

## ***The telepathic drive: the event horizon: the protest: the resistant movement***

I.

*„Protest ist, wenn ich sage, das und das paßt mir nicht. Widerstand ist, wenn ich dafür Sorge, daß das, was mir nicht paßt, nicht länger geschieht.“* Or, as we hear in Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz's latest film, *Telepathic Improvisation* (2016):

“Protest is when I say I don't like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don't like.” Or, since it is always a matter of yet another possibility of translation, of yet another mode of transposing affects, sounds, and their meanings into other affects, sounds, and their meanings into other mouths: “Protest is when I say I don't like this and that. Resistance is when I see to it that things that I don't like no longer occur.” Between liking or not liking “this or that,” between putting an end to what I do not like, and seeing to it that things I do not like no longer occur, no longer keep recurring in daily life, there are matters not only of life and how to live, but also of death and how to die. Matters of addressing a situation that one dislikes, but also of transforming fundamentally the very grounds upon which it occurs. These matters are as political as they are aesthetic. Matters of the heart and its languages, as much as matters of things and their times.

Not to like hegemonic “this and that,” and then to publicly voice that dislike: to protest, to express “dissensus,” to politically activate (dis)taste in order to publicly manifest deep disagreement with the situation. To put an end to the occurrence of the things I do not like: to resist. And then, to push resistance to its limits: not only to end distasteful “this and that,” but more radically and fundamentally to put an end

to the whole normative (il)logic that keeps orientating taste, politics, and aesthetics to privilege the endless creation of egregious conditions and intolerable situations— conditions and situations that must be resisted, must not be liked, must not be tolerated. To resist is to work toward a completely different setup for the occurrence of the occurring.

II.

“Protest is when I say I don’t like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don’t like.” Ulrike Meinhof’s opening words in her May 1968 text “From Protest to Resistance,” where the German political militant starts to articulate the political views that would lead her to co-found the paramilitary Rote Armee Fraktion two years later. But also the words with which Boudry / Lorenz conclude *Telepathic Improvisation*, the film included in their most recent exhibition *Everybody talks about the weather... We don’t* (2017), at Participant Inc. in New York. But since “Telepathic Improvisation” is also the title of a 1974 score by American composer Pauline Oliveros, we can say that Boudry / Lorenz’s latest film already disturbs normative notions of time and the usual understanding of where a political voice is located and from when does it resonate. The film shows how, through the short-circuitries of time’s unhinged motions, a 1974 invitation by a feminist American composer to engage in telepathic improvisation leads right to the mouth of a German militant in 1968 and then, in the same disorientating move, the militant’s words jump to the mouth of a queer performer in 2016, who addresses us, thousands of miles or many years away, through a film whose intrinsic mechanism, we are told, is fueled by telepathy. This film, featuring objects that appear to move

autonomously and four performers whose actions are supposed to be coming directly, telepathically, from the audience viewing the projected film, offers a guide on how to undo the illusion of autonomous subjectivity, of autonomous objectivity, and the illusion of linear-straight time.

III.

The film opens with a projected white circle of light briefly ascending the black backdrop of the theatrical space where the whole of *Telepathic Improvisation* is shot. After a red blot also appears projected on the backdrop for a few seconds, it is quickly replaced by a projection of triangular shards of white light arranged in a circle, while electronic sounds modulate the environment. A performer in red overalls (Marwa Arsanios) walks to a solitary microphone center stage and, looking straight at the camera, delineates what is about to follow, which she calls “an experiment in interstellar telepathic transmission.” She reminds us that the audience, in this case being filmgoers, must be distanced from the film not only in terms of time (they could be “thousands of years away”) but also in terms of space. Regardless, the film acknowledges and addresses its many potential audiences as being contemporary, since the film’s own temporality, in its many mysterious manifolds, follows another kind of chrono-logic, or law of occurrence, what Boudry / Lorenz call “queer, trans-chronic practices.” In its queer practice of trans-time but also of queer-sense and of trans-sensation, the film asks its viewers to “close [their] eyes and send an action to the performers by seeing or hearing it.” Meanwhile, the film’s performers “wait until they have received an impression of the actions mentally and they produce the action.” Finally, if anyone in the audience sees his or

her action being enacted by one of the performers in the film, they should signal the performer by raising an arm, thereby offering feedback on the success of the trans-chronic, telepathic transmission. At this point, there are no doubts: This is the postulation of a completely new world, where the laws of time and the laws of physics, the laws of subjects and objects, the linear orientation of logic and its grammars, the rules of senses with their likes and dislikes, no longer obtain.

IV.

“Protest is when I say I don’t like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don’t like.” We know how Jacques Rancière identified the political in “the aesthetic regime of art” with the production of “dissensus,” the latter being both “the essence of politics” and “the very *kernel* of the aesthetic regime.” Art’s political function is to reveal the conditions under which hegemony becomes normalized in such ways that it turns political life into what Rancière called “police.” The opposite of the political, “the essence of the police” is to reify a very tight “matching of functions [including bodily, sexual, reproductive functions], places [reified ‘proper’ places for art but also ‘proper’ places for women, children, minorities], and ways of being [including ways of being political beings, sexual beings, artistic beings] so that there is no place for any void. It is this exclusion of what ‘is not’ that constitutes the police principle.” Meanwhile, “the essence of politics consists in disturbing this arrangement.”

In both the film and in the exhibition, the presence of something we may call police—a transcendent principle, or *archi-force*, orienting all that occurs—is quite explicit. As we enter the narrow gallery space, which the artists have astutely

transformed from white cube into black box (with all the theatrical implications of such a transformation, like the undecided state of objects between sculpture and props, the theater spots, the little rotating stage supporting seven microphones mounted on stands), we first go through a curtain-sculpture made of hair and felt, appropriately titled *Wig piece (whose body? – whose thoughts?)*. Then, looking ahead, we see at the end of the gallery, suspended by invisible wires, a very large object cutting across the width of the room as if it were its horizon. A huge pair of gray handcuffs hovers seven feet above the ground. Simultaneously object, theatrical prop, sculpture, symbol, the handcuffs are also—definitively—an event. As such, they scar. They nauseate. They emanate the obscenity of law and order under the non-politics of policed life. Actually, their obscenity is the occurrence of police force. In occurring, the handcuffs as objects and event-horizon not only cut across the space of the gallery, marking the exhibition's dead end, but also stand as if they were the film's privileged, captive, audience—they do, after all, resemble a pair of spectacles. Indeed, the set-up of the exhibition creates a narrow space where the film is projected directly in front of the handcuffs, as if for them. If we are to watch the film, we must sit between the hovering handcuffs and *Telepathic Improvisation*.

Thus, film and object co-occur in their face-to-face eventfulness. They affect each other. I am reminded here of a letter by Boudry / Lorenz to curator Virginie Bobin where they refer to “film as toxic”: “[W]hat interests us especially about the toxic is its unpredictability and the way in which sometimes it is used as a cure.” I like to think that this set-up of a film persistently looping the political power of 1970s feminist performance, of a 1960s woman guerrilla call for active political militancy,

and of “queer, trans-chronic practices” in 2017 before an oversized, gray, obscene sculpture of police handcuffs/gaze is telepathically transmitting queer-feminist-militant-resistant toxicity-cure right to the core of police power. I like to think that the film’s trans-chronic queerness warps time such that it directly induces hegemonic powers to fall under its political spell, under its black magic of resistance—a political affect operating through the “this and that” of everyday existence in order to precipitate another mode in which life can occur.

V.

“Protest is when I say I don’t like this. Resistance is when I put an end to what I don’t like. Protest is when I say I refuse to go along with this anymore. Resistance is when I make sure everybody else stop going along too.” Ulrike Meinhof, 1968. But since in the sentence immediately following, not uttered by MPA in Boudry / Lorenz’s film, Meinhof attributes those words to “what a black speaker from the Black Power movement said at the Vietnam Conference in February in Berlin,” it follows that back then Meinhof was already (as she is right now, via MPA’s mouth), a conduit, a vessel, a ventriloquist, of a trans-chronic, political *force*. We will have to call this force, coming from a Black Panther, black resistance. But black resistance as trans-chronic black magic, scrambling away the “reasonable” (il)logics of police and their gray instruments of submission and surveillance. Boudry / Lorenz’s cinematically toxic-curative transmission of Meinhof’s text—which we now know voices the words of Black Panther Fred Hampton through a performer’s mouth, so that all of them together in a fantastical-political reassembled-collective body may address an audience. This audience is in turn asked to change the filmed performers’ actions, so

it may stop going along with the premises of the choreo-cinematic order—  
performing black resistance as incantation. Or perhaps, resistance as art of radical  
hosting: an opening of bodies, mouths, minds, things so they may be inhabited by  
the bodies, mouths, minds, things of others and their struggles. Others to whom and  
things with which we may also want to dispatch our bodies and mouths and minds  
and words and acts and arts in order to join their fight which then becomes also our  
fight—in total telepathic surrendering, in active resistance against self-serving life.

Boudry / Lorenz, as well as Marwa Arsanios, Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Werner  
Hirsch, MPA, Ulrike Meinhof, Fred Hampton, the Black Panthers, Pauline Cisneros;  
the obscure actions of light spots; the choreographed motions of robotic white  
boxes; seven silent rotating microphones; modulated electronic sounds; hair and  
felt; and a film on interstellar telepathic experimentation projected on loop in a dark,  
slightly overheated downtown Manhattan gallery to an oversized pair of gray  
handcuffs, all assemble to resist: opaquely, queerly, trans-chronically, and tele-black-  
magically.

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