and Derrida would be able to speak with one another through their shared interest in cosmopolitanism, the conversation itself never takes place in the book.²³⁴ The binarized narrative simply does not allow for it.

²³⁴ Borradori’s (2003) book is trapped in this binary logic from the outset. She contrasts both thinkers as follows: “Habermas’s dialogue is dense, very compact, and elegantly traditional. His rather Spartan use of language allows his thinking to progress from concept to concept, with the steady and lucid pace that has made classical German philosophy so distinctive. By contrast, Derrida’s dialogue takes the reader on a longer and winding road that opens unpredictably onto large vistas and narrow

The former section already demonstrated that a more diffractive way of theorizing can bring forward undiscovered entanglements between Habermas's and Derrida's reflections on 9/11 and terrorism. These include their shared accentuation of the ever accelerating forces of globalization, digitalization, and technoscience, and their conviction that preordained, uncontextualized definitions of terrorism are debilitating. In addition, both thinkers agree that the impact of terrorist acts, including 9/11—whether read as a major event or not—tend to reveal themselves some time after the actual event. In the following section, I push this diffractive theorizing even further, exploring how both philosophers could potentially speak to one another when confronted with the problem of the suspension of (inter)national law during and after terror attacks in the West. These issues bring us closer to the terrain of philosophizing on (the limits of legal-political) justice—a topic that is central to critical new materialist thought.

canyons, some so deep that the bottom remains out of sight" (xii). While these stylistic differences are notable, by underlining them from the outset, and by letting Habermas speak *before* Derrida, Borradori suggests that Derrida is deconstructing Habermas's more "traditional" philosophy and reflections on terrorism, and thus negates Habermas's argument. This is not always the case, if we were to carefully read them through one another. Another example of this can be found in the subtitles that Borradori has assigned to the analytical sections relating to the responses of Habermas and Derrida, namely, "Reconstructing Terrorism" (starting on page 45) and "Deconstructing Terrorism" (starting on page 137). These titles are rather misleading. For example, in his defense of Enlightenment philosophy, Habermas remains critical of how the War on Terror abuses this tradition and is therefore doing more than "reconstructing." By contrast, Derrida's "deconstructing" does not revolve around dismantling all there is, relativizing everything out of existence, but involves a playful revealing of binaries operating behind "what is," followed by a movement of situated construction, guided by a Kierkegaardian leap. Hence, in that which follows, I refer to these notions as "(re/de)constructing" to nuance this constructed oppositional logic. As noted in the main text, Habermas later wrote an essay that was co-signed by Derrida, entitled "February 15, or What Binds Europeans Together" (Habermas and Derrida 2003). Focusing on February 15, 2003—the day Spain requested other European nations to join the Iraq War—Habermas reflects upon a divided Europe and the potential of a fully realized European Union. Such a fully realized European state would be cosmopolitan in nature, while simultaneously transcending Eurocentrism, European nationalism, and regionalism (Habermas and Derrida 2003). It is not clear whether Habermas and Derrida had an actual "dialogue" before Habermas wrote the essay in question, however.

3.4.1.2. *(Re/de)constructing terrorism: Thoughts on Gewalt, lockdowns, and Continental Patriot Acts*

Engendering a dialogue between Habermas and Derrida on the War on Terror and the suspension of (inter)national law, in contrast to what Borradori's (2003) book suggests, is not that difficult. However, making these thinkers' thoughts productive in a contemporary context, poses more serious challenges. Hence, I will be making a few spacetime jumps again in order to get the discussion going diffractively.

Reading Habermas's and Derrida's comments on the War on Terror in their respective interviews with Borradori (2003) through one another, I arrive at the following conclusions: Habermas *is* critical of the positions taken up by the United States and Europe after 9/11. He clearly claims that, at the time of his interview with Borradori, the Bush administration pretended the situation since 9/11 remained unchanged; the United States were still following the "self-centered course of a callous superpower" (Habermas in Borradori 2003, 26), attempting to hold on, not only to their lost sovereignty, but also to their former status as a neo-imperialist, unilateral actor. Wanting to set up military tribunals and a legal-political framework to legitimize international military intervention and counterterror operations, the United States were mimicking the behavior of what Habermas regards as a modern nation-state facing its demise. This legitimization was accentuated by the ratification of the American Congress and the subsequent approval by former President Bush of the so-called USA PATRIOT Act (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act) on October 26, 2001 (see H.R.3162 2001). This move was intended to strengthen national security (and thus sovereignty) by, among others, setting

aside specific counterterrorism funds, enabling the military to provide assistance if needed, expanding the ability to use telephone tapping and other surveillance techniques to gather intelligence from both US and non-US citizens, and enhancing and tightening border security. However, the measures outlined above were sharply criticized, both by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and international human rights organizations.²³⁵

It is clear that Habermas would see this as the self-undermining act of a state that is unwilling to go along with a new era, after having been “interrupted”—that is, as a refusal to face the facts of a changed, globalized world order, in which international law was becoming increasingly important. In his critique of the United States post-9/11, Derrida stresses similar aspects. Derrida’s main leitmotiv throughout his dialogue with Borradori relates to his ideas about autoimmunity, and the self-undermining “suicidal autoimmunity” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 95) of the United States in particular. The concept of suicidal autoimmunity refers to its deliberate choice to privilege sovereign law over international law, while making legal-political choices that, ironically, further destabilized its sovereign power and its claim to it. For a supposedly “uncritical” pro-Enlightenment thinker (see e.g., Borradori 2003; Geuss 2019), Habermas, too, is astoundingly critical of the double, in this case, *imperialist* pull of this tradition; a double pull that he, like his

²³⁵ The Patriot Act has since its implementation been reauthorized many times, although some of its more problematic provisions have been fought in court and have since been omitted. In 2015, President Obama signed the USA Freedom Act, intended to create a better balance between the Patriot Act and civil liberties. This act, however, has also been criticized by the ACLU and other organizations for continuing to privilege national security over the protection of civil liberties. For the full document, see H.R.2048 (2015).

predecessors from the Frankfurt School, does notice. When letting both thinkers speak to one another, the nuances of both positionalities become clearer.

The philosophies of Habermas and Derrida nonetheless differ, as Habermas constantly points toward the “civilizing role” that Europe should have played (Habermas in Borradori 2003, 27) in the aftermath of 9/11. Derrida also refers to the potential role played by Europe in all of this, however, contrary to Habermas, he talks explicitly about “a *new* figure of Europe” (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 116). According to Derrida, this potential “new” Europe would be accountable for its imperialist-colonial weight, realize the damaging effects of Eurocentrism, and could hence set an example, upholding international law through a cosmopolitan European Union. This is also confirmed in Habermas’s 2003 piece (co-signed by Derrida), which advocates a more “united” Europe. Nonetheless, Habermas does not seem to advocate a deconstructed, self-reflexive, hospitable Europe, instead adhering to a more traditional liberal defense of Western democracy (Habermas and Derrida 2003).

3.4.1.2.1. Bush-Hollande—Diffracted: Patriot Acts, the suspension of (inter)national law, and the Brussels 2015 lockdown

These newly discovered similarities between Habermas and Derrida encourage us to take another look at the Continent, queering spacetime once more, and traveling forward in time, all the way to 2015. As stated earlier, following both terror attacks in 2015, provisions had been made in France to tighten national security, including a similar call for a Continental, Belgian adaptation of the US Patriot Act. As previously discussed, President Hollande’s speech, delivered immediately after the

November attacks, was already packed with war metaphors (see Sharma 2015). During another speech given on November 16, in front of a joint session of Parliament at the House of Versailles, he reiterated his words, again underlining the citational power of “9/11.” Diffracting Bush’s 2001 speech before the Joint Session of Congress and the American People (Bush 2001b) and Hollande’s speech before the Parliament (Hollande 2015), this material-symbolic reciting of “9/11” becomes even clearer. In what follows, I have deconstructed both speeches, diffractively rearranging them as zigzagging fragments and highlighting certain key words in bold. Of those words put in bold, I have selected conceptual pairs that are linked to one another. I have color coded them to underline these haunting similarities; similarities that are, in this particular case, timespace-queering, as Hollande’s words can be read as moving back in timespace, but also as the future actualization of Bush’s words. I have italicized the parts spoken by Bush, although, for this diffractive exercise, it is not strictly necessarily to know what has exactly been uttered by whom. Rather, the effects, affects, and outcomes of both speeches is what matters most:

France is **at war**. The acts committed in Paris and near the Stade de France on Friday evening are **acts of war**. ----- *On September the 11th, **enemies of freedom** committed an **act of war** against our country. All of this was brought upon us in a single day -- and night fell on **a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.** --* ----- They were carried out by a Jihadist army, by **Daesh** [i.e., the Arabic name of ISIL], which is fighting us because France is a **country of freedom**, because we are the **birthplace of human rights**. ----- *Al Qaeda is to terror what the mafia is to crime. But its goal is not making money; its goal is **remaking the world**—and imposing its*

radical beliefs on people everywhere. ----- I shall marshal the full strength of the State to **defend the safety of its people**. I know I can count on the dedication of **police officers, gendarmes, service personnel**, and you yourselves, our national representatives. ----- *These efforts must be coordinated at the highest level. So tonight, I announce the creation of a Cabinet-level position reporting directly to me -- **the Office of Homeland Security***. ----- On Friday, the terrorists' target was **France as a whole**. France, which values life, culture, sports, celebrations. France, which makes **no distinction as to color, origin, background, religion**. The France that the assassins wanted to kill was that of its young people in all their **diversity**. ----- *We have seen the unfurling of flags, the lighting of candles, the giving of blood, the saying of prayers -- in **English, Hebrew, and Arabic***. ----- *Tonight, we are a country **awakened to danger** and called to **defend freedom**. Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or bring justice to our enemies, **justice will be done***. ----- Today, we need **more airstrikes**, which we will carry out, and more support for those who are fighting Daesh, which we, France, will provide. But we need all those who can really combat this terrorist army to unite as part of a **large, single coalition**. ----- *This is not, however, just **America's fight**. And what is at stake is not just **America's freedom**. This is **the world's fight**. This is **civilization's fight**. This is the fight of all who believe in **progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom***. ----- That is why it is vital for Europe to offer a **dignified welcome** to those who are eligible for **asylum** and to send home those who are not. And if Europe does not control its **external borders**—we are seeing this before our very eyes—that means a return to national borders, when it's not walls and barbed wire. That will mean **the dismantling of the European Union**. ----- I have decided that a bill **prolonging the state of emergency** for three months, adapting its content to the changes in threats and technologies, will be brought before Parliament on Wednesday. ----- *And tonight, the United States of America makes the following demands on the **Taliban**:*

Deliver to United States authorities all the leaders of al Qaeda who hide in your land.

These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. ----- Transferring power to the **military authorities** would be inconceivable. However, **we are at war**. But this war is a different kind of war, we are facing **a new kind of adversary**. A **constitutional scheme** is needed to deal with this emergency. ----- *Either you are **with us, or you are with the terrorists**.*

The entanglements between 9/11's aftermath and France's "own" "9/11," as Hollande and specifically the French media appear to imply, are clear when reading the color coded words of these two leaders through one another: Similar to the way in which #JeSuisCharlie's mimetic-memetic function brought us back to "9/11," while simultaneously adding new layers to "9/11"—layers that were further elaborated by other memes remembering the Paris November 2015 and other attacks—Hollande's speech here builds upon Bush's defense of national sovereignty. As the yellow color coding demonstrates, Bush's post-9/11 discourse revolves around the deployment of the state's military and defensive apparatus, countering an "unjust" war with a "just" war (i.e., legitimate, first in the eyes of the United States, and then France). This discourse furthermore features several key values that both the United States and France are allegedly founded upon, namely, freedom, progress, tolerance, diversity, and pluralism. The fact that Hollande calls France the birthplace of human rights here, has to be taken into account as well, as these values are said to have inspired the founding of the United States, which—as (at least until recently) a unilateral power—saw it as its mission to defend such rights and values.

However, a significant difference is revealed between the speeches when they are examined diffractively. Whereas the United States felt that it possessed the authority to act as a sovereign superpower post-9/11, France was part of the European Union's supranational structure at the time of the 2015 attacks. This meant that France had to temporarily suspend several EU laws, such as the Schengen Agreement, canceling border controls between certain EU countries (see European Commission 2019). Another key difference that manifests itself here, is the relation between France and the rest of the Continent. Whereas 9/11 led to a tightening of border security and immigration processes in the United States, Hollande's speech includes several comments about the country's sovereignty in relation to the global asylum and migration crisis—a crisis that, in his eyes, could very well end up destroying the European Union. Hollande here establishes a link between terrorism, national security, and immigration. One thing that nonetheless overlaps is that, following the November attacks, Hollande not only focused on increasing France's sovereignty within the European Union, but also instructed French troops to bomb various ISIL sites in Syria (see Rubin and Barnard 2015), emphasizing France's military power. A comparison can be drawn between Bush's call for a War on Terror, demonstrating the sovereign powers of the United States on a global scale, and the way Hollande's representative in the UN Security Council called for similar action a couple of days after the November attacks by encouraging other countries to join the French bombing campaign (see UN Security Council 2015).

This call to pay more attention to, and provide greater operational power for, national security is of course what is of most interest here, as this is precisely where

9/11, the Paris and the Brussels attacks converge. The American Patriot Act, the implications of which are still visible today, provided the president, the military, and national security and intelligence agencies with much broader operational powers.²³⁶ In France, a state of emergency was declared by Hollande immediately following the November 2015 attacks (although not after the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in January, which is important to stress). According to the French Constitution (see JORF n°0238 1958), such a declaration, which grants special powers to France's executive branch (i.e., the president, the prime minister, and the cabinet) is legally possible following articles 16 and 13. These articles grant the president special powers in times of crisis, and define what can be considered as a state of siege. Furthermore, an additional act from 1955 grants the president the ability to declare such a state of emergency, which can last up to twelve days (see Gouvernement.fr 2015).²³⁷ Its extension has to be approved by law, which happened five times, due to a variety of other terrorist attacks that took place after those in 2015, such as the July 14 attack in Nice in 2016 (see Hartmann 2017), until it finally ended in November 2017. During these two years, anyone who was deemed to be dangerous could be placed under house arrest on the mere suspicion of being linked to terrorist beliefs and/or acts. In addition, special security zones and curfews could also be

²³⁶ This becomes clear when reading the following sections: Sec. 104. Requests for military assistance to enforce prohibition in certain emergencies; Sec. 106. Presidential authority; Sec. 201. Authority to intercept wire, oral, and electronic communications relating to terrorism; Sec. 219. Single-jurisdiction search warrants for terrorism; Sec. 503. DNA identification of terrorists and other violent offenders; Sec. 1001. Review of the department of justice; Sec. 101. Counterterrorism fund. For the full document, see H.R.3162 (2001). The combined reading of these sections demonstrates the radical overthrow of power that took place after 9/11, as security and intelligence agencies got more funds and operational power. US borders became more militarized, and the implementation of certain security measures, such as biometric passports, fingerprint checks, and DNA-databanks, turned the United States into a (proto-)security state.

²³⁷ Notably, this additional act was installed during the Algerian War and is thus directly linked to France's violent colonial past (for more details, see Nelson 2015; Thénault 2007).

enforced, warrantless house searches were permitted, and the detainment of suspects became commonplace. These stringent measures and their repeated extension have been criticized by Human Rights Watch and the Collective Against Islamophobia in France (CCIF; see HRW 2016b).²³⁸ However, such critiques have not had much impact, as France's current President Emmanuel Macron signed a counterterrorism law the moment the extensions came to an end, thereby formalizing what until then had been an impermanent law.²³⁹ By reclaiming its sovereignty, distancing itself from EU rule, and through the implementation of all these Patriot Act-like measures, France is slowly but surely becoming a security state, following in the footsteps of the United States. This engenders yet another entanglement between "9/11," the 2015 attacks, and their outcomes.

Before returning to the Habermas-Derrida dialogues and their post-9/11 context—a context that ultimately turned out to be all about “remaking the world,” to paraphrase Bush as quoted above—I want to stay in 2015 and look at the Belgian political situation. Several political, particularly right-wing, parties in Belgium called for a Belgian Patriot Act following the Paris November 2015 attacks. This was considered an urgent need, as the Belgian Constitution does not allow for the same state of emergency declaration as in France (see Besluitswet 1916101150

²³⁸ The article, published at the start of 2016, states that more than three thousand and two hundred raids have taken place since the November 2015 attacks. It furthermore rightfully criticizes the ways in which the French police have mainly targeted Muslim citizens in poorer *banlieues*, or urban suburbs, often ethnically profiling them and using disproportionate levels of violence during searches and arrests.

²³⁹ Macron's counterterrorist law is supposed to strike a balance between preventive and counterterrorist operations, and the protection of civil rights. It partially mirrors Obama's USA Freedom Act, but actually shows much closer resemblance to the US Patriot Act. Some of the most problematic measures taken during the state of emergency have now been written into French law. Here one may think of measures such as house arrests without warrants, raids without needing the approval of a judge, and forbidding particular public gatherings. For more detailed information, see e.g., DW (2017) and HRW (2017).

1916; De Belgische Grondwet 1831). The constitution permits a state of war to be declared, but anything else is seen as a disturbance of the balance between Belgium’s federal governmental branches.²⁴⁰ It is thus contradictory that Brussels was put under lockdown during November 21–25, 2015, as one of the escaped attackers was thought to have fled to Molenbeek, and Brussels was said to be the target of a newly planned attack.²⁴¹ As a result, Belgium’s terror alert level was raised to the highest possible (level 4). Local schools and colleges closed, international organizations shut down, and the metro was completely sealed off. And soldiers patrolled the city (see Images 18 and 19).



©Reuters 2015

Image 18: Army patrols during the lockdown



©AFP 2015

Image 19: Special forces patrols

²⁴⁰ A detailed analysis according to the tradition of philosophy of law of whether an emergency declaration law could be written into the Belgian Constitution, and whether the suggested Belgian Patriot Act proposal by the N-VA could happen without changing said constitution, can be found in De Braeckeleer et al. (2017). Another source is Van Rossem et al.’s (2017) policy report, commissioned by the Dutch federal government, in which various *de jure* emergency declarations and more unofficial measurements (of which the Brussels lockdown is but one example) are analyzed. The researchers—mostly security studies scholars—in this report analyze Belgium, France, and Germany, and conclude that the standard classification of “emergency declaration” versus “normal situation” is too rigid, identifying many grey areas.

²⁴¹ Three of the Paris November 2015 attackers were Belgians citizens of Moroccan descent, living in the poor Molenbeek area, one of nineteen districts of Brussels (see Higgins and de Freytas-Tamura 2015).

Although the debate on the legality of this urban lockdown continues,²⁴² there are two entanglements that more concretely materialize themselves when diffractively reading this lockdown through the lenses of 9/11, the Paris November attacks, and the Brussels attacks of 2016 that were still to come. The first entanglement that arises comprises a “haunting-in-reverse,” or a premonition of what was to come, as the armed forces on the streets during the 2015 lockdown effectively foreshadowed the aftermath of the March 2016 attacks. The second entanglement unexpectedly directs our attention back to Twitter. On the second day of the Brussels lockdown, the Belgian Federal Police requested all Belgian citizens to respect the lockdown, and to not put anything concerning special ops or police patrols on social media. After this announcement, the hashtag #BrusselsLockdown instantly popped up, unintentionally referring back to #JeSuisCharlie and “9/11,” and the production and circulation of related memes in particular. Subsequently, several locals started spamming Twitter to distract potential terrorists with so-called LOLCats or funny cat memes, as the “quat”-sound of “*niveau quatre*” (the level 4 terror alert) reminded them of cats—in superhero outfits, ready to protect Brussels.



©Police Fédérale 2015
Image 20: Message from the
Belgian Federal Police

²⁴² For more information with regard the Belgian security apparatus, see e.g., Clerix (2015).



©Bhat 2015
Image 21: Cat wearing superhero outfit



©Eckhout 2015
Image 22: Cat dressed up as Darth Vader

Given what was about to unfold several months later, these LOLCats not only appear to be surrealist *à la Belge*, subversive, and provocative (the latter characteristic forming the essence of memes, as they intend to affectively provoke, and here were used to supposedly distract potential terrorists), but also, in a strange way, underscore the citational powers of “9/11” through its reiterability, all the way via #JeSuisCharlie and back, while eerily carrying something in them of what was

yet to come, namely the March 22 attacks.

Another aspect worth noting here has to do with the overall makeup of the Belgian state, and the structure of Western European democracies generally, as they seem to carry something self-defeating within them, as Adorno and Horkheimer ([1944] 1997), but also for instance Derrida (see Derrida in Borradori 2003; Derrida [2003] 2005), suggest. That the Belgian Federal Police requested its citizens to remain silent about an important counterterror operation, tells us something about contemporary democracy. On the one hand, the playful, surrealist responses on Twitter demonstrate the active participation of citizens in democratic governance and decision-making. On the other hand, it also reveals a problematic situation in which citizens are told to withdraw to let the police do their job. Arguably, one could question why citizens would not be allowed to Tweet or form critical opinions about major police and/or counterterrorist actions, especially in a country that often follows France in its protection of Enlightenment-based human rights principles, such as freedom of speech, press, and association. In dire, complex times such as these, concerned citizens, critical thinkers, and the media could play a more democracy-guarding role so that the government and its various policing agencies do not cross specific boundaries, consequently undermining the alleged essence of democracy itself. The Twitter response of the federal police to the counterterrorist cat memes as depicted below (see Image 23) can thus be read in two ways: as an amusing take on an equally “funny” Twitter intervention; or as a problematic

example of a type of uncritical self-disciplining that is being enforced by the state onto its citizens by applauding their obedience.



©Police Fédérale 2015²⁴³
Image 23: Cat food for the “superhero cats”

Bringing these entangled terrorist events and their aftermath together, one could thus say that the Given what was about to unfold several months later, these LOLCats not only appear to be surrealist *à la Belge*, subversive, and provocative (the latter characteristic forming the essence of memes, as they intend to affectively provoke, and here were used to supposedly distract potential terrorists), but also, in a strange way, underscore the citational powers of “9/11” through its reiterability, all the way via #JeSuisCharlie and back, while eerily carrying something in them of what was yet to come, namely the March 22 attacks. The challenges with which

²⁴³ The text in English reads as follows: “For the cats who helped us yesterday evening, help yourselves!” (translation mine).

they present us not only relate to finding the right balance between preventive and counterterrorist measures, and between the protection of civil and international human rights (as was also the case during France’s declared state of emergency). Rather, it is also about respecting the thin lines between the different facets of the democratic state and taking into account the bio-/necropolitical outcomes that a closed off security state in-becoming could generate (as the French example illustrates). What is legally and politically considered “right” may not necessarily be ethically “just,” in light of often undemocratic or at least self-undermining interventions by the democratic nation-state, such as in the case of legally unsupported lockdowns or the “democratic” electing of populist, antidemocratic leaders. These issues, related to the suspension of (inter)national law and the apparently self-defeating essence of democracy, the ideal of justice, and the noticeable split between the ethical and the political-legal (and even between the political and the legal), bring us back to the Habermas-Derrida dialogues. More importantly, they are reminiscent of a thinker that both Habermas and Derrida—one of them directly, the other more indirectly—refer to when sketching out their thoughts about the potential consequences of the War on Terror and the accompanying emergency state declaration in the United States.

3.4.1.2.2. Habermas-Derrida-Benjamin—Diffracted: An ethico-politics of justice-to-come?

We are referring to Benjamin here, who, together with Bloch, already made an appearance in Chapter 2 when it came to (critical new) materialist philosophy’s articulation of grounded hope (see section 2.1.2.). Benjamin is not only known for

his messianic reflections on hope and the presence of the now, but also for his dense essay “Critique of Violence” (Benjamin [1955] 1978). Before diffractively reading Habermas, Derrida, and Benjamin together, it is important to note that Benjamin’s essay is encapsulated within the historical materialist tradition, and this tradition’s self-referential take on the Enlightenment and its philosophical principles.²⁴⁴ Therefore, in this context, the element of “critique” (*Kritik*) should be read as a Kantian evaluative analysis, with a touch of normative ethics.²⁴⁵ It is similar to the analyses made by Adorno and Horkheimer, but instead focuses on the idea of *Gewalt*, which carries the connotation of “violence,” (illegitimate) “force,” and “power” (as institutionally legitimated; Benjamin [1955] 1978). Benjamin thus touches upon the relationship between institutional power, represented by the law (*Recht*), violence, and justice (*Gerechtigkeit*)—all themes that are central to the Habermas-Derrida dialogues as well.

²⁴⁴ While finalizing this dissertation manuscript, I noticed that the four philosophers mentioned here, are all men and are furthermore not known for their explicit feminist interventions. Although Benjamin, Levinas, and Derrida share a particular marginalized positionality because of their Jewish heritage, and Levinas and Derrida have reconceptualized the idea of alterity in such ways that it could make room for a variety of differences and different embodied subjects, they are still, together with Habermas, very much seen as philosophical “Fathers.” I nonetheless would dare to argue that, just like Deleuze and Guattari, Benjamin, Levinas, and, to a certain extent also Derrida, can be regarded as partaking in the minoritarian tradition of Western philosophy, because of their continuous disrupting of the idea of the subject “Man”—and this by emphasizing the proletariat and those subjects living at the margins, such as the poet, the flaneur, and the bohemian (Benjamin); the Other as the beggar, the widow, and the orphan (Levinas), and the Other as ‘woman’ and the refugee (Derrida). It are these criticisms of the subject “Man,” plus these thinkers’ different understanding of difference and justice that links them to critical new materialist philosophies, as I will underline in the epilogue at the end of this dissertation.

²⁴⁵ This is not, however, the kind of deontological Kantian ethics that still occasionally allows subjects to use one another as a means (i.e., instrumentally, to achieve a certain goal), as we will shortly see in the main text and in another footnote. The ethical thread that runs through Benjamin’s philosophy has long been ignored but has recently been stressed by thinkers such as the comparative literature scholar Beatrice Hanssen (1998) and the political theorist Charles Lesch (2014). I too read Benjamin as an ethical thinker, because of his interest in a kind of justice that surpasses legal-political criteria, and his affiliation with the Frankfurt School, which produced critical theory out of ethical motivations.

Returning now to the dialogues one final time: At first sight, only Derrida cites Benjamin when discussing his own ideas about (terrorist) violence (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 102) However, if we disrupt the binary logic according to which Habermas and Derrida are presented by Borradori (2003), and reread Habermas's passages through Derrida's remarks, it becomes evident that Benjamin's philosophy plays a role in both Derrida's and Habermas's understanding of justice—as does the debated, fascism-endorsing political theology of the German thinker Carl Schmitt. Derrida's commentary on Benjamin in Borradori's book speaks for itself: Addressing the vagueness of the notion of terrorism, and conceptually differentiating regular violence from terrorist violence, Derrida evokes the names of Hobbes, Schmitt, and Benjamin—presumably, because precisely these three political philosophers have reflected upon the terror-inducing violence that accompanies the transformation from the state of nature, to the political state by means of a social contract that centralizes violence, authority, and power. Derrida's comments on Benjamin's claim in "Critique of Violence" that the state has constructed "a monopoly of violence" (Derrida 2003 in Borradori, 102), implies an acknowledgment by Derrida of the existence of state violence and state-led ([neo]colonial) terrorism. Derrida later comes back to Benjaminian thought when looking at the tensions between sovereignty and cosmopolitanism through the perspectives of Kant and Arendt. While defending a cosmopolitan stance against the nation-state's alleged all-powerful sovereignty, Derrida's articulations appear to be interrupted by a Benjaminian, messianic-sounding message: Derrida's notion of "[d]emocracy to come" (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 120) refers to his self-styled paradox, namely, that democracy in its most perfect form "will never exist in

the present” (120) and in its more worldly manifestations carries the seeds of its own destruction, because “the state is both self-protecting and self-destroying, at once remedy and poison” (124). Via this notion, he essentially engages with a paradox already sketched out by Benjamin.²⁴⁶

In his “Critique of Violence,” Benjamin ([1955] 1978) argues that, paradoxically, law and violence are intimately connected, and that any critique of violence has to be developed holistically—that is, via a deconstructive unraveling of the relationalities between violence, law (and the nation-state), and justice. Benjamin’s reflections are summarized in the following passage:

For a duality in the function of violence is characteristic of militarism, which could only come into being through general conscription. Militarism is the compulsory, universal use of violence as a means to the ends of the state. This compulsory use of violence has recently been scrutinized as closely as, or still more closely than, the use of violence itself. In it violence shows itself in a function quite different from its simple application for natural ends. It consists in the use of violence as a means of legal ends. For the subordination of citizens to laws—in the present case, to the law of general conscription—is a legal end. If

²⁴⁶ This ambivalence is also referred to by Derrida’s as the *pharmakon* phenomenon—in Greek already pointing toward something that is both poison and a remedy. This idea has been central to Derrida’s thought from the start, as he regards the *pharmakon* to be part of the oppositional binary logic central to Western (phal)logocentrism (see Derrida [1967] 1974). See also Derrida’s ([2003] 2005) *Rogues*, in which he rewrites his deconstructive critique of the *pharmakon* into an analysis of what he calls the autoimmunitary logic of the democratic state. Here, he explains how such a state often ends up undermining itself and its democratic principles, referring to the democratically elected Nazi state, which ultimately ended up hollowing out all that was democratic (Derrida’s [2003] 2005, 33f). Derrida then continues with an analysis of democracy-to-come, and also addresses the geopolitical situation after 9/11. Democracy is always aporetic, in the sense that it is always yet-to-come and never really here and now. Democracy-to-come also moves beyond the borders of the traditional nation-state and is thus yet to arrive. Democracy-to-come transcends “nation-state sovereignty, beyond citizenship” (86), and thus has a cosmopolitan, regulative feel to it.

that first function of violence is called the lawmaking function, this second will be called the law-preserving function. (284)

The paradox concerning violence, the law, and the state, revolves around the following entanglement: Without violence, there can never be a transition from the state of nature to the political state, as the social contract the latter is founded upon came into being via, and with, force. These violent origins are then covered up by the installment of regulative laws, intended to prevent such original violence from ever taking place again. It is this original violence that has to remain suppressed in order for the nation-state to maintain order and sustain itself. Only violence that is in accordance with legally justifiable ends—that is, violence that creates law-abiding citizens—is permitted (Benjamin [1955] 1978).

Another problem then arises, as such an essentially violence-repressing nation-state—which, for Benjamin ([1955] 1978), also includes democratic regimes—could easily collapse through the excessive use of unlawful (i.e., not used for legal ends) violence. This statement is reminiscent of Adorno and Horkheimer’s critique of the Enlightenment as liberating/(re)oppressive. There is “something rotten in law” (Benjamin ([1955] 1978, 286), or at the heart of the law-based state, and, potentially, even human politics more broadly. In order to fully grasp this, we need to understand the difference between two types of violence: violence with a “lawmaking” function (284; i.e., creating new laws through force, during a coup, for instance), and violence with a “law-preserving function” (284; i.e., using force to make citizens obey pre-existing laws). These two types of violence are both considered to be rooted in “mythical violence” (297), because they are circular-

dialectical in nature: Any act that destroys the existing law will bring about a new—through force self-preserving—law. The boundaries between lawmaking and law-preserving violence are thus indistinct. For example, states that endorse capital punishment or police violence against their own citizens, reveal how, at their core, the law and the state are indeed predicated upon mythical violence as pure force (Benjamin [1955] 1978, 294–297).

In the case of the 2015 Brussels lockdown, such a Benjaminian interpretation of violence would help us understand that the police and the army were doing more than their regular, security- and law-preserving tasks: During the lockdown, these forces were acting out the new “laws” that were proposed as measures by the Belgian government just a few days earlier. The legitimacy of these new ordinances was, and continues to be, questionable and, by explicitly deploying the army—who, in contrast to the Belgian police forces, are allowed to use lethal force when threatened—the boundaries between law-making and law-preserving violence were completely distorted. Compounding this already severe situation, the Belgian government at the time did not communicate what the exact legal-political extent of the raised terror threat level actually was.²⁴⁷ It was unclear what the army was and was not allowed to do while patrolling the streets, as were the reasons why this process lasted for months on end once the lockdown was concluded. Last but not least, the government did not clarify why several—now suddenly allowed—intrusive, violent house searches and arrests (which were often based on ethnic profiling) were made during this period. These actions definitely exceed the limits

²⁴⁷ This has been standard procedure ever since. Government communication regarding the raised terror threat alarm read: “Because of the efficiency and safety of the concerned persons, the safety measures will not be further contextualized” (Crisiscentrum 2015, n. p.).

of supposed law-preserving violence, thus further disrupting the boundaries drawn between law-preserving and lawmaking violence.

Anticipating alterity philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's idea of justice (which will be explained shortly as a way of closing this chapter) and already diffracting both the perspectives of Levinas and Benjamin, Benjamin's ([1955] 1978) understanding of justice becomes clearer. Benjamin also discusses another potential form of violence, namely, a "pure immediate violence that might be able to call a halt to mythical violence" (297) and its eternal cycle. This "divine violence" (297)—or paradoxically, *non-violent* violence—is the focus of Benjamin's search. Similar to Adorno's project of negative dialectics, divine violence jumps out of Hegelian dialectics and remains negative, interruptive, and unattainable. This at first sight otherworldly, pure violence could become worldly—that is, it could manifest itself whenever revolutionary violence is performed by mankind.

However, even revolutionary violence toward a just cause does not seem to resemble what Benjamin ([1955] 1978) regards to be "real" justice, which bypasses everything that has to do with *Gewalt* and instrumentalist reasoning (in the case of a revolution for a more just society, violence as a means to a just end). Whereas the legal domain is all about "power making" (294), justice is "the principle of all divine end making" (294). Justice is thus seen as a messianic, ethical ideal; something that surpasses law, as it cannot be contained by a set of supposedly universally applicable laws, or a predetermined Kantian categorical imperative.²⁴⁸ What is just

²⁴⁸ This imperative stands in opposition to a hypothetical imperative, meaning that there is an unconditional requirement—in this case, an ethical one—that has to be respected at all times, not for some opportunistic reasons, but as an end in itself. For more information, see Kant's ([1785] 1997) *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, which clearly inspired Benjamin, as he moves through and beyond Kant's ideas of the categorical imperative and Kingdom of Ends, or a

or unjust, has to be determined within the present moment, in and by a singular act. Moreover, Benjamin's idea of justice transcends the occasional usage of people as means to an end, which is indeed permitted within Kantian ethics. According to Benjamin's philosophy, human subjects must be treated justly at all times, specifically *because* they are human subjects. In this context, justice most certainly transcends the legal-political, as in this context *Gewalt* will always be present. Benjamin's revolution thus appears to be ethical rather than political. Rereading his notion of justice through a Levinasian ethics of the Other, we could push his analysis still further and argue that it is the humanness *of* the Other that commands us to be accountable *to* the Other.

This shared attentiveness toward violence, law, and justice helps to further diffract the perspectives of Benjamin, Derrida, and Habermas, allowing us to touch upon the lingering presence of Benjamin's ghost in Habermas's portions of the dialogues.²⁴⁹ In his conversation with Borradori (2003), Habermas is asked whether the violence of 9/11 has undermined his philosophy of communicative action. In short, this entails a philosophy according to which human subjects, as rational

community of rational human subjects, established via the categorial imperative, which has deliberative power and understands that the universal laws they created, have been made by them, but are also for them to follow.

²⁴⁹ There is much more secondary literature available when it comes to the philosophical relationship between Derrida and Benjamin, than on the one between Habermas and Benjamin. This most likely has to do with Habermas's refusal of the messianic component present in Benjamin's philosophy, and his own ambiguous relationship to his Frankfurt School heritage. Habermas is known for opposing the pessimism of his teachers, Adorno and Horkheimer. While Habermas has directly engaged with Benjamin's work in an article from the 1970s, this engagement mainly focuses on Benjamin's reception history, art theory, and view of history in relation to Adorno and Marcuse. In this essay, Habermas places Benjamin outside of the domains of ethics and politics. In fact, he interprets Benjamin's comments on violence negatively by linking them to what he sees as the violent politics of surrealism (see Habermas [1972] 1979). Brewster and Buchner (1979) offer some useful insights into Habermas's commentary on Benjamin. Furthermore, Cook (2004) addresses the philosophical relationship between the Frankfurt School and Habermas in great detail, as does Alway (1995).

actors, can sensibly discuss their differing lifeworlds with one another and reach mutual agreements about what constitutes “the good life” (see also Habermas [1981] 1984). The events of 9/11 imply a radical undermining of such rational communication, and Habermas explains that such disturbances are always possible. However, he also notes that this does not include a totally eradicating explosion of violence in democratic societies, as democracy is solidly founded upon communicative reason.²⁵⁰ Habermas instantly jumps from this discussion about distorted communication to one on justice, power, and international law as set forth by the United Nations (Habermas in Borradori 2003, 39). Having opened up Benjamin’s philosophy via Derrida’s introductory comments, this jump could be interpreted as an indirect reference to Benjamin’s proto-deconstructive exercise. This hypothesis is confirmed when Habermas proceeds with a discussion of “police action” (39) turning into “an act of war” (39) during (inter)national interventions, such as during the War on Terror and the implementation of the Patriot Act in the United States—which is reminiscent of an engagement with Benjamin’s critique of violence. Moving toward a similar cosmopolitan position as Derrida—although Derrida’s position is definitely more post-Kantian and deconstructionist in nature²⁵¹—Habermas goes so far as to claim that justice surpasses law. In fact,

²⁵⁰ According to Habermas, this kind of reason—or better put, rationality—is something that we were able to rescue from the Enlightenment’s self-destruction. This represents the exact moment at which Habermas stops following in the footsteps of his teachers, Horkheimer and Adorno, and propagates a more optimistic view of Western Enlightenment and the future.

²⁵¹ As demonstrated in their dialogues, Habermas follows a more classic Kantian cosmopolitanism that focuses on a “world citizenry” (Habermas in Borradori 2003, 38) ruled by international law. Conversely, Derrida pushes the Kantian (and also Arendtian) conceptualization of cosmopolitanism to its limits by claiming that the idea of hospitality (upon which the idea of cosmopolitanism is founded) has to be unconditional in order for a “real” democracy—i.e., a democracy that respects alterity—to work. Democracy (which is still to come, for Derrida, or rephrased, democracy-to-come) should thus not be based on a Kantian, duty-based ethics, precisely because of hospitality’s unconditionality. Or, as Derrida puts it: “Pure and unconditional hospitality, hospitality itself, opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an

diffracting these three viewpoints through one another, it becomes clear that Habermas—who is a philosophical pragmatist—links justice to the legal-political. This concurs with the conceptualization of justice he puts forward throughout his oeuvre, and in *Between Facts and Norms* (Habermas [1992] 1996) in particular. For Habermas, justice depends upon the discursively rational, and emerges from within a deliberative democracy's legal framework, which has been set up by rational actors. In this conceptualization, justice rests upon the procedural paradigm of law, whereas for Benjamin and Derrida, justice is something unconditional—an ideal that can guide us but can never really be attained as such.

Of course, this not to say that Benjamin's and Derrida's viewpoints are one and the same: In addition to his engagement with Benjamin in the dialogues, Derrida ([1990] 1992) has commented extensively on Benjaminian thought in "The Force of Law"—an essay that predates the dialogues, and the title of which underwrites Benjamin's core claim of the intimate connection between violence and the law. Jumping back to the Habermas-Derrida dialogues, it is clear that Derrida paints an ethical picture of justice that moves beyond Kantian deontological ethics as well:

For justice does not end with law. Nor even with duties (*devoirs*), which, in a still wholly paradoxical way, "must," "should" go beyond obligation and debt. . . . any

absolutely foreign visitor, as a new arrival, nonidentifiable and unforeseeable, in short, wholly other" (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 128–29). And later: "No state can write it into its laws. But without at least the thought of this pure and unconditional hospitality, of hospitality itself, we would have no concept of hospitality in general and would not even be able to determine any rules for conditional hospitality Without this thought of pure hospitality (a thought that is also, in its own way, an experience), we would not even have the idea of the other, of the alterity of the other, that is, of someone who enters into our lives without having been invited" (129). A different conceptualization of democracy is thus needed.

pure ethics must begin beyond law, duty, and debt. Beyond law, that's easy to understand. Beyond duty, that's almost unthinkable. (Derrida in Borradori 2003, 133)

The “unthinkable” aspect matters here, as it overlaps with Benjamin’s divine violence and justice—ideas that, as we just saw, come close to regulative ideals. This is highlighted in the “The Force of Law,” in which Derrida ([1990] 1992) deconstructs three so-called aporias of justice.²⁵² In his analysis, Derrida touches upon an issue that not only brings us back to Benjamin, but also propels us toward the philosophy of Levinas. Derrida here disconnects justice from “*justice as law (droit)*” (5), as justice is meant to be *given*, rather than enforced. When sketching out how there is always an illegitimate foundational violence attached to law (and this is where Derrida’s direct engagement with Benjamin is revealed),²⁵³ Derrida states that justice is more like a “gift without exchange” (25) and that, similar to his conceptualization of democracy, justice is a regulative ideal, which is, moreover, yet to come. What does this Derridean take on justice, which is said to transcend the legal-political (which, in contrast, Habermas keeps hold of), look like?²⁵⁴ And

²⁵² In “Force of Law,” Derrida ([1990] 1992) distinguishes a genealogical from a structural approach to deconstruction and engages with the latter to reveal the “paradoxes” (21) of justice. Justice is labeled an aporia, as it is always an “experience of the impossible” (16). The first aporia, for Derrida, relates to the idea of freedom, and that one has to be free to act responsibly. Freedom consists of following rules; however, this is not necessarily related to acting in a just manner. The second aporia has to do with undecidability, which arises when one has to take ethical decisions. The third and final aporia connected to justice has to do with the fact that justice has a certain sense of urgency attached to it.

²⁵³ The political scholar Massimiliano Tomba’s essay from 2009 provides an interesting take on *Gewalt*, and Derrida’s rereading of Benjamin’s critique of *Gewalt* in particular. Tomba (2009) criticizes Derrida for not willing to see that Benjamin’s critique of violence is essentially a critique of democracy.

²⁵⁴ Parts of this discussion on Levinas and Derrida are included in my QE field statement (see Geerts 2016b).

could such a renewed model of justice that points at the limitations of more common, legal-political conceptualizations of justice, provide us with enough critical food for thought, to then push it into more critical new materialist directions?

Derrida's idea of justice is further developed in *Specters of Marx* ([1993] 1994) and *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* ([1997] 2001)—two books that are heavily influenced by the philosophy of Levinas and his critique of Heidegger's proto-existentialism.²⁵⁵ Levinas's ethics, as presented in *Entre Nous* ([1991] 1998) and *Totality and Infinity* ([1961] 2015), and in fact provide the foundation for Derrida's ethico-politics. Briefly summarized, Levinas's ethics of radical alterity— theorized with the Holocaust's dehumanizing horrors in mind—starts with the life-interrupting confrontation between the until then ego-focused subject that, like Heidegger's *Dasein*, has been thrown into the world, and “the face of the Other” (Levinas [1961] 2015, 24).²⁵⁶ Meeting the Other engenders a radical “epiphany” (171) and confronts the subject with “the transcendence of the Other” (172); a moment that forms “the first ethical gesture” (174). This disturbs the subject and,

²⁵⁵ Both Levinas and Derrida have elaborated upon the proto-existentialist—and philosopher-turned-Nazi—Martin Heidegger's ([1927] 2008) *Being and Time*. Creating his own “existential analytic of *Dasein*” (33), Heidegger in this book criticizes *Seinsvergessenheit*, or the forgetting of Being (i.e., the existential act of being), in Western philosophy. The analysis of *Dasein* as a socially situated, finite “[B]eing-in-the-world” (33) propels Heidegger to argue that Being's essence is time or living until death's arrival. *Dasein* can either fully invest in its own “Being-towards-possibilities” (220), and transform into an “authentic Being-towards-death” (304) by accepting its finitude and its freedom to act amidst others until then, or refuse to do so, and cultivate a “[b]ad conscience” (337) instead. This contextualization of Heidegger's philosophy with regard to Levinas's and Derrida's thoughts about justice matters here, as Heidegger, despite talking about (in)authenticity and a more relational understanding of Being-with, never concretely conceptualized an intersubjective ethical subject. It is almost as if the ethical is completely overlooked in *Being and Time*, and one could even argue that Heidegger writes a new split into philosophy—that is, a split between ontology/ethics—in addition to the ethical/political split that appears central to modern Western philosophy. This is why Levinas is so critical of Heidegger's ontological philosophy.

²⁵⁶ In line with Levinas's capitalization, I will be capitalizing the Other throughout the remainder of this section when referring to Levinas's and Derrida's notion of the Other.

because of the ungraspable quality of the Other, the modern philosophical subject/object split consequently breaks down. In contrast to Hegel's self/other dialectics, in which objectification is bound to occur, Levinas conceives of the Other as the subject's "master" (72). The Other and the ethical moment that she/he brings, thus surpass the legal-political domain of laws and rights. If the call is accepted, this act of submission to the Other opens up the ethical horizon of justice. Recognizing the Other as Other in her/his "singularity" (246) is where justice blossoms. It is only when this ethical encounter has taken place, and when the subject has responded to the Other's call—think of the aforementioned idea of response-ability traveling via Levinas, to Derrida, and to Haraway and Barad as developed in Chapter 2, section 2.1.1—that an ethical attitude can be cultivated.

A similar view on ethics and justice is theorized in Levinas's ([1991] 1998) more political orientated *Entre Nous*. Here, Levinas rethinks the connection between justice and the response-ability²⁵⁷ that is placed upon us when engaging in relationships with the Other. He does so concretely from within the context of the state and a multitude of Others. In *Entre Nous*, Levinas's ethics is connected to a political philosophy, however—and analogous to Benjamin—he continues to prioritize the ethical moment, here re-imagined as an "ethics of the meeting" (227).

Looking at the philosophy of Habermas and Derrida from a Levinasian perspective, several interesting concluding observations can be drawn. As articulated earlier, Habermas stays within the legal-political framework, whereas Derrida agrees with both Benjamin's and Levinas's prioritization of the ethical,

²⁵⁷ As noted in Chapter 2 (footnote 68), Levinas can be seen as coining the idea, as he focused on responding to the Other's call in his alterity philosophy.

albeit without decoupling the ethical from the political.²⁵⁸ This becomes clear in Derrida's *Specters of Marx* ([1993] 1994) and *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* ([1997] 2001), which respectively address Marx's political legacy, and Europe's refugee crisis during the mid-1990s—an issue that continues to haunt Fortress Europe today. *Specters of Marx* in particular is important to this diffractive exercise. In addition to articulating his critique of neoliberalism and the political theorist Francis Fukuyama's Hegelian-inspired “gospel” (Derrida ([1993] 1994, 70) of the end of history,²⁵⁹ it is here that Derrida reveals his ideas about “hauntology” (10), justice, and temporality.²⁶⁰

Criticizing Heidegger's metaphysics of presence, Derrida ([1993] 1994) creates a space between presence and absence, and between the strict delineations of past, present, and future, by means of the figure of the specter. The specter represents the (Levinasian) Other, but this time an Other from the past whose call has not been answered or, more accurately, violently silenced. Justice does not only bypass law, but is also temporally disjointed, interruptive, and still to be attained—which, as we discovered via the diffracting of various perspectives, are Benjaminian-Levinasian aspects. In this sense, justice is connected to the “future-to-come” (xix), because it entails a responsibility—or, response-ability—that goes

²⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that various Derrida commentators have claimed that his philosophy only turns (toward the) political in his later works, as initially he did not stress the political implications of deconstruction (see Patton 2007). Other commentators, however, emphasize the continuous political and ethical-political threads running through Derrida's oeuvre (see e.g., Blair 2007; Guerlac and Cheah 2009)—a standpoint with which I agree. This is not to say that the philosophies of Benjamin and Levinas are not political in nature, although they clearly prioritize the ethical at all times.

²⁵⁹ See Fukuyama (1992), in which, following Hegel's philosophy of the *Geist*, he lauds secular liberal democracy as the final, most perfect governmental form.

²⁶⁰ Hauntology is Derrida's play on the French pronunciation of ontology and is tied to his critique of (phal)logocentrism, as also noted in the introduction to this dissertation. In *Specters*, Derrida's interest in the ethical-political is emphasized via his social critique and ethico-political model of justice. For a similar enterprise with an even stronger Frankfurt School influence, see Gordon ([1997] 2008).

“beyond the living present” (xix). A queering of linear progressive time and neatly demarcated temporalities unfolds itself here, as justice-to-come not only revolves around future corrections of past and present wrongdoings, but also involves accountability for one’s (and society’s) past actions. This is referred to as learning to live simultaneously “with ghosts” (xvii–xviii), as well as with present and future behavior. The ghosts of the past, together with their material markings—or, in some cases, missing markings—upon the present and the what-is-to-come, need to be continuously pursued. In addition to its ghostly quality, justice has to be given as an incalculable “gift” (26), which again underlines Derrida’s Benjaminian refusal of justice as an economic *do ut des*-relationality, or a legal phenomenon. Like hospitality (one of those other paradoxes Derrida refers to), justice has to be given “without reserve” (82), which seems to imply a Levinasian, submissive attitude. It is the latter notion of hospitality—also emphasized in the dialogues—that ties into a diffractive rereading of Habermas, Derrida, Benjamin, and, partially, also Levinas.

On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness presents us with Derrida’s ([1997] 2001) thoughts on hospitality and forgiveness, framed by a critique of democracy as a paradoxical system that is founded upon shared citizenship and inclusionary principles, yet also operates via a selective mechanism of exclusion and expulsion. Conceptualized as both a duty and a right, hospitality, like justice, is put at the center of the ethico-political. An “ethic of hospitality” (16) should be cultivated upon encountering the Other, as ethics, for Derrida, *is* hospitality—that is, hosting the Other out of respect for her/his humanity. This goes beyond mere tolerance of the existence of difference, which would still entail a legal and obligatory aspect.

Cultivating such an ethics would engender major political transformations, starting with the implementation of a cosmopolitan “democracy to come” (23) that would transcend the framework of the current nation-state. Following Derrida, this framework is limited by its strong focus on a fundamentally flawed principle of sovereignty—which, according to Benjamin, is rooted in state-founding violence. Derrida’s reconceptualization of the democratic state—similar to the gifts of justice and hospitality—shares such ethico-political dimensions, as democracy has to be understood outside the “*conditional* logic of the *exchange*” (34). The foregoing demonstrates that the Derridean take on justice refrains from thinking the latter outside a metaphysics of difference-reducing presence, and directly connects it to ethical and political issues. It is this thinking together of the realms of ethics and politics that, as emphasized throughout this dissertation, brings Derrida’s philosophy—despite its focus on transcendent regulative ideals—very close to critical new materialist undertakings. Both philosophies share an emphasis on the entanglements between the ecological, the ethical, and the political, working from within the world to provoke sociopolitical transformations.

3.4.2. Post-diffractive observations: A different take on justice?

The particular diffractive exercise undertaken in this final section has brought us full circle: First, we started with thoughts about how to best practice (feminist) philosophizing from the ground up. Second, we mapped how (critical) new materialist theorizing could help us re-interpret the world as completely entangled, creating multilayered *Zeitgeist*-adjusted critical theories, conceptual tools, and stories that can grasp and examine these complex entanglements. Finally, we

diffracted various philosophical perspectives through one another, inflected with a degree of critical new materialist thought, to better analyze situated manifestations and earlier theorizations of terror(ism) and the challenges these manifestations have engendered, not merely on a philosophical level, but also academically, politically, and practically.

Diffracting Habermas-Derrida-Benjamin (but also partially Levinas) revealed several significant points that are worthy of more grounded philosophizing in future projects: Diffractive theorizing (from) with(in) the Habermas-Derrida dialogues offered us a good starting point from which to think complex contemporary Continental terrorist attacks, their aftermaths, and their political recuperations, anew. Such a critical new materialist process of thinking is based on the critical theoretical and deconstructionist philosophies of Habermas and Derrida and their philosophical predecessors, and aims to establish a dialogue between them—a dialogue that in the original book (Borradori 2003) was only partially successful, as it was hindered by the oppositional narrative via which these thinkers were interpreted. Highlighting their shared critique of sovereignty, the illegitimacy of the War(s) on Terror, and their conception of “9/11” as a continuously cited event that changed the philosophical-geopolitical landscape forever, Habermas and Derrida were brought closer together than Borradori’s narrative—but also the standard reception histories of their oeuvres—initially allowed.

The concepts of law and justice inevitably come to the fore when diffractively theorizing France’s declaration of the emergency state after the Paris 2015 November attacks, the Brussels 2015 lockdown that soon followed, the potential design of Continental laws resembling the US Patriot Act, and other

measures that were unlawfully proposed and sometimes even hastily implemented. Rereading Habermas's and Derrida's ideas on law and justice has led us toward a rereading of Benjamin's *Gewalt* philosophy. Benjamin's reflections appear crucial when diffractively rereading Habermas and Derrida, especially as Habermas only indirectly underlines the relevance of Benjaminian philosophy to today's terrorism debate and political violence, and thus at times comes surprisingly close to Derrida's philosophy.

However, reading Benjamin, Habermas, and Derrida through one another also reveals certain limits. Habermas's equally Frankfurt School-rooted critical theory, for instance, remained within the realm of man-created law, predicated on a system that can be perverted and is founded upon violence. This is not to say that Habermas would not be critical of *Gesetz ist Gesetz*-like formulas ("The law is the law"), if these would engender injustices and unfair treatments. However, a critique of, and a plea to change, the law is all Habermas's philosophical framework seems to allow. Conversely, Benjamin and Derrida do not stop at merely pointing out the illegitimacy of certain laws and the injustices they engender. Rather, they stress the infallibility and self-contradictory nature of law as such, and, simply put, focus on the ethical reverence, respect, and accountability that should arise when encountering other embodied beings, who share a fleshy vulnerability and impermanence. This is true especially of Derrida, who is influenced by Levinas. Whereas Habermas has high hopes for changing society through rational deliberation and a resketching of the—eventually fully developed framework of international—law, Benjamin and Derrida pursue a fundamentally different worldview. Propelled by an ethical lens, Derrida in particular aims to create a

worldly ethico-politics of the encounter, which is based on singularity and fueled by regulative ideals, such as justice and hospitality. Whereas Derrida's ethico-politics of justice-to-come may at first seem rather "otherworldly," its Levinasian component causes this ethico-politics to be at least partly preoccupied with the cultivation of response-ability. It is this element of response-ability that, because of its critical new materialist connotations, finally pushes us to reconsider the often separated domains of ethics and politics, and the models of justice and critical theory upon which they were founded.

It has hopefully become clear to the reader that this project of critical new materialist philosophizing from the ground up, here specifically its analysis of Continental terrorist events of global importance, and the two philosophies that have already given us thought-provoking conceptual tools to tackle what is at stake, holds great potential. Radically thinking through Derrida's ethico-politics by means of a critical new materialist perspective would, however, require us to perform another Copernican revolution that moves beyond the purely philosophical. This would necessitate an engagement with self-reflective praxes of unlearning (i.e., of radically thinking through humanist theories and conceptualizations, the power of definition-making, traditional Western ideas about justice, democracy, etc.), while updating existing critical conceptual tools, paradigms, and frameworks. What would happen, for instance, if our traditional Western model of law-based justice would be deconstructed, and replaced with a multilayered, less easily universalizable model of justice including responsiveness-as-response-ability that takes the entanglements of the ontological, the epistemological, and the ethico-political seriously, while "staying with(in) the trouble" (Haraway 2016) and

focusing on the ethico-political demands produced by the encounter with both the human and non-human Other? In the short epilogue that rounds up this dissertation project, I hope to tease out some final diffractive musings about the potential of such a more all-encompassing—but also incredibly complex—model by pushing Derrida’s Levinasian ethico-politics in more critical new materialist directions.

3.5. Chapter summary

Chapter 3—also this dissertation’s final chapter—had a dual goal: On the one hand, this more practical philosophical chapter was written in such a way that it could be read on its own, namely, as a critical new materialist analysis of the need to rethink and revitalize contemporary critical theory, as our world is becoming increasingly complex, multilayered, and “troubled.” On the other hand, it simultaneously forms the concluding part of this dissertation, and thus brings various Harawayan-Baradian diffractive moments of philosophizing together. It emphasizes the importance of critical, feminist theorizing from the ground up, the potential of contemporary (critical) new materialist thought, and a burning issue that could benefit from *Zeitgeist*-adjusted situated, materialist, and critical theorizing, namely, terror(ism) and the political philosophical theories produced on the topic so far.

This chapter has actualized several critical new materialist philosophies, strongly rooted in preceding materialist theories—for example, the historical materialisms of the Frankfurt School. Having mapped a variety of new materialist constellations and interlinked assemblages by means of a Braidottian critical cartographical methodology in Chapter 2, this third chapter follows up on this mapping exercise, combining a critical cartographical methodology with a more

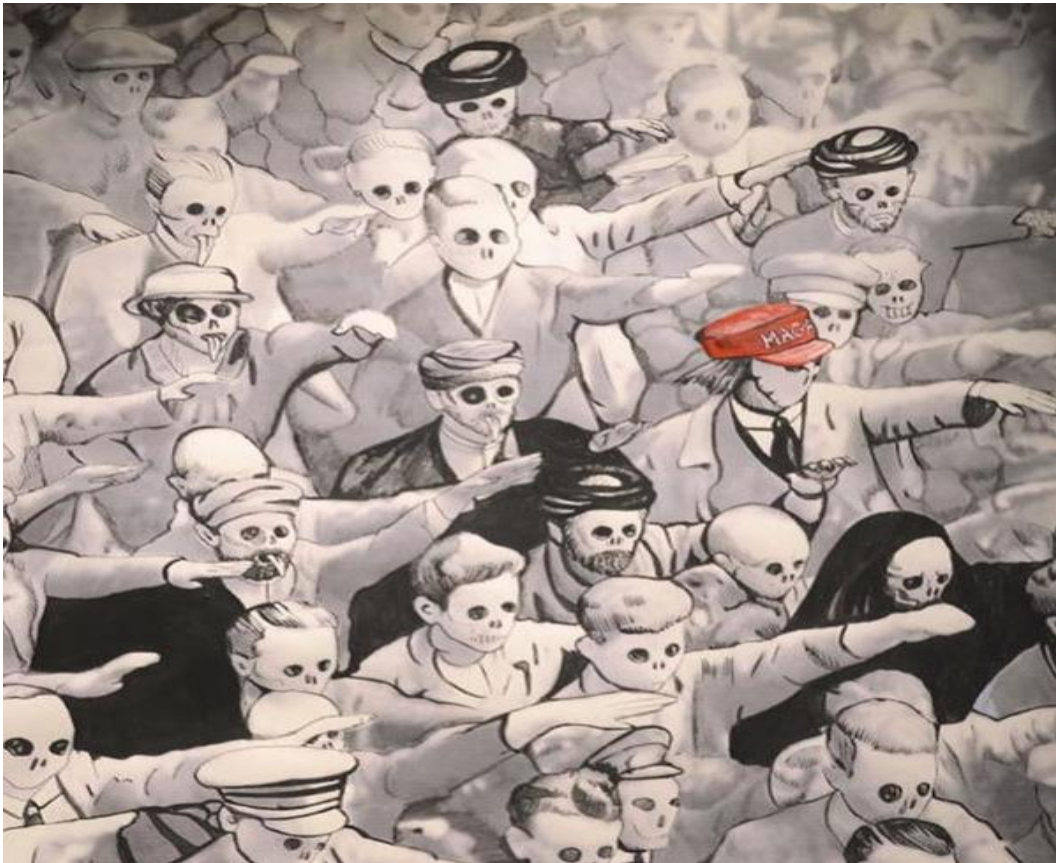
diffraction-based methodology and writing style, which was already explored in the excursus that directly preceded it. First, the double pull of the Enlightenment and the necessity of creating updated and up-to-date critically attentive theories, concepts, and stories was introduced—an issue that Haraway has emphasized time and time again. Second, a broadly painted cartography of some of the existing philosophical literature on terrorism was provided. Looking at how terrorism has been positioned as a modern phenomenon, and mapping several key philosophical, critical theoretical, and post/decolonial reflections, it was argued that 9/11 has led to an increase of philosophical theorizing on contemporary terror(ism). After noting the importance of a mapping—rather than a tracing—strategy, accentuating the dangers of framing, and referring to some of the shared ideas and principles between critical cartographical mapping and diffractive thinking, the Habermas-Derrida dialogues on terrorism and 9/11 were addressed.

The final sections established the claim that the Habermas-Derrida dialogues need to be brought back to the Continent, which has recently been targeted by multiple terrorist attacks. Rather than merely rereading these dialogues in a linear fashion, a diffractive, more fragmented, spacetime-queering reading, theorizing, and writing strategy was used to critically elaborate on the reflections of Habermas and Derrida. In addition, I narrated my own situated experiences of feeling-thinking-through the Paris November 2015 and Brussels 2016 attacks. I diffractively approached the thoughts of Habermas and Derrida regarding 9/11 and its aftermath, traversing the problematic oppositional structure through which their philosophies have been read. Considering the digital-material space and applications via which the Paris November 2015 and Brussels 2016 events reached

me while I was living in Santa Cruz, California, I theorized the artistic tributes, hashtags, and memes that were created to materially—and, in some cases, digitally—materially—memorialize these events. Diffracting legal and political texts concerning the constitutions of both France and Belgium, as well as particular historical materialist and critical new materialist textual fragments and ideas, a different, more entangled, materially grounded way of philosophizing about contemporary terror(ism) and its bio-/necropolitical, law-suspending outcomes emerged. Diffractively rereading Habermas, Derrida, Benjamin, and also partially Levinas through one another, the contemporary—apparently self-undermining—democratic state, terrorism, and the legitimacy of lockdowns and emergency state declarations, were called into question. This chapter ends with an anticipation of the epilogue, in which the necessity of an up-to-date, critical new materialist eco-ethico-political model that would no longer separate the political from the ethical, and moreover reflects upon the potential combination of justice and responsibility-as-responsiveness, is advocated.

EPILOGUE

Eco-Ethico-Political Re-orientations Toward a Different Kind of Justice: Making Space for Responsiveness-as-response-ability



—Kamran Behrouz, *Corpoanarchy: Politics of Radical Refusal*²⁶¹

This dissertation has aimed to establish the eco-ethico-political narratives that underpin critical new materialist thought, as well as its present-day relevance. Therefore, this project would not be complete without an epilogue on how one

²⁶¹ ©Behrouz 2019. Image 24: Herd mentality in all of its variations.

might put this materialist—yet obviously also very theory-based—philosophizing from the ground up into actual ethico-political practice. In these final pages, all of the already entangled strings of this intellectual yet soil-rooted project will be tied together, while opening up new research routes that are infused with the more practical philosophical topics of ethics—or theorizing why the world is as it is and how it ought to be—and politics—or philosophizing about how to effectively change the world, and simultaneously putting those ideas to good use, as to effect actual progressive and radical change. Further, such routes consider the entanglements between the ethical and the political, which play a crucial role in Levinasian-Derridean philosophies, as well as in critical new materialist philosophies, as we saw toward the end of Chapter 3. The above painting by Iranian artist Kamran Behrouz (2019) functions as this epilogue’s visual epigraph to re-orient ourselves as critical theorists, activists, pedagogues, and teachers toward a critical new materialist rethinking—that is, to reconstruct and differently practice contemporary political models of justice.

This dissertation is as much about re-emphasizing the necessity to produce contemporary critical theory production, thought, and politics as it is about providing the reader with a critical cartography of new materialist philosophies in all of their constellations and interlinked assemblages. The pairing of these two projects—one more descriptive, the other more normative in nature—is no coincidence, as such a situated exploration of a critical cartography of (critical) new materialisms could fuel a rethinking and re-evaluation of critical theory. Underlining the necessity of contemporary critical thought, this intellectual project goes directly against the claims of many present-day post-truth aficionados and

politicians, who believe that critical, fact-based thought no longer has a valuable role to play in the political realm. This once rich realm is increasingly reduced to an anti-intellectual landscape, consisting of xenophobic, racist, and fearmongering appeals to basic affects and emotions. In this context, I have emphasized at length the importance of the “critical nature” of what I refer to as “critical new materialisms”—those new materialist philosophies that have been clearly marked by the social justice-oriented traditions of feminist, queer, and critical race studies. Thus, this thesis is not only concerned with how these philosophies could provide us with a *Zeitgeist*-adjusted conceptual toolbox with which to examine the world in all of its complexity and current crisis modes. It is also characterized by what could be seen as a visionary, well-grounded, hope-infused touch, following the world-making feminist fabulations of, among others, Donna Haraway. This approach underwrites the need to use up-to-date conceptual frameworks as a means via which to eco-ethico-politically re-orient ourselves, and it was with this call for an eco-ethico-political processes of re-orientation that Chapter 3 closed. A new project, revolving around the potentiality of a different eco-ethico-politics of justice—one infused with an accentuation of the intertwinement between the ethical and the political, responsiveness-as-response-ability, and potential acts of refusal—is slowly but surely unfolding.

This project-in-the-making is informed by critical new materialist thought and by the critical philosophies of Benjamin, Levinas, and Derrida, whose philosophies are united by their proto-new materialist affirmative understanding of

alterity.²⁶² Moreover, these philosophies provide a thorough critique of the ambiguous, often violent underpinnings of Western democracy, and the idea that the ethical and the political should not be considered in isolation from each other. The project proposed in Chapter 3 started with a critical commentary on the actions of the French and Belgian state apparatuses, both during and following their respective homegrown terrorist events in 2015 and 2016. When contemporary legal frameworks, political models, and ethical contemplations—if taken into account at all—clash and contradict one another, and the law-preserving violence of the Western democratic state takes over (which is exactly what happened in France and Belgium during the state of emergency declarations and lockdowns analyzed in Chapter 3), critical theory empowers us to take a step back and reflect upon these contradictions. Moreover, it provides us with tools and methodologies with which to analyze how such contradictions came into being, and why they are likely to rematerialize in the future if we do not rethink the foundations of the Western nation-state, and work toward a different model of justice that transcends the confinements of the legal-political framework in which it is currently enclosed.

²⁶² This is not to say that these three thinkers can all be seen as proto-new materialist in the same way: Benjamin is definitely the most materialist, and also the most proto-new materialist thinker of the three, due to his connections to the Frankfurt School and his accentuation of grounded hope as the root for socio-political “earthly” revolutions and transformations. His philosophy is nonetheless still very influenced by Jewish theological thought, and the same can be said about the philosophies of Levinas and Derrida. Moreover, abstract regulative ideals play a distinct role in all three philosophies, meaning that Benjamin, Levinas, and Derrida cannot exactly be seen as full “scene-setters” of critical new materialist thought. That role was preserved for Haraway’s ecophilosophy, as was noted throughout this dissertation and specifically in Chapter 2—where a connection between Harawayan thought and the historical materialist philosophies of Bloch and Benjamin was established. The attachment of Benjamin, Levinas, and Derrida to a more affirmative understanding of alterity and of difference, as well as the ways in which the political is always thought together with the ethical, does overlap with Harawayan thought, and can be regarded as proto-new materialist. It is of course true that these three thinkers nonetheless still very much invested in a particular conceptualization of the human subject—but given their own lived experiences with dehumanization processes, that of course also makes sense.

The complex yet fascinating question that remains to be answered (or at least tentatively explored) is how we might start re-orienting ourselves toward a different perspective on justice. Such a potentially situated—non-totalizing—perspective not only takes the retroactive and retributive (i.e., more legal-political) components of justice as a regulative, transcendental ideal into account, but also the more immediate, materially grounded, attainable ethico-political components of justice, such as its potentially redistributive and restorative effects. In more Levinasian, but also Harawayan-Baradian terms,²⁶³ these effects can be seen as actual manifestations of an eco-ethico-political *responding-to* certain injustices, wrongdoings, and transgressions—including large-scale environmental injustices, which often intersect with racialized forms of oppression.

The foregoing question—the potential starting point for a new research project—first emerged while further reflecting upon Derrida’s critical thoughts on justice, articulated at the end of Chapter 3. The discovery of the aforementioned painting by Behrouz further fueled this orientation. Behrouz’s *Corpoanarchy: Politics of Radical Refusal* (2019) is a thought-provoking piece that tackles the thinking anew of an ethico-political act of bodily disobedience, or outright refusal, attributed to August Landmesser. Landmesser was an ordinary German citizen, who worked as a laborer at a local shipyard. He is said to have refused to salute Hitler, when the Nazi leader—already in power and thus embodying the heavily racialized nationalist Nazi politics of the time—unexpectedly visited Landmesser’s workplace in 1936. Landmesser’s refusal to salute Hitler was said to be the result of his love for his Jewish wife. As a result of this particular act of corporeal refusal and his

²⁶³ For more on the notion of response-ability, see Chapter 2 and specifically footnote 68.

marriage, Landmesser was later found guilty and imprisoned for dishonoring the German people under the Nazi racial laws of the time.²⁶⁴ With this work, Behrouz connects their own lived experiences as a queer Iranian artist in exile to that of those who have experienced—and currently experience—the bio-/necropolitical effects of the former fascisms that underpin the various neofascisms that are on the rise today.

Corpoanarchy (2019) can be interpreted as a critique of the uncritical, post-truth-based herd mentality that these fascisms simultaneously engender, and are driven by. A herd mentality that is by the way not only potentially damaging to human subjects—and specifically those that, because of visible bodily differences or intellectual stances are dehumanized in such fascist contexts—but also to the natural environment itself, which connects the critical new materialist element of the ecological back to our ethico-political concerns. *Corpoanarchy* depicts the Nazi-saluting laborers and Landmesser in combination with some of the proponents of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and a “Make America Great Again” (MAGA) hat-wearing individual who uncannily resembles the current American President Donald J. Trump. All of the individuals depicted, except for Landmesser, are part of a (neo)fascist bodily politic, driven by the earlier-described blinding herd mentality—such as conceptualized by Arendt ([1951] 1968, 378ff.) in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Behrouz’s oeuvre combines critical thoughts on the current global refugee and migrant crisis, neoliberal and neofascist politics, and the idea of a queer

²⁶⁴ For more historical details surrounding this particular case, see e.g., Eckler (1996) and Flock (2012).

diaspora. Thus, from a more holistic perspective that takes into account this wider oeuvre, *Corpoanarchy* is also a commentary on which bodies are allowed to matter in contemporary society. This becomes clear in other art works and installations that are centered on displaced migrant bodies that are affected by grief, nostalgia, and violence. Behrouz's oeuvre thus explicitly tackles the topic of which bodies are constructed to matter less, or not at all, in specifically situated contexts and environments, and are seen as exploitable, and ultimately disposable—as commodities.²⁶⁵

According to some critical new materialist thinkers, who have highlighted the mattering of bodies and their potential disposability as surplus, left-over matter, in these neoliberal, extraction-based, capitalist times—times that are all about commodifying and using up our natural environment in non-sustainable ways—this process could eventually be the fate of *all* living bodies (see e.g., Braidotti 2013; Cooper 2008). This topic is connected to another leitmotiv that has been underlined throughout this dissertation, namely, the idea that, in order to dismantle the unequal mattering of embodied subjects—be they human, dehumanized, or non-human—the negative, separation-focused Hegelian take on difference has to be closely scrutinized and dismantled. This idea, of the necessity of a different take on difference, is shared by all of the critical thinkers named so far in this epilogue, and specifically the critical new materialists mentioned in this dissertation.

Furthermore, such a re-orientation appears to be the prerequisite for conceptualizing a new eco-ethico-politics of justice that could be accountable to

²⁶⁵ See also e.g., Braidotti (2013), Butler (1993), and Cooper (2008) as referenced throughout this dissertation.

answering the call of the Other as automatically relating, and related, to the subject receiving this call—to phrase it in more Levinasian-Derridean terms. Such an eco-ethico-politics of justice foregrounds a relational responsiveness—that is, a *response-ability*—toward what is and what is yet to be, and thus breaks out of its legal-political constraints. This framework follows the kind of critical new materialist micropolitical model of intersubjective encounters that was touched upon in Chapters 2 and 3. This was highlighted in my discussion of the more Deleuzoguattarian new materialisms of Massumi, Grosz, and Braidotti, but also the agential realist politics of Barad, who is heavily influenced by the tradition of Levinasian-Derridean alterity philosophy, Benjaminian theological philosophy, and Haraway’s and Minh-ha’s diffractive—and thus non-separational—understandings of difference and its often violent inscription upon bodies.

Let us now return to Behrouz’s painting, and Landmesser’s bodily act of refusal, which it commemorates and rematerializes. Perceived from a more critical new materialist perspective, this embodied individual act of refusal—of opposing a fascist regime that was considered to be “just,” seen through the legal-political perspectives of those in power at the time—is a flat-out refusal to allow one’s physical body to become incorporated into the bio-/necropolitical fascist body politic. This boils down to a powerful eco-ethico-micropolitics that focuses on politicized ethical principles, such as geopolitical accountability, situatedness, attentiveness, and care within encounters—both with others and the world.

This, however, does not mean that such a more micro-oriented model could not also impact on macrostructures and institutions. Landmesser’s act of disobedience—a clear, and in this case also solitary, act of accountable *responding-*

to an ethico-politically unjust ideology and system—holds the power to provoke others to do the same, thus creating a potentially collective antifascist body politic. On top of the foundations of such a more relational, embedded, grassroots eco-ethico-micropolitics, an even more collective, macropolitical can be constructed. Such a model would complement existing models of justice, while further highlighting the importance of “staying with(in) the trouble” (Haraway 2016) of today’s world and the specific contexts of certain wrongdoings via the principles of, among others, non-totalizing situatedness, context, attentiveness, and care. It is indeed the contextual, and not the emptied-out “universal”—which could easily relapse into something totalizing and re-oppressive—that seems to matter most in such an eco-ethico-politics. After all, what is the value of a regulative ideal such as justice, if it is not measured against immanent, worldly standards and also implemented from the ground up?

With this last remark—which basically propels us toward a new intellectual-political project—my argument has come full circle. Clearly, conceptualizing a micropolitics such as the model described above and then actively implementing it takes time, effort, and what I would call “re-orientation-through-disorientation,” echoing Ahmed’s (2006) ideas about orientation. Critical new materialist thought, together with various pre-existing forms of grassroots politics and movements for social justice, can provide us with multiple crucial impulses via which to develop such a more contextualized, well-grounded micropolitics of response-ability with macropolitical implications. Both Haraway’s (1988) situated knowledges—which accentuates the power of a coalitional feminist politics with a clear focus on the ecological—and Barad’s (2011) Levinasian-Derridean agential realist “ethics of

entanglement” (150)—which spotlights the cross-temporal, cross-generational power of justice and response-ability combined—are crucial to this undertaking. As Barad (2010) suggests, this responsiveness-as-response-ability predates agential cutting and subjectivity structures, and thus focuses on the relational connections between beings, rather than separational “subjects” and “objects” with identities-as-differing:

Entanglements are relations of obligation—being bound to the other—enfolded traces of othering. Othering, the constitution of an “Other,” entails an indebtedness to the “Other,” who is irreducibly and materially bound to, threaded through, the “self”—a diffraction/dispersion of identity. “Otherness” is an entangled relation of difference (*différance*). . . . Crucially, there is no getting away from ethics on this account of mattering. (265)

Following Barad’s agential realist ontology—as in many other critical new materialist ontological worldviews—this ethical debt toward the Other is woven into the fabric of the world, and thus one cannot escape these relations of obligation.²⁶⁶ And that, not only toward the human Other, who, has more often been not been negatively conceptualized as the non-human, not-mattering Other, but also to the environment, the world, and the universe itself.

Approaching the end of this epilogue, and also dissertation, it has hopefully become clear that a rethinking of justice as such cannot but involve the ethical and the ecological. There is an urgent need to develop a more relational eco-ethics that

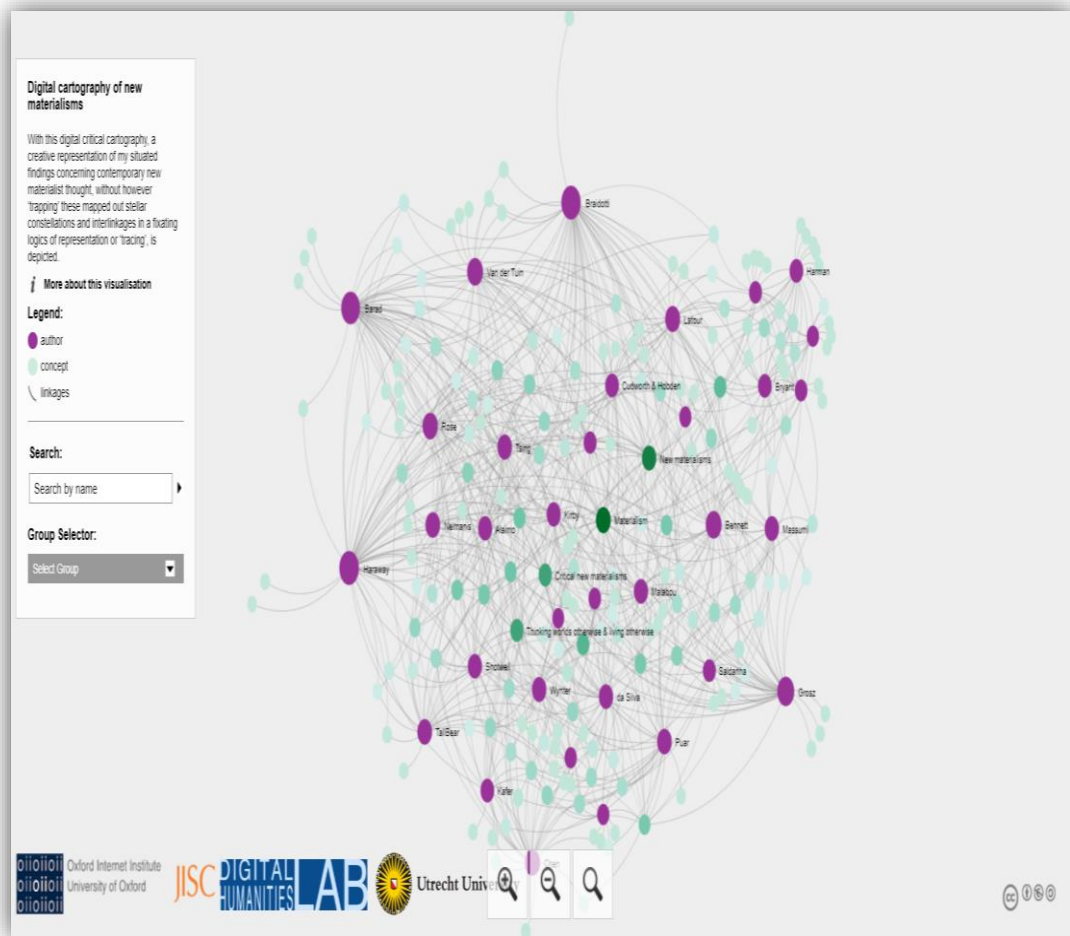
²⁶⁶ Unless one of course actively refuses to partake in these relations of obligation, which would lead us to what I would call a different kind of refusal and antipolitical politics of refusal.

values all beings simply for “being.” Such an ethics highlights a subject that is continuously encountering the Other, in all of its differing forms, and therefore also exposes, not only the vulnerable limits, but also the beginnings of her-/himself. Without this re-orientation, an eco-ethico-micropolitics of response-ability will not have a proper chance to blossom and challenge the various existing neoliberalism-tainted, neofascist models that are consciously promoting the further disconnection of the political, the ethical, and the affective from one another. From this point of view, contemporary critical new materialist philosophies could provide a vital eco-ethico-political counterbalance.

APPENDIX

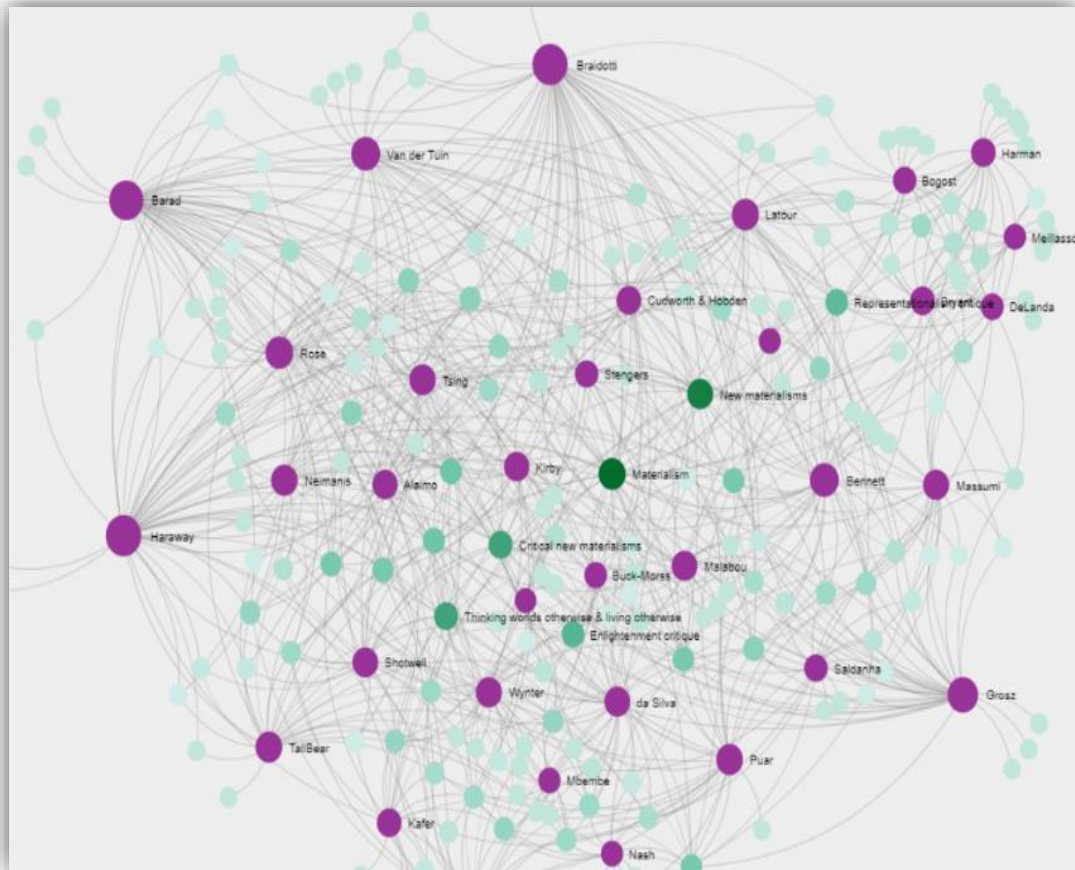
Appendix A: A Digital Critical Cartography of New Materialisms

The following Appendices A and B (which are best read before finishing Chapter 2) consist of the data and methodology used to create the digital version of the critical mapping exercise that was explored in Chapter 2, which, as also noted earlier in the dissertation, is accessible by clicking on this link: <http://dhstatic.hum.uu.nl/digicart/> (Geerts, Hebing, and de Kruif 2019). The opening page is depicted below (Still 7).



© Geerts, Hebing, and de Kruif 2019
Still 7: Digital Cartography Overview: 2

More names, concepts, and networks appear as one keeps zooming in, as seen here below (Still 8).

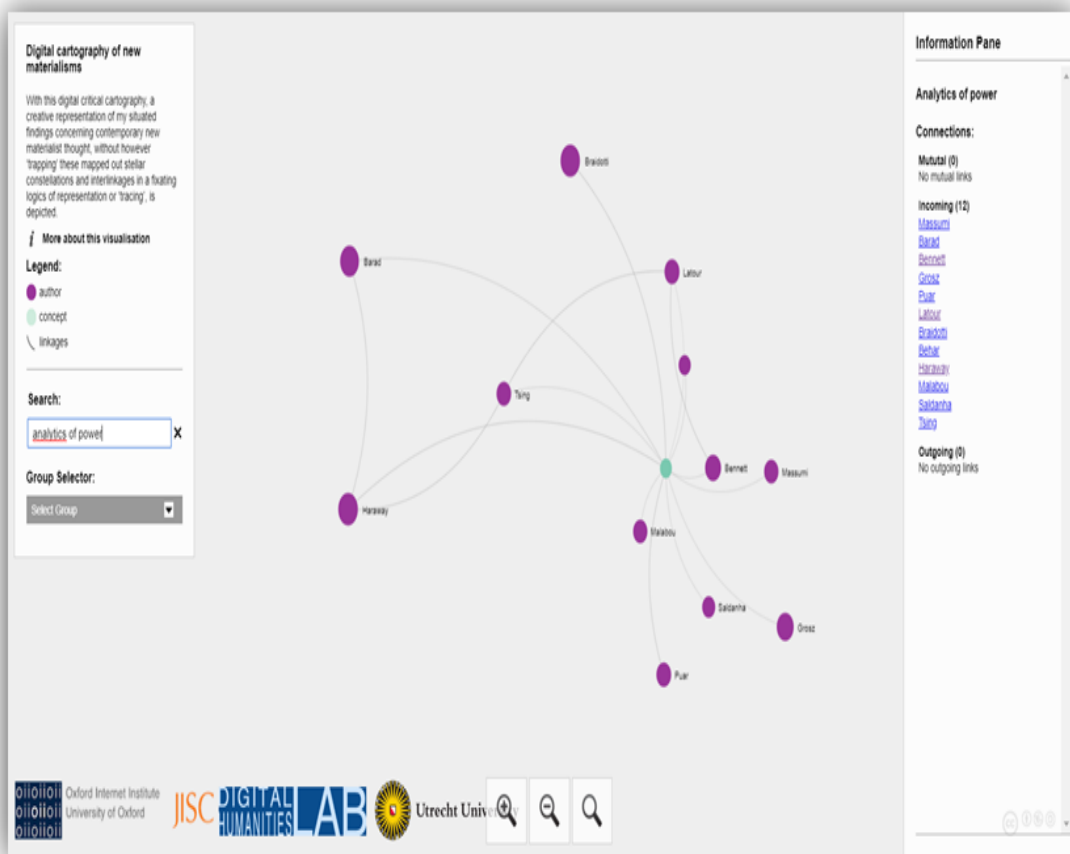


© Geerts, Hebing, and de Kruif 2019
Still 8: Digital Cartography Overview: 3

This digital cartography can be used in numerous of ways: One can navigate the map by zooming in and out, and get a general yet detailed overview of how the presented authors—represented by purple dots—are connected (or not connected) to one another. By for instance clicking on one author, one gets an overview of the concepts linked to this author, and of how this specific author is linked to another author depicted on the map, plus an overview of the concepts that are connected to the first author. To give an example: Shotwell’s philosophy (with all of the major

concepts) pops up when one clicks on the Haraway node, meaning that these philosophies and authors are interlinked.

Another way to navigate the map, is by using the provided interface system on the left and typing in the name of a particular author mentioned in Chapter 2, or a concept. It is also possible to get an overview of various groups (all of the authors, for example, or all of the authors that are interconnected via a certain common concept). To give but one example: When typing in “Power,” the interface provides us with three clickable navigational options, namely, “Flat ‘powerless’ ontology,” “Analytics of power,” and “Thing-power.” Clicking on the second notion then gives us the following interlinkages between authors (Still 9).



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Still 9: Digital Cartography Overview: 4

The size of the purple nodes (and all of the other nodes) by the way is also of importance: The bigger the node in question, the stronger the connection. In the image above (although it is more visible on the site itself), Braidotti's node is bigger than Latour's, which says something about their attachment to the notion in question. This should suffice as a manual to help the reader navigate this digital cartography—the point is to explore the map and see where the interlinkages between thinkers and concepts take you.

Now a little bit more about the methodology and framework behind this digital cartography: As also explained in the main text in Chapter 2, I wanted to find a creative way to represent my own situated findings concerning contemporary new materialist thought, without however “trapping” these mapped out stellar constellations and interlinkages in a fixating logic of representation. The methodology for visually developing this cartography thus had to not only stay true to the nature of contemporary new materialist thought, but also follow a more Deleuzoguattarian rhizomatic logic. With these philosophical ideas in mind, I in the end cooperated with Utrecht University's Digital Humanities Lab (2019), and during these consultation sessions, I realized that a network-focused depiction of several new materialisms, their most important authors, and key concepts, would make an interesting addition to this project, as such a “lively” digital depiction would focus on the complex intra-actions between various new materialist strands of thought and thus transcend the limitations attached to more common, static visualizations.

One thing immediately became clear when trying to come up with the “data” needed to design this networks and nodes-focused cartography, and that is the fact

that this turned out to be a diffractive thinking, writing, and assembling process all in one. I came up with the idea of using an Excel sheet (as one needs a place to gather data, to then visualize said data with a particular data visualization program, in this case, Gephi), selecting the most interesting new materialist or related thinkers—and that either on the basis of how many times they were mentioned in the dissertation or because I had discovered that their work had either *a lot* or almost *nothing* in common with other thinkers that were going to be included in the mapping project. I thus intentionally looked for the more “provocative” thinkers that the dissertation mentions, and did so from within my situated interpretation and framing of current-day new materialist thought, which, to accentuate it again, means that this digital map, just like its textual counterpart developed in Chapter 2, can still be added on to. Ideally, this digital cartography would be open source itself and, together with the data created and used, available to everyone online so that others could experiment with it as well. The selection of the concepts, by the way, went much slower: I decided to select and use a lot of the concepts mentioned in the dissertation itself, but also went through various main authors’ books, and specifically, book indexes, to find useful concepts. I initially expected to come up with a simple list of authors, concepts, and weight attributed to these concepts (i.e., in this case a number between 1–5, with 1 denoting “little to no relevance” and 5 “high relevance,” which, again, were decisions based on my personal situated take and interpretation) after having mapped the new materialist assemblages and their interlinkages in question.

But what ended up unfolding itself, turned out to be a way less linear process than originally expected: I of course knew beforehand that the outcome of this

exercise was going to be a complex map with lots of overlapping nodes, but I did not expect to keep going back to the text every time the map materialized itself more and more. I actually went back to Chapter 2 numerous times to rewrite and edit it, as unexpected linkages arose when designing and then later on publishing the digital map. To give but one example of this more intra-active encounter between myself as the researcher-writer, the data developed, and the digital map created: I was initially only planning on mentioning the work of Buck-Morss in relation to Adorno and Horkheimer but eventually devoted more space to her philosophy, as the gathering and evaluating of the required concepts for the digital cartography demonstrated that the conceptualizations of the future, critical theory, and the role of *Zeitgeist*-adjusted concepts in future world-building in Buck-Morss, Haraway, and Braidotti, were very similar. I thus did not only “create” the data (i.e., concepts in question)—the data often agentially approached or even “encountered” (see also Somerville 2016) me. And this happened with numerous other thinkers as well.

This in the end proved to be a good complementary “lively” critical mapping exercise that hopefully not only accentuates some of the points that I have tried to make in this dissertation but also demonstrates the “liveliness” of both a diffractive methodology and of current-day new materialist thought in its various constellations and assemblages.

Appendix B: The data created and used

Source	Target	Weight	Source	Target	Weight
Braidotti	[Re]territorialization	5	Bryant	Affect	4
Braidotti	[Queering] futurity	3	Bryant	Correlationalism critique	5
Braidotti	Accountability	5	Bryant	DeLanda	5
Braidotti	Affirmation	5	Bryant	Deleuze & Guattari	5
Braidotti	Analytics of power	5	Bryant	Democracy of Objects	5
Braidotti	Anthropocene	4	Bryant	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	3
Braidotti	Becoming	5	Bryant	Harman	5
Braidotti	Bio/necropolitics	5	Bryant	Latour	5
Braidotti	Bodies that matter	5	Bryant	Materialism	4
Braidotti	Commodification of matter	5	Bryant	New materialisms	4
Braidotti	Cooper	4	Bryant	Non-human actor	5
Braidotti	Critical cartography	5	Bryant	Object-oriented ontology	5
Braidotti	Critical new materialisms	5	Bryant	Object-oriented philosophy	5
Braidotti	Critical posthumanism	5	Bryant	Onticology	5
Braidotti	Cyborgs	3	Bryant	Onto-cartography	5
Braidotti	Deleuze & Guattari	5	Bryant	Plasticity	5
Braidotti	Difference	5	Bryant	Post-Continental philosophy	5
Braidotti	Eco-ethico-politics	5	Bryant	Posthumanism	5
Braidotti	Embodied and embedded subject	5	Bryant	Representationalism critique	5
Braidotti	Enlightenment critique	4	Bryant	Speculative realism	5
Braidotti	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	4			
Braidotti	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	5	Chen	[Dis]ability	5
Braidotti	Foucault	5	Chen	[Queering] futurity	5
Braidotti	Grounded hope	4	Chen	Analytics of raciality	5
Braidotti	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	4	Chen	Animacy	5
Braidotti	Irigaray	5	Chen	Animality	5
Braidotti	Materialism	5	Chen	Bio/necropolitics	5
Braidotti	Micropolitics	5	Chen	Butler	5
Braidotti	New materialisms	5	Chen	Critical race studies	5
Braidotti	Phallogocentrism critique	5	Chen	Critique of [neoliberal] extraction-based capitalism	4
Braidotti	Nomadic feminism	5	Chen	Deleuze & Guattari	3
Braidotti	Non-innocence of theorizing	5	Chen	Derrida	3
Braidotti	Politics of imperceptibility	5	Chen	Enlightenment critique	2
Braidotti	Politics of location	5	Chen	Environmental justice	5
Braidotti	Processes of [de]humanization	5	Chen	Feminist science studies	4

Braidotti	Relational ontology	5	Chen	Foucault	4
Braidotti	Representationalism critique	4	Chen	Homonormativity critique	5
Braidotti	Rethinking critique	5	Chen	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	4
Braidotti	Sexual difference/differing	5	Chen	Kafer	5
Braidotti	Situated knowledges	5	Chen	Lead	5
Braidotti	Spinoza	5	Chen	Politics of visibility	4
Braidotti	The materialization & mattering of bodies	5	Chen	Purity politics [critique]	5
Braidotti	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	5	Chen	Queer crip theory	5
Braidotti	Transcending dualisms	5	Chen	Queer of color critique	5
Braidotti	Transcending somatophobia	5	Chen	Queer theory	5
Braidotti	Transpositions	5	Chen	Racial difference/differing	5
Braidotti	Virtuality	5	Chen	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	4
Braidotti	Vitalism	5	Chen	Toxicity	5
Braidotti	Zoe-egalitarianism	5	Chen	Vitalism	4
Haraway	[Queering] futurity	4	Cudworth & Hobden	Actant	4
Haraway	Analytics of power	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Actor-Network Theory [ANT]	4
Haraway	Analytics of scientific knowledge-production	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Adorno	5
Haraway	Animality	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Animality	5
Haraway	Anthropocene	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Anthropocene	5
Haraway	Attentivity	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Bennett	5
Haraway	Bodies that matter	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Companion species	5
Haraway	Chthulucene	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Complexity thinking	5
Haraway	Classification critique	4	Cudworth & Hobden	Distributive agency	5
Haraway	Commodification of matter	3	Cudworth & Hobden	Ecophilosophy	4
Haraway	Companion species	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Emancipatory posthumanism	5
Haraway	Critical new materialisms	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Enlightenment critique	5
Haraway	Critical posthumanism	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Haraway	5
Haraway	Critical race studies	4	Cudworth & Hobden	Latour	5
Haraway	Cyborgs	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Materialism	5
Haraway	Difference	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Negative dialectics	4
Haraway	Diffraction	5	Cudworth & Hobden	New materialisms	4
Haraway	Eco-ethico-politics	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Parliament of Things	4
Haraway	Ecophilosophy	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Politics of visibility	3
Haraway	Embodied and embedded subject	5	Cudworth & Hobden	Posthumanism	5
Haraway	Enlightenment critique	4	Cudworth & Hobden	Stengers	4
Haraway	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	5			
Haraway	Feminist objectivity	5	Buck-Morss	[New] Humanism	4
Haraway	Feminist science studies	5	Buck-Morss	Adorno	5
Haraway	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	5	Buck-Morss	Anti/decolonial thought	4

Harawa y	Gene fetishism [critique]	4	Buck-Morss	Aufhebung	5
Harawa y	Grounded hope	5	Buck-Morss	Bio/necropolitics	3
Harawa y	Harding	5	Buck-Morss	Critique of [neoliberal], extraction-based capitalism	4
Harawa y	Kinship	5	Buck-Morss	Enlightenment critique	5
Harawa y	Materialism	5	Buck-Morss	Globality	5
Harawa y	New materialisms	5	Buck-Morss	Grounded hope	4
Harawa y	Non-innocence of theorizing	5	Buck-Morss	Hegel [critique]	5
Harawa y	Purity politics [critique]	5	Buck-Morss	Heidegger	5
Harawa y	Relational ontology	5	Buck-Morss	Materialism	5
Harawa y	Representationalism critique	4	Buck-Morss	Negative dialectics	5
Harawa y	Responsibility as response-ability	5	Buck-Morss	Rethinking critique	5
Harawa y	Rethinking critique	4	Buck-Morss	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3
Harawa y	Situated knowledges	5			
Harawa y	The materialization & mattering of bodies	5	Kafer	[Dis]ability	5
Harawa y	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	5	Kafer	[Queering] futurity	5
Harawa y	Transcending dualisms	5	Kafer	Animacy	4
Harawa y	Transcending somatophobia	5	Kafer	Bodies that matter	5
Harawa y	Vitalism	3	Kafer	Butler	5
			Kafer	Chen	5
DeLand a	[Re]territorialization	5	Kafer	Crip time	5
DeLand a	Assemblages	5	Kafer	Critical new materialisms	5
DeLand a	Correlationalism critique	5	Kafer	Cyborgs	3
DeLand a	Flat "powerless" ontology	4	Kafer	Enlightenment critique	3
DeLand a	Materialism	5	Kafer	Environmental justice	4
DeLand a	New materialisms	3	Kafer	Haraway	5
DeLand a	Non-human actor	5	Kafer	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	3
DeLand a	Object-oriented philosophy	5	Kafer	Materialism	5
DeLand a	Post-Continental philosophy	5	Kafer	New materialisms	5
DeLand a	Relations of [exteriority and interiority]	5	Kafer	Politics of visibility	4
DeLand a	Representationalism critique	5	Kafer	Purity politics [critique]	5
DeLand a	Social ontology	4	Kafer	Queer crip theory	5
DeLand a	Speculative realism	5	Kafer	Queer theory	5
DeLand a	Withdrawn objects	5	Kafer	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3
			Kafer		
Meillas soux	Ancestrality	5			
Meillas soux	Arche-fossils	5	Malabou	[Critique of the Derridean] trace	5
Meillas soux	Correlationalism critique	5	Malabou	Analytics of power	3
Meillas soux	Flat "powerless" ontology	5	Malabou	Aufhebung	5
Meillas soux	Fossil-matter	5	Malabou	Becoming	5
Meillas soux	Materialism	5	Malabou	Derrida	5

Meillas soux	New materialisms	3	Malabou	Difference	5
Meillas soux	Non-human actor	5	Malabou	Embodied and embedded subject	5
Meillas soux	Object-oriented philosophy	5	Malabou	Flow[s]	5
Meillas soux	Post-Continental philosophy	5	Malabou	Hegel [critique]	5
Meillas soux	Representationalism critique	5	Malabou	Heidegger	5
Meillas soux	Speculative realism	5	Malabou	Logic of exclusion	3
Meillas soux	Withdrawn objects	5	Malabou	Materialism	5
			Malabou	Mutability of being	5
Massu mi	[Re]territorialization	5	Malabou	Negative dialectics	5
Massu mi	Affect	5	Malabou	Neuroplasticity	5
Massu mi	Affirmation	4	Malabou	New materialisms	4
Massu mi	Analytics of power	3	Malabou	Ontology of the accident	5
Massu mi	Assemblages	5	Malabou	Phallogocentrism critique	5
Massu mi	Becoming	5	Malabou	Plasticity	5
Massu mi	Correlationalism critique	4	Malabou	Post-Continental philosophy	5
Massu mi	Critical new materialisms	2	Malabou	Sexual difference/differing	5
Massu mi	Difference	3	Malabou	Spinoza	5
Massu mi	Encounters between objects	4	Malabou	The materialization & mattering of bodies	4
Massu mi	Embodied and embedded subject	3	Malabou	Transcending somatophobia	5
Massu mi	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	3			
Massu mi	Immanence	5	Mbembe	[New] Humanism	4
Massu mi	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	4	Mbembe	Analytics of raciality	5
Massu mi	Materialism	5	Mbembe	Bio/necropolitics	5
Massu mi	Micropolitics	5	Mbembe	Black reason	5
Massu mi	Movement	4	Mbembe	Césaire	5
Massu mi	New materialisms	5	Mbembe	Critical posthumanism	5
Massu mi	Non-human actor	5	Mbembe	Deleuze & Guattari	4
Massu mi	Politics of imperceptibility	5	Mbembe	Enlightenment critique	5
Massu mi	Representationalism critique	5	Mbembe	Fanon	5
Massu mi	Speculative realism	2	Mbembe	Foucault	5
Massu mi	The event	5	Mbembe	Necropolitics	5
Massu mi	Virtuality	5	Mbembe	Postcolony	5
Massu mi	Vitalism	4	Mbembe	Racial difference/differing	5
			Mbembe	Sovereignty	5
Barad	[Queering] futurity	5			
Barad	Accountability	5	Nash	Assemblages	3
Barad	Agential cut[ting]	5	Nash	Crenshaw	5
Barad	Agential realism	5	Nash	Critical race studies	5
Barad	Analytics of power	4	Nash	Difference	5
Barad	Analytics of scientific knowledge-production	5	Nash	Diversity/inclusion complex	5

Barad	Benjamin	5	Nash	Foucault	5
Barad	Bodies that matter	5	Nash	Hill Collins	5
Barad	Butler	5	Nash	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	5
Barad	Critical new materialisms	5	Nash	Logic of exclusion	4
Barad	Critical posthumanism	5	Nash	Politics of visibility	4
Barad	Derrida	5	Nash	Queer of color critique	5
Barad	Difference	5	Nash	Queer theory	5
Barad	Diffraction	5	Nash	Racial difference/differing	5
Barad	Eco-ethico-politics	5	Nash	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3
Barad	Embodied and embedded subject	5			
Barad	Enlightenment critique	3	Neimanis	[Speculative] storytelling	5
Barad	Entanglements	5	Neimanis	Alaimo	5
Barad	Ethics of worlding	5	Neimanis	Anthropocene	5
Barad	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	4	Neimanis	Bodies that matter	4
Barad	Feminist objectivity	5	Neimanis	Braidotti	5
Barad	Feminist science studies	5	Neimanis	Collaborative knowledge[s]	3
Barad	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	5	Neimanis	Critical new materialisms	5
Barad	Foucault	5	Neimanis	Critical posthumanism	5
Barad	Grounded hope	3	Neimanis	Eco-ethico-politics	3
Barad	Haraway	5	Neimanis	Ecophilosophy	4
Barad	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	4	Neimanis	Environmental justice	3
Barad	Intersubjective encounters	4	Neimanis	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	3
Barad	Intra-action	5	Neimanis	Feminist science studies	3
Barad	Kirby	5	Neimanis	Grosz	5
Barad	Levinas	5	Neimanis	Haraway	5
Barad	Materialism	5	Neimanis	Irigaray	5
Barad	Micropolitics	4	Neimanis	Kinship	5
Barad	New materialisms	5	Neimanis	Merleau-Ponty	5
Barad	Non-innocence of theorizing	5	Neimanis	New materialisms	5
Barad	Processes of [de]humanization	5	Neimanis	Phallogocentrism critique	4
Barad	Queer theory	5	Neimanis	Sexual difference/differing	5
Barad	Relational ontology	5	Neimanis	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3
Barad	Representationalism critique	5	Neimanis	Transcending dualisms	5
Barad	Responsibility as response-ability	5	Neimanis	Transcending somatophobia	5
Barad	Rethinking critique	5	Neimanis	Transcorporeality	3
Barad	Situated knowledges	4	Neimanis	Unknowability	5
Barad	The materialization & mattering of bodies	5	Neimanis	Water	5
Barad	Transcending dualisms	5			
Barad	Transcending somatophobia	5	Shotwell	[Dis]ability	5
Barad	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	5	Shotwell	[Speculative] storytelling	4

			Shotwell	Anthropocene	5
Bennett	Adorno	5	Shotwell	Attentivity	4
Bennett	Analytics of power	3	Shotwell	Classification critique	5
Bennett	Assemblages	5	Shotwell	Critical new materialisms	5
Bennett	Becoming	5	Shotwell	Critical race studies	4
Bennett	Critical new materialisms	3	Shotwell	Critique of [neoliberal] extraction-based capitalism	4
Bennett	Critical posthumanism	4	Shotwell	Derrida	5
Bennett	Deleuze & Guattari	5	Shotwell	Eco-ethico-politics	5
Bennett	Difference	4	Shotwell	Ecophilosophy	5
Bennett	Distributive agency	5	Shotwell	Environmental justice	5
Bennett	Eco-ethico-politics	3	Shotwell	Feminist science studies	5
Bennett	Enlightenment critique	3	Shotwell	Grounded hope	4
Bennett	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	3	Shotwell	Haraway	5
Bennett	Flow[s]	5	Shotwell	Materialism	5
Bennett	Force[s]	5	Shotwell	Politics of visibility	4
Bennett	Immanence	5	Shotwell	Purity politics [critique]	5
Bennett	Latour	5	Shotwell	Queer theory	4
Bennett	Lucretius	5	Shotwell	Racial difference/differing	4
Bennett	Materialism	5	Shotwell	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	5
Bennett	Micropolitics	5	Shotwell	Toxicity	5
Bennett	New materialisms	5	Shotwell	Transcending dualisms	5
Bennett	Non-human actor	5	Shotwell	Transcending somatophobia	5
Bennett	Object-oriented ontology	3			
Bennett	Object-oriented philosophy	3	Saldanha	[Re]territorialization	5
Bennett	Purity politics [critique]	4	Saldanha	Analytics of power	3
Bennett	Spinoza	5	Saldanha	Analytics of raciality	5
Bennett	The materialization & mattering of bodies	5	Saldanha	Assemblages	5
Bennett	Thing-power	5	Saldanha	Becoming	5
Bennett	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3	Saldanha	Critical new materialisms	4
Bennett	Thoreau	5	Saldanha	Critical race studies	5
Bennett	Thrash	5	Saldanha	Deleuze & Guattari	5
Bennett	Vibrant matter	5	Saldanha	Flow[s]	5
Bennett	Vitalism	5	Saldanha	Force[s]	5
			Saldanha	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	4
Grosz	[Re]territorialization	5	Saldanha	Materialism	5
Grosz	Affirmation	4	Saldanha	Movement	5
Grosz	Analytics of power	3	Saldanha	Politics of imperceptibility	5
Grosz	Assemblages	5	Saldanha	Purity logics [critique]	5
Grosz	Becoming	5	Saldanha	Racial difference/differing	5
Grosz	Bergson	5	Saldanha	Virtuality	5
Grosz	Critical new materialisms	4	Saldanha	Viscosity of race	5

Grosz	Critical posthumanism	4			
Grosz	Darwin	5	da Silva	Affect	3
Grosz	Deleuze & Guattari	5	da Silva	Analytics of raciality	5
Grosz	Derrida	5	da Silva	Anti/decolonial thought	5
Grosz	Difference	5	da Silva	Bio/necropolitics	5
Grosz	Embodied and embedded subject	5	da Silva	Critical new materialisms	5
Grosz	Enlightenment critique	3	da Silva	Critical race studies	5
Grosz	Flow[s]	5	da Silva	Critique of [neoliberal] extraction-based capitalism	5
Grosz	Force[s]	5	da Silva	Enlightenment critique	5
Grosz	Immanence	5	da Silva	Foucault	5
Grosz	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	5	da Silva	Globality	5
Grosz	Irigaray	5	da Silva	Hegel [critique]	5
Grosz	Life	5	da Silva	Heidegger	4
Grosz	Materialism	5	da Silva	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	4
Grosz	Micropolitics	5	da Silva	Life as surplus	5
Grosz	Movement	5	da Silva	Logic of exclusion	5
Grosz	New materialisms	5	da Silva	Materialism	5
Grosz	Non-human actor	4	da Silva	New materialisms	5
Grosz	Politics of imperceptibility	5	da Silva	Politics of visibility	4
Grosz	Processes of [de]humanization	3	da Silva	Postcolony	5
Grosz	Representationalism critique	4	da Silva	Racial difference/differing	5
Grosz	Sexual difference/differing	5	da Silva	Representationalism critique	3
Grosz	Spinoza	5	da Silva	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3
Grosz	The event	5	da Silva	Transcending dualisms	5
Grosz	The incorporeal	5	da Silva	Transcending somatophobia	5
Grosz	Transcending dualisms	5			
Grosz	Transcending somatophobia	5	TallBear	[New] Humanism	4
Grosz	The materialization & mattering of bodies	4	TallBear	[Speculative] storytelling	3
Grosz	Virtuality	5	TallBear	Analytics of raciality	5
Grosz	Vitalism	5	TallBear	Anti/decolonial thought	5
			TallBear	Attentivity	3
Puar	[Dis]ability	5	TallBear	Bio/necropolitics	5
Puar	[Queering] futurity	5	TallBear	Bodies that matter	5
Puar	Analytics of power	5	TallBear	Classification critique	5
Puar	Assemblages	5	TallBear	Collaborative knowledge[s]	4
Puar	Becoming	5	TallBear	Commodification of matter	4
Puar	Bio/necropolitics	5	TallBear	Critique of [neoliberal] extraction-based capitalism	3
Puar	Bodies that matter	5	TallBear	Enlightenment critique	3
Puar	Butler	5	TallBear	Environmental justice	5
Puar	Critical new materialisms	5	TallBear	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	5
Puar	Critical race studies	5	TallBear	Feminist science studies	5
Puar	Deleuze & Guattari	5	TallBear	Gene fetishism [critique]	5
Puar	Difference	5	TallBear	Haraway	5
Puar	Enlightenment critique	3	TallBear	Kinship	5

Puar	Foucault	5	TallBear	Materialism	5
Puar	Homonationalism critique	5	TallBear	Native American DNA	5
Puar	Homonormativity critique	5	TallBear	Politics of visibility	4
Puar	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	5	TallBear	Purity politics [critique]	5
Puar	Materialism	5	TallBear	Racial difference/differing	5
Puar	Micropolitics	5	TallBear	Sovereignty	5
Puar	New materialisms	5	TallBear	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3
Puar	Politics of imperceptibility	4	TallBear	Transcending dualisms	5
Puar	Politics of visibility	4	TallBear	Transcending somatophobia	5
Puar	Processes of [de]humanization	5			
Puar	Queer of color critique	5	Wynter	[New] Humanism	5
Puar	Queer theory	5	Wynter	[Speculative] storytelling	3
Puar	Representationalism critique	4	Wynter	Anti/decolonial thought	5
Puar	The materialization & mattering of bodies	5	Wynter	Bio/necropolitics	4
			Wynter	Bodies that matter	4
Latour	Actant	5	Wynter	Césaire	5
Latour	Actor-Network Theory [ANT]	5	Wynter	Critical posthumanism	5
Latour	Analytics of power	2	Wynter	Critique of [neoliberal] extraction-based capitalism	3
Latour	Anthropocene	4	Wynter	Difference	5
Latour	Assemblages	5	Wynter	DuBois	5
Latour	Cosmopolitics	5	Wynter	Enlightenment critique	5
Latour	Distributive agency	5	Wynter	Fanon	5
Latour	Ecophilosophy	4	Wynter	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	5
Latour	Encounters between objects	5	Wynter	Foucault	5
Latour	Enlightenment critique	4	Wynter	Heidegger	5
Latour	Flat "powerless" ontology	4	Wynter	Humanness as a praxis of being	5
Latour	Gaia	5	Wynter	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	2
Latour	Materialism	5	Wynter	Life as surplus	4
Latour	Micropolitics	5	Wynter	Politics of visibility	3
Latour	Modern Constitution	5	Wynter	Purity politics [critique]	5
Latour	New materialisms	4	Wynter	Racial difference/differing	5
Latour	Object-oriented philosophy	4	Wynter	Representationalism critique	3
Latour	Parliament of Things	5	Wynter	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	4
Latour	Posthumanism	5	Wynter	Transcending dualisms	5
Latour	Relational ontology	4	Wynter	Transcending somatophobia	5
Latour	Representationalism critique	4			
Latour	Rethinking critique	5	Rose	[Speculative] storytelling	5
Latour	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	2	Rose	Accountability	5
			Rose	Animality	5
Stengers	Anthropocene	5	Rose	Anthropocene	5
Stengers	Cosmopolitics	5	Rose	Anti/decolonial thought	5
Stengers	Critical new materialisms	4	Rose	Attentivity	4
Stengers	Deleuze & Guattari	5	Rose	Bodies that matter	4
Stengers	Ecophilosophy	5	Rose	Companion species	5

Stenger s	Flow[s]	4	Rose	Critical new materialisms	5
Stenger s	Grounded hope	3	Rose	Critical posthumanism	5
Stenger s	Materialism	5	Rose	Critique of [neoliberal] extraction-based capitalism	3
Stenger s	New materialisms	5	Rose	Eco-ethico-politics	5
Stenger s	Posthumanism	5	Rose	Ecophilosophy	5
Stenger s	Process philosophy	5	Rose	Embodied and embedded subject	4
Stenger s	Rethinking critique	4	Rose	Environmental justice	5
Stenger s	Slow science	5	Rose	Ethics of connection	5
Stenger s	The event	5	Rose	Ethics of worlding	5
Stenger s	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3	Rose	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	5
Stenger s	Whitehead	5	Rose	Feminist science studies	3
			Rose	Grounded hope	3
Kirby	[Queering] futurity	5	Rose	Intersubjective encounters	5
Kirby	Barad	5	Rose	Levinas	5
Kirby	Bodies that matter	5	Rose	Materialism	5
Kirby	Butler	5	Rose	New materialisms	5
Kirby	Corporeal	5	Rose	Politics of location	5
Kirby	Critical new materialisms	5	Rose	Processes of [de]humanization	5
Kirby	Critical posthumanism	5	Rose	Recuperation	5
Kirby	Derrida	5	Rose	Responsibility as response- ability	5
Kirby	Difference	5	Rose	Situated knowledges	5
Kirby	Diffraction	5	Rose	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	5
Kirby	Distributive agency	4			
Kirby	Eco-ethico-politics	4	Tsing	[Speculative] storytelling	4
Kirby	Entanglements	4	Tsing	Analytics of power	3
Kirby	Intra-action	4	Tsing	Anthropocene	5
Kirby	Logic of exclusion	4	Tsing	Collaborative knowledge[s]	5
Kirby	Materialism	5	Tsing	Critical new materialisms	4
Kirby	New materialisms	5	Tsing	Critical posthumanism	5
Kirby	Phallogocentrism critique	5	Tsing	Critique of [neoliberal] extraction-based capitalism	5
Kirby	Quantum anthropologies	5	Tsing	Eco-ethico-politics	4
Kirby	Queer theory	5	Tsing	Ecophilosophy	5
Kirby	Transcending dualisms	5	Tsing	Embodied and embedded subject	4
Kirby	Transcending somatophobia	5	Tsing	Entanglements	5
			Tsing	Environmental justice	5
Van der Tuin	Barad	4	Tsing	Feminist science studies	5
Van der Tuin	Becoming	5	Tsing	Globality	5
Van der Tuin	Bodies that matter	4	Tsing	Grounded hope	4
Van der Tuin	Braidotti	5	Tsing	Haraway	5
Van der Tuin	Canonization	5	Tsing	Latour	5
Van der Tuin	Classification critique	5	Tsing	Materialism	5
Van der Tuin	Critical cartography	5	Tsing	Matsutake mushroom	5
Van der Tuin	Critical new materialisms	5	Tsing	New materialisms	5
Van der Tuin	Deleuze & Guattari	5	Tsing	Politics of location	5

Van der Tuin	Difference	5	Tsing	Processes of [de]humanization	3
Van der Tuin	Diffraction	5	Tsing	Relational ontology	3
Van der Tuin	Embodied and embedded subject	5	Tsing	Situated knowledges	3
Van der Tuin	Feminist epistemology & subjugated knowledges	5	Tsing	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	4
Van der Tuin	Feminist objectivity	4	Tsing	Toxicity	5
Van der Tuin	Generational feminism	5			
Van der Tuin	Haraway	5			
Van der Tuin	Intersectionality & identity politics [critique]	5			
Van der Tuin	Intra-action	3			
Van der Tuin	Jumping generations	5			
Van der Tuin	Materialism	5			
Van der Tuin	Micropolitics	5			
Van der Tuin	New materialisms	5			
Van der Tuin	Nomadic feminism	5			
Van der Tuin	Non-innocence of theorizing	4			
Van der Tuin	Phallogocentrism critique	4			
Van der Tuin	Politics of location	4			
Van der Tuin	Representationalism critique	5			
Van der Tuin	Rethinking critique	5			
Van der Tuin	Sexual difference/differing	5			
Van der Tuin	Situated knowledges	4			
Van der Tuin	Transcending dualisms	5			
Van der Tuin	Transcending somatophobia	4			
Van der Tuin	Transpositions	4			
Cooper	Bio/necropolitics	5			
Cooper	Bio-economy	5			
Cooper	Commodification of matter	5			
Cooper	Critical new materialisms	4			
Cooper	Enlightenment critique	3			
Cooper	Life	5			
Cooper	Life as surplus	5			
Cooper	Materialism	5			
Cooper	New materialisms	4			
Cooper	Purity politics [critique]	5			
Cooper	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	3			
Alaimo	Anthropocene	5			
Alaimo	Bodies that matter	4			
Alaimo	Critical new materialisms	5			
Alaimo	Critical posthumanism	5			
Alaimo	Eco-ethico-politics	5			
Alaimo	Ecophilosophy	5			
Alaimo	Embodied and embedded subject	5			

Alaimo	Environmental justice	5
Alaimo	Feminist science studies	5
Alaimo	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	5
Alaimo	Haraway	5
Alaimo	Materialism	5
Alaimo	New materialisms	5
Alaimo	Object-oriented feminism	3
Alaimo	Purity politics [critique]	5
Alaimo	Queer theory	3
Alaimo	Situated knowledges	3
Alaimo	Thinking as stuff of the world	5
Alaimo	Thinking worlds otherwise & living otherwise	4
Alaimo	Transcending dualisms	5
Alaimo	Transcending somatophobia	5
Alaimo	Transcorporeality	5
Behar	Analytics of power	3
Behar	Critical posthumanism	4
Behar	Flat "but not flattening" ontology	3
Behar	Materialism	5
Behar	Micropolitics	5
Behar	New materialisms	5
Behar	Object-oriented feminism	5
Behar	Object-oriented ontology	4
Behar	Object-oriented philosophy	4
Behar	Otherwise oriented	5
Behar	Relational ontology	5
Behar	Representationalism critique	4
Behar	Vibrant matter	4
Harman	Actor-Network Theory [ANT]	5
Harman	Bryant	5
Harman	Correlationalism critique	5
Harman	Critique of materialism	5
Harman	DeLanda	5
Harman	Flat "powerless" ontology	5
Harman	Heidegger	5
Harman	Immaterialism	5
Harman	Latour	5
Harman	Meillassoux	5
Harman	New theory of everything	5
Harman	Object-oriented ontology	5
Harman	Object-oriented philosophy	5
Harman	Post-Continental philosophy	5

Harman	Posthumanism	5
Harman	Speculative realism	5
Harman	The Thing-in-itself	5
Harman	Weird realism	5
Harman	Withdrawn objects	5
Bogost	Alien phenomenology	5
Bogost	Correlationalism critique	5
Bogost	Cyborgs	4
Bogost	Flat "powerless" ontology	5
Bogost	Harman	5
Bogost	Materialism	4
Bogost	New materialisms	4
Bogost	Non-human actor	5
Bogost	Object-oriented ontology	5
Bogost	Object-oriented philosophy	5
Bogost	Ontography	5
Bogost	Post-Continental philosophy	5
Bogost	Posthumanism	5
Bogost	Representationalism critique	5
Bogost	Speculative realism	5
Bogost	Tiny ontology	5
Bogost	Videogames	5

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