

Teeth, identity politics and drugs



1. Framework

1.1. Alienation in acceleration, dematerialisation, castration and artifacts(error)

In the words of Hito Steyerl, the poor image's condition boils down to deterioration through acceleration. It's resolution, a symbol of castration of the author.

As Rosi Braidotti puts it, "the defining feature of our days is the high level of anxiety, exhilaration, fear or optimism." This would be the paradox of hyper-modernism. In a way then, a society so advanced that it knows all there is to know in terms of biotechnologies, genetics and the medical field, we are doomed to develop a manic anxiety surrounding our DNA and „organic capital”(Braidotti). A technological artefact/artifact in this scenario would mean inevitable panic, an existential threat.

We must ask ourselves then: how will we advance from here on- accept the risks of artefacts/artifacts or bring this acceleration to a halt? Should we fear new innovations in the dental industry or accept the dreadful corrosion of nature on our dental capital?

2. Found teeth and the narrative (tea) of medicalisation

2.1. The great anxiety of degradation and yellowing

We all know the story of yellow teeth, in recent times, the practice of tooth whitening has become increasingly more accessible and more marketed.

We also know the dangers of yellow teeth. They represent infection, disease, substance abuse and even death. We can immediately, and cross-culturally imagine the pigeonhole of the yellow toothed person.

So we can agree that we are all scared of getting yellow teeth. No matter how niche and covert of a group, none will subscribe to the aesthetic of yellow teeth. Sure, sympathy (and perhaps empathy, though one could speak of empathy or lack there-of for illness here) could be exhibited for this matter, but it still remains unwanted.

Therefore, we can also deduct that there must be, like with other bodily phenomena, a phobia and/or a toughened aversion to yellowness of the teeth.

We can observe an increase of anxiety in more particular groups of people. We might even go on a more clinical route and discover that a preoccupation with the colour of teeth is commonly recognised as a symptom of BDD (Body Dysmorphic Disorder).

I would like to talk about the drug users, the club goers, the chain smokers and red wine drinkers; those who go out so much that they forget to brush their teeth for days in a row.

Let's look at a certain isolated bracket of individuals who are all too familiar with the idea of tooth anxiety- anxious tooth clubbers.

Below is an excerpt from an interview with an anonymous individual who offered to speak to us about this subject.

****She speaks with a very thick eastern European accent, and she seems to not have all her teeth in order so here is the transcript.**

(me) How does a usual night out look like for you?

(anxious tooth clubber) Well first I would sit at home, have some me time after a school day or a lazy Saturday, then after dinner and a shower i would crack a beer and start choosing my outfit. Uhh maybe then-

(me) Sorry to interrupt, but can you go more into detail into how you choose an outfit? And are there any challenges?

(ATC) Oh for sure. Many. I really am picky when it comes to outfits and since I have like some mild BDD I can spend even hours choosing just pants. I just have like an obsession of giving people so many impressions. Like one day I will go out looking preppy and I will have to go back to change because I would see too many non preppy people and that would make me self conscious. I would then change into a rat outfit. But like you know, clubs are better.

(me) Hm, I don't know. Can you tell me how it is different getting ready for a club versus for a day to school?

(ATC) Well to start, I don't want to break my anonymity, but I do go at an art school so there isn't much of a difference in how i feel about dressing up in these two scenarios. I'm stressed nonetheless.

(me) Why is that exactly? It's not that the school goers are all models and techno djs?

(ATC) Of course not. But you don't know that. And I'm not a simple person. I always assume people are cooler than me and in art school even more. You see people already breaking gender norms and it's 10am in the canteen. You wouldn't see that at 10pm on the train.

(me) So it's just a matter of audience you are concerned when you dress up?

(ATC) Yes.

(me) But then don't you dress for yourself?

(ATC) NO.

(me) Ok. Then why not?

(ATC) Couldn't tell you man. I dress as if I want everyone in the room to consider having sex with me, that's why... Isn't that what everyone wants, to slay?

(me) Sure. Anyways, after you get ready to quote 'slay', then, you do what? And how did you get so tooth anxious?

(ATC) Hold on girl. Isn't your job as an interviewer to space out questions, like... But ok... I pick my outfit-

(me) Struggling.

(ATC) ...Yes?... I pick my fit, I drink my beers, I check my drugs and then go. I get in, I do drugs, I dance, I do drugs, etcetera. Talk to a few people when I'm high, and then leave and hope I come down well.

(me) Ok where's the teeth, this is an interview about teeth let's not get too far.

(ATC) OK. Well for starters, it starts at the beers- or sometimes it's wine. And then I get really anxious and brush my teeth before leaving the house. I also get like 3 or 4 types of gum and mouth wash with me for every time I smoke a cigarette.

(me) Hmm, you don't want to quit though? It sound like it would be easier and give you more peace of mind.

(ATC) No of course not. I wont quit because I can't and I'm not done thinking smoking and drugs are cool.

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But anyways, I guess where I'm going is, I DON'T know whats in the drugs I'm taking. I don't even know if I'm not brain damaged yet. Oh and on top of that, I also get that tooth grinding thing whenever I do uppers. And grass and ket don't do much for me so I'm pretty much stuck with uppers that fuck my molars up. Not to mention I can't eat without my jaw fucking falling off the next days. But like-

It's cool, I get my fun out, I'm as hedonistic as the person next to me and I feel sexy as fuck.

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I think it's worth it.

(me) But- you still have anxiety of your teeth falling and or getting yellow?

(ATC) Of course. It's part of the deal. But still what I would love is more clear research into what these drugs do to you. Most gay people nowadays do designer drugs, god knows what they do to you.

Like, for normal red wine drinking people, dentists already know how to get the stains out, but I can't just go to my girl and say hey i just did abc123 and my brain is probably more stained than my teeth, can I make an appointment for that Whitener 3000?

(me) I guess it makes sense. But what I'm wondering is, you haven't mentioned your scene yet. Can you detail more about who you hang out with, where, what type of music? Just like 3 words or so.

*(ATC)... Hmm, well i mean it's pretty clear. Homosexuals, raves or like the club we all say is a sex club and definitely techno or those new mixes of hardstyle and techno but camp-ier. So you know, they all get high. So I'm just waiting to find someones teeth on the ground, either from rot from all the molly and designer shit they do, or like bits and pieces from all the tooth grinding they do. *laughing* haha probably if you turn the music down you hear a symphony of teeth.*