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**Book Review: Marina Gržinić, ed., *Border Thinking: Disassembling Histories of Racialized Violence*, Publication Series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Vol. 21, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2018, 308 pp., ISBN 978-3-95679-383-7**

In February 2018 Sternberg Press published an extensive anthology edited by Marina Gržinić titled *Border Thinking: Disassembling Histories of Racialized Violence*. It is the 21st issue of a collection released under the patronage of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and the series editors Rector Eva Blimlinger and Vice-Rectors Andrea B. Braidt and Karin Riegler.

The idea for the anthology was conceived as part of *Post-Conceptual Art Practices* (PCAP), a course led by Gržinić at the Academy. Its history is precise: in 2015 the book was called forth as a political necessity and as an attempt to articulate the narrative reflecting on an important refugee movement, grown out of a 2012 refugee protest camp in Vienna.<sup>1</sup> The need for writing the history of the refugee movement as well as for the wider reflection of what it represents in Europe and around the world surfaced due to utter suppression of the protests and the movement itself by the Austrian government, in 2015. From whence the starting point and focal theme of the book derive – the reflection of the “refugee crisis” of Europe and corresponding to Europe’s two most prominent contemporary features: the proliferation of new forms of borders and the evermore noticeable limitations of (Western) European (white, mainstream) thought in pondering this crisis.

The 26 contributions, by thirty authors hailing from varied geographical, national, identity and research contexts, build upon the basis of at least three key trajectories Gržinić has developed as a theorist and professor. The first trajectory, the editorial says, refers to the *historicization of biopolitics*, since what Michel Foucault referred to in the 1970s as a politics of taking care of (good) life (within the First World) is now *shifting towards necropolitics*. Achille Mbembe in 2003 introduced necropolitics<sup>2</sup> when naming politics of subjugation of life to the power of death, which

<sup>1</sup> See Marina Gržinić’s “Introduction,” 13.

<sup>2</sup> Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” *Public Culture* 15, 1 (2003): 11–40.

nowadays transgress the borders of the African context. This line, in short, ponders life as such along a series of modes of its managing and governing in the context of neoliberal global capitalism. Within the context of the latter, the *transformation of a national (imperial) state into a war state* occurred. The war state is founded on the co-operation in wars of transnational capital, hence producing numerous forms of life: “dispensable”, “disposable”, “bare life”, life as a “collateral damage” or “life that is simply let live” in so far as it is “unworthy of state’s care.” The second trajectory therefore considers the ways in which capitalism formulates itself in the form of a state, or becomes superimposed as a form of sovereignty. The third trajectory thus concerns thinking of the neoliberal state as a *racial state* (as being the missing intermediate link in the aforementioned transformation), and mapping the structural racism: *processes of racialization* as global capitalism’s (and with the idea of race connected) internal administrative, legal and economic procedures regulating the space of capitalism, as well as representation, knowledge, theory and practice.<sup>3</sup>

The book takes the notion of “border thinking” – deriving from post and de-colonial studies – in the full sense of the meaning and pushes it even further: by the *re-appropriation, re-contextualization* and *re-mobilization of the border*.<sup>4</sup> The genealogies of racialized violence are literally disassembled and dismantled in a series of five parts of the publication (titled *Exposing, Mobilization, Get Down To, Demasking* and *Disconnecting*) following a precise “intervention politics.” What all contributions share is *thinking at and of the border itself* – the border that became a continuous territory extending beyond its locality and materiality. The border is thus elaborated not only in line of Fortress Europe’s actual borders<sup>5</sup>, but also in reference to the “body” or “racial flesh”<sup>6</sup> as sites where those borders inscribe themselves.<sup>7</sup> We read about ‘Eurocentric’ epistemological borders manifested as “colonial aphasia”<sup>8</sup> and resulting in “confiscation” of counter-epistemologies<sup>9</sup> and “racial agnosia.”<sup>10</sup> We read about the complicity in the limitless “production” and “consumption” of images of violence, death<sup>11</sup> and fear.<sup>12</sup> Simultaneously, we read about the “border bodies” as

<sup>3</sup> Marina Gržinić, and Šefik Tatlić, *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism: Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art, and Life* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014), 107.

<sup>4</sup> Gržinić, “Introduction,” *Border Thinking*, 20.

<sup>5</sup> See the book’s papers of Göksun Yazici, Stanimir Panayotov, Fieke Jansen and Tactical Technology Collective, C.A.S.I.T.A. (Loreto Alonso, Eduardo Galvagni, Diego del Pozo Barriuso) and Juan Guardiola, Miguel Gonzalez Cabázas.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Carr, “At the Thresholds of the ‘Human’: Race, Psychoanalysis, and the Replication of Imperial Memory,” *Cultural Critique* 39 (1998): 119–50, doi:10.2307/1354553.

<sup>7</sup> See the papers of Maira Enesi Caixeta, Shirley Anne Tate, Aneta Stojnić.

<sup>8</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France,” *Public Culture* 23, 1 (2001): 121–56. See the papers of Panayotov, Tjaša Kancler, Yuderky Espinoza Miñoso.

<sup>9</sup> See Musawenkosi Ndlovu’s paper.

<sup>10</sup> Sherman A. Jackson, “Islam, Muslims and the wages of racial agnosia in America,” *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture* 13, 1 (2011): 1–17. See Tate’s paper.

<sup>11</sup> See papers of Khaled Ramadan, Betül Seyma Küpeli and Esra Özmen.

<sup>12</sup> See Neda Hosseinyar’s paper.

liminal spaces offering either a transgression of thought's borders and limitations<sup>13</sup> or a decentred (ungovernable) position.<sup>14</sup>

Each of the theoretical contributions and presented artistic positions, intersecting with each other at numerous points, provide an extremely precise analysis of the increasingly widespread and diversified racializing processes that produced a world where “everyone is (not) white”, to borrow Shirley Anne Tate's formulation. The consequences for democracy (as established by Eurocentric western epistemology) are far-reaching. Moreover, it is not just about democracy, it is also about the future: how to envision “freedom” as the fundamental human right of everyone to self-understanding, self-awareness, and self-representation, and a community as “being-with others”<sup>15</sup> in times of “in-betweenness”,<sup>16</sup> and “blurred lines”,<sup>17</sup> under the conditions of necropower?

By way of genealogical “streaming of memory”<sup>18</sup> *Border Thinking* draws out a topography full of paradoxes and contradictions: the new global order in which the proliferation of borders, walls and the ever-new attempts of their crossing find themselves adjacent. Here we find ignorance and hope, numbness and empowerment. Critical self-reflection runs along the critique of western shameless expropriation of people, that through hegemonically constructed ideas of race, gender and class establishes the regimes representing “ontologically and epistemologically” supported disqualifications of “others”, aimed to restore the (national) community “pured” from the “threatening others.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the book by way of introducing a specific terminology outlines the (spectral) dimension of consequences of today's necropolitical “erasure through seizure”<sup>20</sup>: “hyper-neutrality”,<sup>21</sup> “eternal present”,<sup>22</sup> total “de-historicization” and “de-contextualization”<sup>23</sup> – all those notions point to a complete disconnection of thought from reality, a “pure form of a dream.”<sup>24</sup>

The book thus speaks of a (paradoxical) time molding the global space. It speaks of a special time knot “confiscating and erasing” the past, present and the future of each and every one of us. Taking the border precisely as a political stand, posited against (limited) Eurocentric thought (in order to de-link from it), the book, from

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<sup>13</sup> See Miñoso and Stojnić's paper.

<sup>14</sup> See Çetin Gürer's paper.

<sup>15</sup> See Marika Schmiedt and Jelena Petrović's paper.

<sup>16</sup> See Suvendrini Perera's paper.

<sup>17</sup> See Njideka Stephanie Iroh's paper.

<sup>18</sup> See papers of Rubia Salgado, Gergana Mineva and das Kollektiv Women.

<sup>19</sup> See Zoltán Kékesi's paper.

<sup>20</sup> Marina Gržinić, “Political Agency: The Subject and the Citizen in the time of Neoliberal Global Capitalism,” *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies* 14 (2017): 1–11, doi: 10.25038/am.v0i14.205.

<sup>21</sup> See Joshua Simon's paper.

<sup>22</sup> See Ilya Budraitskis' paper.

<sup>23</sup> See Adla Isanović's paper.

<sup>24</sup> See Hiroshi Yoshioka's paper.

its first to last page, testifies to the possibility of waking up from this “pure form” of a dream, as long as we actually think borders – with border thinking, the borders of thinking can be transgressed. The anthology is thus intended for all those who wish to transgress one’s own borders of thinking in order to conceive a radically different conviviality.