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THE TRANSVERSALITY OF NEW MATERIALISM

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Key terms

New materialism, neo-materialism, cultural theory, feminist theory, (anti-) representationalism, matter

Abstract

This article centres around three ways in which ‘new materialism’ or ‘neo-materialism,’ terms coined by DeLanda and Braidotti in the second half of the 1990s, can be called ‘transversal.’ New materialism is a cultural theory that does not privilege the side of culture, but focuses on what Haraway would call ‘naturecultures.’ It explores a *monist* perspective of the human being, disposed of the dualisms that have dominated the humanities until today, by giving special attention to matter as it has been so much neglected by dualist thought. New materialism, a cultural theory inspired by the thoughts of Deleuze, that spurs a renewed interest in philosophers such as Spinoza and Leibniz, shows how cultured humans are always already in nature, and how nature is necessarily cultured, how the mind is always already material, and how matter is necessarily something of the mind. New materialism opposes the transcendental and humanist (dualist) traditions that are haunting a cultural theory, standing on the brink of both the modern *and* the post-postmodern era. The transcendental and humanist traditions, which are manifold yet consistently predicated on dualist structures, continue to stir debates, which have a stifling effect on the field (think of the feminist polemic concerning the failed materialism in the work of Butler, and of the Saussurian/ Lacanian linguistic heritage in media and cultural studies). New materialism allows for the conceptualisation of the travelling of the fluxes of matter and mind, body and soul, nature and culture, and opens up active theory formation. The three transversalities concern disciplinarity, paradigms, and the spatiotemporality of theory.

THE TRANSVERSALITY OF NEW MATERIALISM

Manuel DeLanda and Rosi Braidotti – independently of one another, and working from different scholarly fields – first began using ‘neo-materialism,’ or ‘new materialism’ in the second half of the 1990s for a cultural theory that does not privilege the side of culture but focuses on what Donna Haraway (2003) would call ‘naturecultures.’ By no means leading up to a ‘unified’ theory or methodological stance, these ideas, and the way they kept on being reflected into one another, set into action a series of movements exploring a *monist* perspective of the human being. By giving special attention to matter as it has been so much neglected by dualist thought, they (implicitly) posed serious questions with the dualisms that dominate the humanities up until today. Of course this was not something DeLanda and Braidotti ‘invented’. Thinking the human being from a monist perspective is itself not a new idea. Most famously, already in 1677, Benedictus de Spinoza, more or less in response to René Descartes, claims that the mind is the idea of the body, making the body necessarily the object of the mind. The mind and the body are the same thing, he keeps stressing over and over. This however does not mean that we can consider him the starting point of new materialist theories either. The history of thought, though dominated and organized through dualist oppositions, is speckled with monism. Perhaps most obviously in the works of Lucretius, Duns Scotus, Hume, Nietzsche, Whitehead and Bergson, a similar alternative take on thinking is practiced. But a thorough analysis will reveal a monism in many more branches of thinking. And we are limiting ourselves now only to the Western tradition.

What makes new materialism (as we prefer to call this ‘series of movements’ from now on) such an interesting and refreshing development in the humanities today, is of course in the first place its new reading of this monist tradition (we will talk more of that later), but also its timing. Over the past years new materialism has proven to be capable of breaking through the transcendental and humanist traditions that are haunting a cultural theory, standing on the brink of the post-postmodern era. Of course the dualist traditions are stubborn and have buried themselves deep into the minds of (common-sense) scholars today. They continue to stir debates, which have a stifling effect on the field (think of the feminist polemic about the failed materialism in the work of Judith Butler, and of the Saussurian/ Lacanian linguistic heritage in media and cultural studies, which, as Karen Barad (2007) has shown, have prevented the theorisation of ‘agential matter’ from being effectuated). But, at the start of the 21st century, the monist tradition does seem to offer a more than equal alternative for scholars working in all parts of the humanities. Perhaps for the first time in its history, the monist tradition seems capable of being more than the ‘minor tradition’, as Gilles Deleuze

labeled the abovementioned mavericks of the history of philosophy. Perhaps today the times are right to finally offer the alternative take that was definitely out there for a long time, but that was overcoded by dualist forms of thinking.

In the work of both Braidotti and DeLanda it has been through the rethinking of several French philosophers closely connected to May '68 (among others Michel Foucault, Luce Irigaray, and Deleuze (and Félix Guattari)) that their thinking came about. And it was the work of Deleuze (and Guattari) that was actually most important to them. Especially in his early work, Deleuze tried to show that the materialist philosophy he proposed was not new, but fell into the rich though minor tradition already mentioned. By writing on philosophers like Spinoza, Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Bergson, but also on artists like Marcel Proust and Franz Kafka, Deleuze intended to rewrite the history of thinking by giving attention to those authors it had rejected or marginalised for such a long time. In his early works, Deleuze shows us that radical minds like Spinoza actually offer philosophy a new way of thinking, namely, a philosophy of the body. And it is by traversing these different philosophies of the body that Deleuze in his second period (sometimes with Guattari) really starts exploring materialist/ monist thought to the fullest, creating the fertile ground upon which new materialism takes root today.

Most faithful to the work of Deleuze (and Guattari), DeLanda's early new materialism proffered the claim that the concept 'abstract machine' (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987) captures processes without form or substance that can be found in concrete assemblages of biology, sociology, and geology alike, in a manner that enables cultural theory at large to move away from linguistic representationalism towards 'the realm of engineering diagrams' which are 'shared by very different physical assemblages. Thus there would be an 'abstract motor' with different physical instantiations in technological objects and natural atmospheric processes' (DeLanda 1996: no page number). This new materialism engenders *immanent* thought, and, as a consequence, breaks through not only the mind-matter and culture-nature divides of transcendental humanist thought, but also through thinking causal structures and teleology (*i.e.* a determinism):

This conception of very specific abstract machines [...] indeed points towards a new form of materialist philosophy in which raw matter-energy through a variety of self-organizing processes and an intense power of morphogenesis, generates all the structures that surround us. Furthermore, the structures generated cease to be the primary reality, and matter-energy flows now acquire this special status (*ibidem*).

The way in which matter seems to gain primacy in DeLanda's new materialism rather points at a *generative matter*, which is a concept that does not capture matter-as-opposed-to-

signification, but captures *mattering* as simultaneously material and representational (*cf.* Chea 1996, Barad 2007).

Braidotti, who does not refer to DeLanda (nor does DeLanda quote Braidotti), introduced new materialism or ‘a more radical sense of materialism’ by framing it as ‘[r]ethinking the embodied structure of human subjectivity after Foucault’ (Braidotti 2000: 158). But Braidotti’s ‘after Foucault’ should not so much be read as a reference to a move *beyond* Michel Foucault as far as she, and DeLanda, as well as other new materialists can be said to affirm, one way or another, the much-commented on prediction made by Foucault ([1970] 1998: 343) that ‘perhaps, one day, this century will be known as Deleuzian.’ Compared to DeLanda, Braidotti’s new materialism, which touches upon a related set of issues albeit from an explicitly feminist angle, is equally immanent, and non-linear, and her ‘embodied subjectivity’ is conceptualised accordingly:

A piece of meat activated by electric waves of desire, a text written by the unfolding of genetic encoding. Neither a sacralized inner *sanctum*, nor a pure socially shaped entity, the enfleshed Deleuzian subject is rather an ‘in-between’: it is a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects. A mobile entity, an enfleshed sort of memory that repeats and is capable of lasting through sets of discontinuous variations, while remaining faithful to itself. The Deleuzian body is ultimately an embodied memory (Braidotti 2000: 159).

Apart from the immanence of the new materialism qualitatively shifting the many instantiations of cultural theory that exemplify the transcendental, there is a strong emphasis to be found on the intra-action¹ of the technological and the natural, or on, as Braidotti has called it, ‘the “posthuman” predicament’ which entails ‘much more than the definitive loss of the naturalistic paradigm’ (*ibidem*: 158). Bringing ‘nature’ into cultural theory does not make new materialists susceptible for taking over the ontology of the so-called positivist natural sciences. One of the pillars of the new materialism is the claim that modern natural science and postmodern cultural theory are both humanisms (*cf.* Colebrook 2004). In Braidotti’s work the shared humanist subject of biological determinism and social constructivism is exchanged for a *posthumanist subject*, which, for starters, entails a qualitative shift simultaneously away from the two poles of current-day epistemology: positivism and postmodernism (*cf.* Haraway 1988).

In their subsequent work, DeLanda and Braidotti continued constituting new materialism by posing *dual oppositions* as their main target. In addition to this, they worked on similar dualisms: like Braidotti, DeLanda (1996: no page number) targets ‘the distinction between the natural and the artificial, but also that between the living and the inert’, and like

DeLanda, Braidotti (2006: 110) does not conceptualise matter as opposed to signification, but designed an ‘approach that starts with asserting the primacy of life as production, or *zoe* as generative power.’ Reworking, and eventually *breaking through* dualism appears as key to the new materialism. Dualism comes to the fore as the structuring principle of the transcendental and humanist traditions that they want to shift in their work. Prioritising mind over matter, or culture over nature is a transcendentalising gesture, which generates and is generated by humanism and dialecticist thought (positing postmodernism as overcoming the flaws of positivism, and social constructivism as overcoming biological determinism, but also the aforementioned prioritisation exercises) is predicated upon sequential negation, which has a progress narrative structure. The reliance upon dialecticism has been uncovered as an effect of what Lynn Hankinson Nelson (1993: 127-8) termed ‘unreal dichotomies’ or ‘non-exhaustive oppositions.’ Nelson has made clear that the one pole of a dichotomy or binary opposition is always already implied in the other *as its negation*, which makes dichotomies unreal and oppositions non-exhaustive. In the words of Michel Serres:

An idea opposed to another idea is always the same idea, albeit affected by the negative sign. The more you oppose one another, the more you remain in the same framework of thought (Serres with Latour 1995: 81).

The intimate relation between two so-called opposites makes insightful that the transcendental and humanist tendencies, which are fought by new materialist cultural theorists, are fundamentally reductive; after all, negation implies a relation, which is precisely what is undone by transcendental humanist thought depending on dualism.

Attempting to break through reductive dualist thought in *A New Philosophy of Society*, DeLanda (2006: 45-6; emphasis in original) makes the following statement:

[...] general categories do not refer to anything in the real world and [...] to believe they do (*i.e.* to reify them) leads directly to essentialism. Social constructivism is supposed to be an antidote to this, in the sense that by showing that general categories are mere stereotypes it blocks the move towards their reification. But by coupling the idea that perception is intrinsically linguistic with the ontological assumption that only the contents of experience really exist, this position leads directly to a form of *social essentialism*.

Linguisticity (which is *not denied*, but given its proper place, that is, a more modest one) forms the nexus of DeLanda’s non-dualist argument about new materialism. *Anti-representationalism* (an immanent gesture) is employed so as to break through the assumed

binary opposition between realist essentialism and social constructivism. Due to the fact that causally linear reasoning has been left behind, it cannot be argued that the new materialism entails a simple move *beyond* social constructivism in a progressive way. According to DeLanda, new materialism is *neither* realist *nor* social constructivist. It is precisely the commonalities of realism and social constructivism that are being recognised, and shifted. It is important to note that DeLanda's argument about linguisticity links his work to Braidotti's new feminist materialist take on subjectivity. Via Deleuze's work on Hume it is argued that subjectivity, if not considered in a realist or social constructivist vein, follows 'a model in which the subject *emerges* as relations of exteriority are established among the contents of experience' (*ibidem*: 47; added), which is to say that gender, for example, as an *attribute* of persons is not what we start from when we study assemblages, because that would imply a linguisticist, identity-political approach. We focus on '*the pattern of recurring links*, as well as the properties of those links' (*ibidem*: 56: emphasis in original), one of which pertains to (gendered) (a)symmetries.

Braidotti (2006: 130; *cf.* Rossini 2006) theorises similar moves in *Transpositions*, yet with a clear focus on feminist politics:

In the political economy of phallogocentrism and of anthropocentric humanism, which predicates the sovereignty of Sameness in a falsely universalistic mode, my sex fell on the side of 'Otherness,' understood as pejorative difference, or as being-worth-less-than. The becoming-animal/ becoming-world speaks to my feminist self, partly because my gender, historically speaking, never quite made it into full humanity, so my allegiance to that category is at best negotiable and never to be taken for granted.

This is neither an essentialist statement, nor one of semiotic constructivism. It is rather the materialist acknowledgement of a historical location: a starting position of asymmetrical power differentials. This location is not only geopolitical, but also genealogical and time-bound.

Braidotti's claim is anti-representationalist in two ways. First of all, Braidotti cuts across essentialism and 'semiotic constructivism' (here, a relativism) in a manner that mirrors the moves DeLanda makes. Secondly, a feminist politics is conceptualised, which does not embrace the dualist move of creating counter-identities (a modernist feminist project) nor does it attempt to move beyond dualism by producing a plethora of counter-identities according to a pluralising gesture (a postmodernist feminist project; again, a relativism). Feminists 'rather go further and push towards qualitatively stronger de-territorializations' (*ibidem*: 134), that is, towards becoming-animal/ becoming-world, which entails a

breakthrough of the naturalising tendencies of *both* sexist humanism *and* the de-naturalising tendencies of modern and postmodern feminisms.

What we find in the work of DeLanda and Braidotti is a series of moves that complexify cultural theory in the light of the habit of dualism. We claim that the immanent philosophies of DeLanda and Braidotti, in their early as well as their recent incarnations, exemplify the constitution and enactment of new materialist cultural theory. In contrast with the dualist traditions, which are reductive in nature and representationalist stifling exercises, the new materialism of both theorists focuses on the dynamic and the virtual, that is, on generativity that is not causally linear.

This article engages with the constitution of new materialism, as object of study and a shared ambition with the scholars whose work we study. Building on a comprehensive review of enactments or instantiations of new materialism in recent cultural theory, this article proposes that the immanent gesture of the new materialism is transversal rather than dualist as it intersects academic (neo-) disciplines (for instance feminist theory, science and technology studies, and media and cultural studies), paradigms (for instance the Saussurian/ Lacanian linguisticism that is still prevalent in cultural theory today), and the linear spatiotemporalities conventionally assigned to epistemic trends ('new' materialism versus 'good old' Marxist materialism/ identity politics, etc.). The proposition is that the new materialism is itself a distinctive trend, both in feminist theory and in cultural theory more broadly, on the one hand, and a device or tool for opening up theory formation, on the other. This is to say that new materialism not only allows for *addressing* the conventional epistemic tendency to what can be summarised as classification or *territorialisation* (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 for *de-territorialising* the academic territories, tribes, and temporalities traditionally considered key to scholarship. After all, the classificatory strategy perfectly exemplifies transcendentalism and the two characteristics of dualism (sequential negation and progress narrative). Braidotti has summarised the need for this double move as a 'qualitative leap' towards 'creating conditions for the implementation of transversality' (*ibidem*: 123). In this article, we intend to affirm the *transversality* of new materialism, that is, we study as well as propose a new materialism that *cuts across* or intersects dual oppositions in an immanent way. The strength of the new materialism is precisely to be found in its ability to show that agential, or the *non-innocent* nature of all matterⁱⁱ seems to have escaped *both* modernist (positivist) and postmodernist humanist epistemologies. The way in which new materialism is immersed in Deleuzian philosophy, and 'third-wave feminist epistemology,'ⁱⁱⁱ and vice versa is exemplified by this text.

New Materialism Generated: Depending on Disciplines

Although we want to show here that a first instantiation of transversality enacted by new materialist cultural theorists concerns cutting across disciplines, a whole range of scholars are working on new materialism from their respective disciplinary locations. In these specifically disciplinary takes on new materialism, the potentialities of the new materialism get lost in unnecessarily narrow understandings. Introducing a new materialism to a discipline entails a transcendental gesture according to which the new materialism and the discipline in question (e.g. sociology) are positioned as pre-existing or *generated* rather than generative, and, consequently, as inter- rather than intra-acting. In other words, due to the schism/ dualism presumed, the transversality of new materialism is being undone rather than affirmed.

Momin Rahman and Anne Witz (2003: 245) in 'What Really Matters? The Elusive Quality of the Material in Feminist Thought,' for instance, focus exclusively on sociologically induced feminisms, and argue that 'there needs to be a recognition of both the limits of a constructionism grounded in materialism and the potential of a constructionism that deploys materiality as a more porous and flexible concept.' Rahman and Witz recognise the shift engendered by a new materialism (conceptualising 'materiality'), and claim that the conceptualisation of the material employed in the early days of feminist sociology was more complex than simply economical. This cartography is in line with what we want to present here. Although the new materialism has set in motion a *qualitative shift* in cultural theory at large, this shift is transversal, not dualist. Striking alliances between the old and the new, Rahman and Witz claim that early-day feminists widened the definition of the economically determinist material for it to include social relations, and the domestic sphere, and worked on the material as including everyday and institutional practices as well (*ibidem*: 250). As a consequence, they read Butler's claim about 'the distinction between the material and the cultural [as] no longer a stable or viable one' (*ibidem*: 249) as an outrage, precisely because of the fact that 1970s and 1980s feminist sociology did not necessarily work along the lines of such a distinction. In the work of Butler, they imply, a second-wave feminist materialism functions as a straw person. Rahman and Witz find that good-old feminist sociological work worked along the lines of an expanded conceptualisation of the material.

Simultaneously, however, they claim that the work simply *added* new (relativist, they say) theoretical frameworks to the existing economically determinist materialism. They question whether in such a context, 'the distinctive materiality of materialism has any residual conceptual integrity' (*ibidem*: 252). In other words, they stumble over the problems of additive/ quantitative epistemic approaches, especially, we would say, when the two quantified approaches are non-exhaustive oppositions. Adding a so-called feminist postmodern epistemology with relativist inclinations to a modern epistemology, feminist or

not, materialist or not, does not necessarily result in a qualitative shifting of *either* the modern *or* the feminist postmodern, we claim, and this is why the questioning of conceptual integrity is rightful in the case of the cartography of Rahman and Witz, but not in the context of new (feminist) materialism per se. The conceptualisation of ‘materiality’ that the sociologists Rahman and Witz engage with does not necessarily shift the term towards something that differs from the economic simply because of the fact that early feminist sociologists seem to have *added* a bodily materiality *to* the economic.

The materialism brought to the fore by Rahman and Witz – if compared with economical (neoclassical) materialism the constructionist approach remains constant – should in fact be labelled ‘new’ in the teleological sense of the term, whereas we have argued that it is among other things *teleology* (as shared by realist/ totalising/ modern and the social constructivist/ relativist/ postmodern epistemologies) that is broken through in new materialism. Rahman and Witz themselves yearn for a break-through of linear continuity as well, while remaining in a dualistic mode (pre-distinguishing the social and the physical), which we would interpret as an artifact of their territorial approach to new theory formation:

The social constructionism being worked at here is not one that is limited by physical matter, but rather one that is able to incorporate body matters as an indivisible part of lived, gendered experience and action. [...] it seems to us that there is an attempt to consider the *social* effectivity of the physical – materiality as embodiment, experienced and rendered meaningful within gendered and sexualized frameworks of meaning and action (*ibidem*: 256; original emphasis).

Rahman and Witz thus affirm dualisms throughout their article – the dualism between the new materialism and sociology being the starting point, and the dualism between physicality and sociality being the end result. It seems as if they have wanted to rescue (good-old) feminist sociology in the light of a materialism that is new in the teleological sense of the term.^{iv} Analysing their article, we have shown that such an approach does not allow for a qualitative shifting of concepts. The materiality celebrated gets to remain reduced to being the polar opposite of a sociality, that is, the material here has to be made socially effective, rather than seeing the social and the material as co-constitutive forces through, for instance, the ‘abstract machine.’ We interpret this absence as an artefact of the authors buying into disciplinary territoriality. Bringing new materialism (assumed to be a pre-existing body of work) into contact with a scholarly discipline (equally assumed to be pre-existing) has distortive effects. The assumption that there is a new materialism *generated* is in contradiction with new materialism’s own *anti-representationalism*. New materialism then,

takes scholarship into an absolute deterritorialisation, and is not an epistemic class that has a clear referent. The new materialism is to be *put to work*.^v

Cultural theory being less disciplined than (feminist) sociology, the beginnings of a *transversal* understanding of new materialism can be found in Susan Sheridan's 'Words and Things: Some Feminist Debates on Culture and Materialism.' Sheridan (2002: 23), not using the term new materialism herself, argues that the impact of post-structuralism on feminist cultural theory has resulted in the displacement of 'the primacy of social and economic relations in analyses of women's situation,' and in the implementation of taking into consideration the primacy of 'issues of sexuality, subjectivity and textuality.' Sheridan claims that this seeming shift rests on a misinterpretation of post-structuralist theory, in which words and things became separated (all of a sudden 'words' gained primacy), whereas post-structuralism, if read unpolemically, and together with recent work on matter, 'demonstrates how inseparable are the symbolic and the material in examining the discursive construction of 'objects' of knowledge, and the material effects of that discursive power' (*ibidem*: 25). In other words, post-structuralism and new materialism in Sheridan's understanding should not be read as dual opposites, and together, they should not be seen as theoretical moves *beyond* a feminist sociological materialism. This cartography is qualitatively different from the one presented by Rahman and Witz.

Sheridan positions herself amongst post-structuralist feminists who have argued that cultural constructivist feminism 'is not materialist enough' (*ibidem*: 27), and who have attacked 'reductive (essentialist) representations of the nature/ culture binary divide itself' (*ibidem*: 28). Here, a post-structuralist feminist cultural theory seems to be dualistically opposed to a 'cultural constructivism.' Post-structuralist feminists are argued to have critiqued cultural constructivism for working with a 'de-materialised body,' whereas another critique is that they have working with 'understandings of 'discourse'' that are 'limited' when language is taken to be performative (*ibidem*). At the same time, post-structuralist feminist cultural theory is said to have attacked the reductive essentialism of *both* feminist sociology (focusing on the material) *and* cultural constructivism (focusing on the cultural). Traversing the non-exhaustive opposites of feminist sociology and cultural constructivism, and analysing the reductivism effected on the basis of a reliance on *either* matter *or* discourse demonstrates transversality. In other words, Sheridan argues that the current rise in new materialist analyses in cultural theory shows that *both* language-oriented cultural constructivisms *and* sociologically induced feminisms are to be critiqued, since *neither* has fully employed the agential qualities of matter. Sheridan's reading of what she calls a 'new stage' (*ibidem*) in feminist theory generates a focus not only on biological matter/ a cultural theory incorporating insights from the natural sciences, but also on the matter of the political

economy, thus qualitatively shifting a concept of matter as purely physical and opposed to the social or linguistic.

The new stage's disciplinary transversality is fully delineated by Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (2008: 9-10; *cf.* Squier and Littlefield 2004) as a new materialism (here called 'material feminism') that is to be found in the disciplines of 'science studies, environmental feminisms, corporeal feminisms, queer theory, disability studies, theories of race and ethnicity, environmental justice, (post-) Marxist feminism, globalization studies, and cultural studies,' and which, as an epistemic trend, is involved in 'integrating them into what amounts to a new paradigm for feminist thought. [...] this paradigm is currently emerging and [...] is a necessary and exhilarating move for contemporary feminism.' For us, too, the new materialism allows for a move away from disciplines towards the meta-disciplinary, in feminist theory and in cultural theory more broadly, which is a claim that alludes to the importance of studying and engaging with the effect that this move might have on the *paradigms* of contemporary cultural theory. So, in what ways does new materialism traverse paradigms?

Generating New Materialism: Playing with Paradigms

Demonstrating the workings of new materialism, that is, generating a new materialism rather than relying upon a new materialism generated, Braidotti (2000: 160) argues that what is to be found in postmodern cultural theory (*i.e.* the body of social/ semiotic constructivist cultural theory considered state-of-the-art once theory formation is positioned on a global classificatory map) is a 'denial of the materiality of the bodily self' in paradoxical conjunction with the rapid circulation of an excessive number of theoretical discourses about, and cultural representations of the human body. In other words, cultural theory in the postmodern era has been unable to fully account for the materiality of the human body, whereas it found itself surrounded by an excessive representation (thus objectification) of bodily matter in popular culture as well as cultural theory. Braidotti takes the postmodernist constructivism's specific anti-essentialism, affirming representationalism, to be responsible for this curious situation. Postmodernist constructivism is discovered as a paradigm in which the space for materialism is, using the words of Alistair Welchman (2005: 390), 'restricted,' and postmodern cultural theorists are simply included in the huge category of 'critics who use an impoverished conception of matter inherited from non-materialist systems of thought' (*ibidem*: 388). Postmodern cultural theory, otherwise seen as having constituted and having been constituted by the *Crisis* of Reason, seems to have continued to work within the legacy of modernism's foundationalism; the modernist system of thought relying on Reason has not been fully

broken through, and this is why transcendental and humanist tendencies continue to haunt current-day cultural theory. We have explained earlier that a postmodernism dualistically opposing modernism cannot entail anything but a continuation of the Same (*cf.* Alaimo and Hekman 2008: 2-3). How does new materialism succeed in qualitatively shifting the paradigm that had supposedly already left the academic stage after May '68? And how does it introduce a conception of matter that is *not* impoverished?

As said, Braidotti's new materialism begins with 'the enfolded Deleuzian subject,' which is 'a folding-in of external influences and a simultaneous unfolding outwards of affects.' The exterior and the interior, the subject(ive) and the object(ive), the individual, the social, and the symbolic are conceptualised as co-constitutive instead of being pre-determined levels or layers. The genealogy of this Deleuzian subject is strictly Continental; it includes 'Descartes' nightmare, Spinoza's hope, Nietzsche's complaint, Freud's obsession, Lacan's favourite fantasy, Marx's omission' (Braidotti 2000: 159). This cartography shows that the new materialism has something to say about Reason/ the modernist paradigm as well as the Crisis of Reason/ the postmodernist one. In other words, it is a *qualified* cartography, which opens up for a qualitative shifting of a dual opposition. This shifting is done by rethinking matter. Affirming a radical sense of materialism, or simply radical immanence, instead of starting from Reason (whether adjectified, thus postmodernised, or not), Braidotti does not define matter as solid and stable, as self-identical. A radically immanent conceptualisation of matter affirms 'metamorphosis' (Braidotti 2002). This, as well as Braidotti's endorsement of 'embodied memory' can be explained through the work of Elizabeth Grosz.

According to a philosophy of radical immanence informed by a Bergsonian concept of time (*durée* instead of linearity and progress), matter is not thought of as Matter, the photonegative of Reason or Mind, but rather by a focus on 'duration [inserted] into matter' (Grosz 2005: 111), on, indeed, metamorphosis, or transformation:

What endures, what is fundamentally immersed in time is not what remains unchanging or the same over time, a Platonic essence, but what diverges and transforms itself with the passage of time (*ibidem*: 110).

This boils down to matter *escaping* representation in the modernist, scientific meaning as well as in the postmodernist, social or semiotic constructivist sense of the term according to which representation is not the scientific 'mirror of nature' but rather the equally representationalist 'mirror of culture' (Barad 2007). This is to say that whereas a modernist scientific materialism allows for one, True representation of matter, and a postmodernist cultural constructivism allows for a plethora of equally true representations, it is the shared *representationalism* that is questioned and shifted by the new materialism. Matter is a

transformative force *in itself*, which does not need to be re-presented. The conception of matter introduced here is DeLanda's generative matter, or 'mattering' according to Pheng Cheah and Barad.

In 'What is the Matter of Feminist Criticism?,' Mariam Fraser affirms Braidotti's new materialism, by working on the academic whom Claire Colebrook (2004: 293) has called the epitome of contemporary (feminist) postmodern cultural theory: Butler. Representationalism or linguisticity is key to the work of Butler. Fraser (2002: 613) claims that in this work, language ends up addressing only the exterior. As a corollary, the interior appears as fundamentally ungraspable, as any grasping is done through language. How do Barad and Vicky Kirby, whom Fraser positions alongside Braidotti for the generation of new materialism, qualitatively shift the relation between matter/ materiality and language, between the exterior and the interior of the body? Key to this is the abandonment of assumptions about linguisticity, and about who does the speaking/ writing. For Barad (1998: 105 in *ibidem*: 618; emphasis in original), 'what is being described by our theories is not nature itself, but our participation *within* nature.' She theorises the intra-action of the observer, the observed, and observing instruments, all of which are 'agential.' In line with this, Kirby starts from the literacy of matter. In the work of Kirby, matter appears as something that is not only spoken about or spoken with, but rather as itself simply *speaking*. Nature and culture, word and flesh are 'all emergent *within* a force field of differentiations that has no exteriority in any final sense' (Kirby 1997: 126-7 in Fraser 2002: 619; emphasis in original). Both cases of transversality, signified by the 'within,' entail leaving behind the primacy of either language/ culture or matter/ nature. In other words, a false dualism is traversed. New materialism, that is, cuts across postmodernist and modernist paradigms as it shows that *both* epistemologies start from a distinctive pole of what Colebrook (2004: 56) has called 'the representation/ materiality dichotomy.' Questioning this dichotomy involved the following:

When feminists criticized or rejected the notion of women as mired in material embodiment, they did so because matter was deemed to be devoid of dynamism. When, subsequently, that phobia regarding matter was questioned, it was precisely because the border between mind and matter was deemed to be the effect of a prior linguistic or social production. And when 'linguisticism,' in turn, was challenged, this was because language had been erroneously taken to be a fixed, determining, and inhuman grid imposed upon life, rather than a living force (Colebrook 2008: 64).

Bodies are texts that *unfold* according to genetic encoding, Braidotti says, which implies traversing the material and the representational.

Key to the new materialist paradigm, then, is an emphasis on the ‘material-discursive’ or ‘material-semiotic’ that we know from the paradigm-shifting work of Haraway (1988: 200-1; emphasis in original):

[...] bodies as objects of knowledge are material-semiotic generative nodes. Their *boundaries* materialize in social interaction. Boundaries are drawn by mapping practices; ‘objects’ do not pre-exist as such. Objects are boundary projects. But boundaries shift from within; boundaries are very tricky. What boundaries provisionally contain remains generative, productive of meanings and bodies. Sighting (sighting) boundaries is a risky practice.

Such a claim is transversal when it comes to the broad (modernist and postmodernist) paradigms of cultural theory. The focus on the *materialisation* of bodies and other so-called objects of investigation demonstrates how ‘duration’ has in fact become ‘inserted into matter’ (how DeLanda, for instance, came to focus on ‘matter-energy flows’), and how the ‘the representation/ materiality dichotomy’ has indeed become broken through (how Braidotti, for example, got to conceptualise the body as ‘a piece of meat activated by electric waves of desire, a text written by the unfolding of genetic encoding’) in new materialist cultural theory. Working with ‘material-semiotic agents,’ as Haraway calls them, allows for a complexification of the way in which matter used to be defined. An object is no longer passive matter that has to be re-presented; meaning-making takes place on a two-way track.^{vi} Here it is demonstrated also how new materialism does not discard signification (*cf.* Ahmed 2008: 34) but rather directs it to its proper place and qualitatively shifts the linguistic turn accordingly (*i.e.* non-dualistically).

In the quotation given above as well as in her later work, Haraway focuses upon the ways in which bodies and systems of scholarly signification/ representation materialise alongside each other. Harawayian instantiations of new materialism affirm what Barad (2007) has called an onto-epistemology, or even an ethico-onto-epistemology, according to which being and knowing (and the good) become indistinguishable. Inspired by Haraway and Barad, we want to lastly discuss the *cartographical methodology* that generated and has been generated by the disciplinary and paradigmatic transversalities of new materialism.

Cartography Rather than Classification

New materialism is a cultural theory for the 21st Century that attempts to show how postmodern cultural theory, while claiming otherwise, has made use of a conceptualisation of

'post' that is dualist. Postmodern cultural theory re-confirmed modern cultural theory, thus allowing for transcendental and humanist traditions to haunt cultural theory after the Crisis of Reason. New materialist cultural theory shifts (post-) modern cultural theory, and provides an immanent answer to transcendental humanism. It is a cultural theory that is non-foundationalist yet non-relativist. We have shown that much is to be gained in an argument such as the latter; after all, postmodernisms and modernisms are manifold, on the one hand, and epistemologically very similar, on the other. It is for that reason that new materialism continues to rewrite the history of philosophy. As said, the minor tradition Deleuze proposed is now widely read and commented on, but increasingly, great minds of the past are being given the attention their work needs. Modernist scholars like Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead, William James and Edmund Husserl, all of whom had been pushed aside or reinterpreted by dualist thinking, are growing increasingly popular again. And not in the least place, those pre-modern philosophers such as Duns Scotus, Lucretius and the whole Stoic tradition, whose work is not (that) effected by dualist thought, are being read like never before. The richness of these philosophies had, by and large, been forgotten in dualism-dominated modernism and postmodernism. The way in which new materialism was generated in the previous paragraph alluded to the fact that duration not only became inserted into matter (ontology), but also, and simultaneously so, into theory formation (epistemology). In other words, also theory formation entails the materialisation of boundaries. Inserting *movement* into theory formation alludes to cartography rather than classification, which is the third instantiation of transversality that we intend to highlight in this article.

In the introduction we claimed that new materialism not only *enacts* a thinking about theory formation that is other than classificatory (new materialism sets in motion a non-dualist epistemic practice), but also that it enables us to understand the way in which theory formation used to be thought (following a territorialisation pattern). We claimed that classification exemplifies the territorial and is fully dualist, and throughout this article we have made clear how seemingly opposite epistemic tendencies or classes are in fact non-exhaustive oppositions. New materialism criticises not only the use of 'a discipline' or 'a paradigm' as pre-determined, but is critical also, along the lines of the dismantling of binary oppositions that it enacts, of the pre-determination of classifications of theoretical trends. Classifying epistemic tendencies that are supposedly prevalent in cultural theory implies working along territorial lines, which is a transcendentalising gesture as well as invoking sequential negation and progress narrative (*i.e.* it is dualist). This does not allow for the (un)folding of cultural theory – the matter-energy flows of theory formation, the non-linear coding practices, the cutting across matter and signification – to be captured. New materialism de-territorialises the ways in which cultural theory has been classified, and this process we call cartographical. Above we referred to Colebrook who questioned a

conceptualisation of 'language' as 'a fixed, determining, and inhuman grid imposed upon life.' She defined new materialism as allowing for seeing not only matter, but also language as a 'living force.' Questioning fixity, thus opening up for thinking about theory formation in a non-linear way, evokes cartography.

Barad's 'Re(con)figuring Space, Time, and Matter' is useful for explaining the move away from the classificatory towards the cartographical. Above, we mentioned Barad's neologism of intra-action, which allowed us to demonstrate that for instance mind and matter, and sociology and new materialism do not exist independently before they start to inter-act. Barad (2001: 98) explains the machinery of intra-action as follows:

[...] structures are to be understood as material-discursive phenomena that are iteratively (re)produced through ongoing material-discursive intra-actions.

This machine is not a Euclidean device, nor is it merely a static instrument with a non-Euclidean geometry. It is a topological animal which mutates through a dynamics of intra-activity. Questions of connectivity, boundary formation, and exclusion (topological concerns) must supplement and inform concerns about positionality and location (too often figured in geometrical terms).

Affirming onto-epistemology, Barad talks about mapping practices that draw boundaries, and she claims that *the same* objects/ boundaries materialise in non-exhaustively opposite mapping practices (Euclidean space versus stasis in non-Euclidean space). The mapping practice, generating and generated in intra-action, that shifts both options works along the following lines:

What we need are genealogies of the material-discursive apparatuses of production which take account of the intra-active topological dynamics that reconfigure the spacetime manifold. In particular, it is important that they include an analysis of the connectivity of phenomena at different scales. [...] The topological dynamics of space, time, and matter are an agential matter and as such require an ethics of knowing and being: Intra-actions have the potential to do more than participate in the constitution of the geometries of power, they open up possibilities for changes in its topology, and as such interventions in the manifold possibilities made available reconfigure both that will be possible. The space of possibilities does not represent a fixed event horizon within which the social location of knowers can be mapped, nor a homogenous fixed uniform container of choices. Rather the dynamics of the spacetime manifold is produced by agential interventions made possible in its very re(con)figuration (*ibidem*: 103-4).

These genealogies, cartographies in our vocabulary, are non-dualist approaches to theory formation that allow for absolute deterritorialising. Not primarily interested in representation, signification, and disciplinarity, new materialism is fascinated by affect, force, and movement as it travels in all directions. It searches not for the objectivity of things in themselves but for an objectivity of actualisation and realisation. It searches for how matter comes into the agential realism, how matter is materialised in it. It is interested in speeds and slownesses, in how the event unfolds according to the in-between, according to intra-action. New materialism argues that we know nothing of the (social) body until we know what it can do. Matter is therefore studied in terms of its longitude and latitude, as Duns Scotus taught us: ‘Latitude is made up of intensive parts falling under a capacity, and longitude of extensive parts falling under a relation’ (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] (1987): 256-7). It agrees on studying the multiplicity of modes that travel natureculture as the perpetual flow it always already has been.

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ⁱ For this term see Barad 2007.

ⁱⁱ See Dolphijn 2004: 24.

ⁱⁱⁱ For this term see Van der Tuin (2009).

^{iv} See Van der Tuin 2008 for a critique of a biologically tainted argument about new materialism (namely Ahmed 2008). A comparison between Sara Ahmed's work and Rahman and Witz will show that, whether sociologically or biologically biased, a disciplinary take on the new materialism is always already a reduction.

^v Despite the most original and radical thoughts by which DeLanda has inspired so many scholars and scientists all over the world, a return critique on his work has to be that the scholarly areas of his interest never even seem to connect to one another. Whether it concerns his revolutionary take on geology, biology, sociology, architecture, mathematics or historiography (which only seem to be some of the fields of which he has proven himself to be an expert), the disciplinary boundaries, contrary to the way Deleuze and a lot of other scholars working with Deleuze today deal with this, stay firmly intact.

^{vi} Instantiations are to be found in the work of among others Gallagher (2005) and Massumi (2002).