

# ***The Ones With No name***

## ***A Desire For Anomaly***

**Ocean & Wavz**  
**2021**

It is generally agreed that bodies and identity-based representations are ceaselessly being elaborated, evaluated and transformed within ideological systems, institutional and discursive structures that generate mechanisms of control. Michel Foucault provided the essential tools of critical analysis for this "order of discourse"<sup>1</sup>, and there is no point for claiming a naïve opposition, in the sense of adopting a position out of these regimes.

On a daily basis, socialism, communism and capitalism have, as both political regimes, meta discourses and social practices, utilised autonomous subjects and bodies, not only for ideological ends – which would be logical, after all – but also in heavy defensive, repressive and oppressive ways.

In the name of social stability, security, wellbeing, wealth, collective participation, most of individuals, institutions, corporate, recourse to surveillance, evaluation, rating, tracing.

Management and bureaucracy have become the paradigms of interlocution.  
They are the main basis for making and implementing decisions.  
No political vision.

Desire has to be detected and managed, with the elimination of risk-taking in action and creation.

Transient pain, sadness and anxiety, even disease,  
are no longer perceived as stepping stones to the construction of the self and the development of societies, but as pathologies to be eradicated.

Children, adults and the elderly are mutually exclusive groups, with, respectively, the playground, the workplace and, so to speak, the dead end.

The act of eating is an insult to the "ideal" body, or, on the contrary, the height of exoticism and luxury.  
In Asia, the soil is called "dirt"... while nobody yet call dirt all the chemicals that contaminate the soil and kills biodiversity.

Trees stand in straight lines.

---

<sup>1</sup> In *L'Ordre du discours*, Paris, Flammarion, 1971.

Conurbations conform to aesthetic principles that are identical across the globe.

Cars and pedestrians are placed under video surveillance.

Parks are carefully circumscribed and controlled,  
to the exclusion of certain individuals or animals,  
to the exclusion of certain amorous or sexual encounters.

Benches are taken away or designed by artists to prevent any posture of ease or relaxation.  
No privacy is possible.

In Asia and China, extreme poverty is not eradicated at all,  
but simply wiped out from the views of streets and the middle classes of people.  
In Europe and USA, they are exposed to the sordid indifference of the masses.

Fruits and vegetable are doped with chemicals to have a clean skin, glossy colors, bigger shapes, faster growth, productivity, and consumption.

Chocolate, ice cream, yogurt have no more the taste of the original ingredients because of a very tiny (if not at all) percentage of milk and chocolate.

But they are still called and tasted as chocolate, ice cream, yogurt...

Silence has become the rule. Deafening and criminal silence... in the noise of the social media.  
Especially among the new generations of young Chinese city/neti-zens who are claiming to be more educated and international than their elders but who are promoting ultra nationalism, hate of foreigners and pro-authoritarianism.

Silence has also become a violent method of harassment: those who do not speak have the power of disowning, evaluating, reporting and ostracising others just to earn some good points and rewards from the police and the government, promoting fast connectivity while they act like the new red army spys generation.

The slightest criticism is perceived as a threat to the proper conduct of public order and to the development of private businesses.

And – the last straw – there will always be someone to speak in your place.

The great achievement of such bureaucracies and authoritarian regimes is not just to have succeeded in making people "ingesting" these schemas and codes as "natural" forms of behaviour and self-censorship, but to have made them the signs and proofs of social and economic success for an individual, a society, a city, a country.

Have we become our own dictators?

Such programmes of control, such obsession of hygiene, may end up in a levelling-out of thinking.  
They may also attain such a degree of sophistication that we start generating new viruses, unheard-of diseases, formatted expressions.

Whatever gesticulations people can perform on Instagram, Tik Tok, Bilibili, bodies, smiles, looks, postures are now all similar, transparent, flat, tedious.

A new ideology is coming to the fore – that of "new ecologies" which advocate greater respect for the environment, harmonious social relations, more respectful relations to each others.

The intentions are of course admirable.

But the ways in which "such "ecologies" are formulated, (re)appropriated, administrated and applied are truly dubious and one has to question its validity.

New ecologies and sustainable development are once again concerned with control and profit rather than opening up to the unexpected and the creative.

They are a regrettable refusal to embrace entropy and chaos and indispensable creative disorder, or take a chance on fruitful contradictions.

A failure to accept the living,

It was in the not-so-distant past, in an era of flourishing economic and capitalist globalisation, that people started thinking about the "post-human"<sup>2</sup>, with hybrid bodies mutating in order to generate more overtly combinant possibilities, and the virtual images of computing science, biotechnology and genetics holding out a promise of absolute but still mercantile freedom.

In the same way, the post-human phase of the global era has produced a number of well-meaning, encouraging types of discourse on multiculturalism and gender confusion.

Today in Asian communist regimes as well as in Western liberal representations, the body is most frequently reduced to a surface upon which tokens of social behaviours, psychological affects, biological and sexual identity can be, not only identified and displayed, but also predicted, controlled and transformed to make us becoming better consumers and submissive masses.

But there are still grounds for infiltrating them and reacting to them from within, means creating counter-representations in the form of new modalities for the re-signification of discourse, and for the legitimation of emergent forms.

There have been revolutionary studies such as Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*<sup>3</sup>, and her magnificent *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*<sup>4</sup>. What she is saying is that in the formation of language and genders, the mere fact of identifying and condemning an oppressor-locutor is no longer enough. The point, now, is to invent new ways of acting through a form of language that transforms the power of insult, indifference and oppression:

*"Understanding performativity as a renewable action without origin or clear purpose suggests that discourse is not, in the end, constrained either by a determinate locutor or a context of origin. Discourse is not defined only by a social context, but also by its ability to break with such contexts. Performativity has its own social temporality, in which it is rendered possible precisely by the contexts with which it breaks. (...) The political possibility of reworking instances of discourse so as to bring them into play against the force of insult consists of reappropriating the power of discourse by deflecting it from its previous contexts."*<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> *Post Human* is the title of a 1992 exhibition curated by Jeffrey Deitch at the Castello di Rivoli, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Rivoli; Deichtorhallen, Hamburg; Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art, Athens; and FAE Musée d'Art Contemporain, Pully/Lausanne. See the *Post Human* catalogue, Ostfildern, Cantz; Athens, Deste Foundation for Contemporary Art.

<sup>3</sup> London, Routledge, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> London, Routledge, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

**What, then, is left?**  
**Well, a good deal of hope.**  
**A desire for anomaly.**

The power to act and create is proportional to the violence exercised by different forms of oppression.

In the domain of art, in the midst of innumerable contemporary "artistic" proposals that excel in decorative elegance, in the annihilation of sense and action, there remains an immensity to be worked on.

When we as O&W talk about "anomaly", this has nothing to do with "norms", or "abnormality".

"Anomaly", strictly speaking, is that which evades, or downplays, nomination.

The "anomal", literally, runs up against language and any formalisation.

The anomal is that which appears impossible to represent.

In the domain of art, the anomal sheds light on an issue that goes beyond the usual dichotomies between the figured figure of the body and its abstraction; between conceptual work and performative work.

For the anomal work of art, the issue is that of eliminating everything that might maintain or reinforce the image in its formal identity as art.

In the late 19th and 20th centuries, artists such as Francis Bacon, Gustave Courbet, John Cage, Marcel Duchamp, Valie Export, Mike Kelley, Stéphane Mallarmé, Ana Mendieta, Bruce Nauman, Cindy Sherman, were all artists of anomaly.

The anomal is risk-taking in potential for action which, for better or worse, could demarcate or define it.

In this sense, the anomal harks back to Jacques Lacan's definition of "the real":

*"[T]he real, or that which is perceived as such, is what holds out absolutely against (symbolic) symbolisation."*<sup>6</sup>

The real is what stands outside language and reality; what is of the order of the inexpressible; trauma; the "truer than true". The entire question, then, is to work out how the artist visualises, imbues, creates figure in order to give the image access to an "inchoateness" of language – the ineffable, the unrepresentable. Thus, when we say that the anomal holds out against formalisation we are also saying that the unfathomable challenge for artists is to give form to the anomal, to drive formalisation through into anomaly.

Having been living and working in different contexts, we have been experiencing different forms of violence, oppression, surveillance, silence that express a radical change in our daily individual and social life. In this way:

- We are making the choice to face up the horror and the ignominy rather than circumventing or prettifying them.

---

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, Livre I, Les Ecrits techniques de Freud (1953-1954)*, Paris, Seuil (Collection Champ Freudien), 1991.

• We are trying to mark out the contours of a humanity that is other than the founding humanism of our modernity. For or against religions, sciences or political regimes, the crux of humanism was to consider man as an animal endowed with intelligence and language. The organisation of the individual, the collectivity and the world is centralised, starting with the superiority of the human intellect. Over the centuries, humanism constructed the utopia of humanity's power to generate goodness and harmony. But by now everyone is perfectly aware of this utopia's relativity. Humanism has fuelled the most benevolent forms of power, and also the most malevolent forms of oppression:

*"What we call humanism has been exploited by Marxists, Liberals, Nazis and Catholics. This does not mean that we have to reject what we call 'human rights', or 'freedom', but it means that neither freedom nor human rights can be circumscribed within set boundaries. Eighty years ago, for example, had you asked whether or not female virtue was a part of universal humanism, everyone would have said that it was. What alarms me about humanism is that it presents a certain form of our ethics as a universal model that can apply to any type of freedom whatsoever. I think our future contains more secrets, possible freedoms and inventions than humanism would have us imagine."<sup>7</sup>*

---

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, "Vérité, pouvoir et soi", in *Dits et écrits*, Vol. IV, 1980-1988, Paris, NRF, Gallimard.