

Embodying Worm
Catherine Duboutay



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Navigating towards fluid identities through Worm

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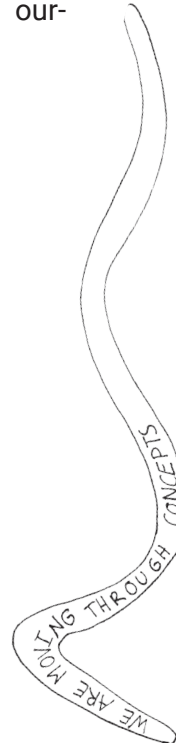
Navigating towards fluid identities through Worms

introduction / opening / mouth

Out of an investigation of my personal interests fluid identities and its connection to gender and sexuality I am introducing the following notions and concepts of Bilateria, embodiment, intersectionality, transcorporeality, disorganization, virtuality, difference and repetition, technobodies, prothesis, orgasmic force, and Avatar. And I bring them in relation to Worms. Regarding the history of ecofeminism and queer theory, it makes sense to suggest that Worm and humans are different in many ways and connect and intersect in others. And maybe by incorporating the Idea of Worms¹, we can question our-

selves and our surrounding structures. In this thesis I propose Worms as a tool to move through Ideas and thoughts, and help me to navigate towards fluid identities.

In this text, I'll introduce philosophical concepts with which I connected on a sensual level. Sensualities towards texts and concepts is a physical reaction, which shows us a connectedness beyond our physical borders, in this case with words, Ideas, associations, memories, etc. The words of great thinkers, like Astrida Neimanis, Villèm Flusser, Gilles Deleuze, Paul B. Preciado, Adrienne Rich, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Stacy Alaimo, and Donna Haraway have become entangled with my own experiences and the perception of my reality. This makes me be the person I am now and will be – that I will be because identity is not pre-existing but is a process: when I now connect with concepts, I may connect differently with them in time. The thoughts those writers thought, I am rethinking and reconnecting them with distinctive Ideas. So that this text is a constellation of collective thinking that will not stop with my writing. I found an intimate relation to the very words I was reading and discussing. And this relation made me think of a



¹ The term Idea is adapted from Deleuze and describes Idea as prior the concretely existing. What means that Idea is virtual and exists before any concept. Worms in this context are an Idea, which comes before any concept of identification and individualization. Worms exist before its actualization (into the concretely existing). It is a virtual Idea, which nonetheless has the potentiality to actualize. I adopt the capitalized Idea from Deleuze. I capitalize Worm, because it is an Idea and therefore not the same as the concrete existing worm, but includes it.

written word, as always more-than-word, as much as we as humans are always more-than-human or never fully human.

navigation / porous mesoderm

I introduce Worms into this writing as a tool of navigation/concept/Idea/movement to imagine ourselves – as bodies – as decentred, but always *transcorporeally*² and *intersectionally*³ implicated, to then later use those concepts to describe the fluidity of identities on the basis of difference and disorganization.

I begin by describing Worms as a species, without concentrating on a single one: Worms are a kind of animal whose different species usually share a tubelike physical form without limbs and eyes. Some Worms are known as parasites while living inside the bodies of other animals. Others live in marine waters or freshwaters and underground. Most Worms are invertebrates, which means they don't have a spine or bones. Worms form together with the human and many other animals the group eucoelomates⁴, which are animals composed of three tissues: "the ectoderm that envelops them and defines them in the world; the endoderm that secretes liquids that digest the world; and the mesoderm, found between the defining layer and the world-absorbing layer, which allows the animal to orient itself in the world and act upon it."⁵

Flusser's description of the three different tissues already gives us an Idea of the common perception of a molar Body⁶ (ectoderm), the concept of hydrocommons⁷ (endoderm), and the porosity of both

2 Transcorporeality describes the intersection between biology, experiences, culture, and context, which cannot be thought separately and therefore are always interacting. Our Bodies form out of the contact between what we consider human and more-than-human nature.

3 Intersectionality describes how different aspects of a person's social and political identity create additional marginalization and discrimination types when these are combined.

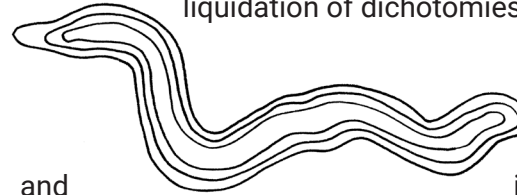
4 Eucoelomates or coelomates are animals possessing a true coelom and therefore differ from animals without a true coelom, such as pseudocoelomates and acoelomates. The coelom is a fluid-filled body cavity that forms itself out of the embryonic mesoderm, allowing beings to have a separated circulatory system from abdominal organs. In most animals, the coelom contains the digestive tract and other organs. In contrast, the term in this text is borrowed from Flusser and describes animals with three tissues. Flusser used the word to describe triploblastic animals, but didn't distinguish between eucoelomates, pseudocoelomates, and acoelomates. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coelom>; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triploblasty>; <https://www.biologyonline.com/dictionary/coelom>; <https://www.biologyonline.com/dictionary/eucoelomate> [13.02.2021])

5 Vilém Flusser, *Vampyrotheuthis infernalis* (New York, Dreden: Atropos Press, 2011), p.24

6 Molar body, describes a body entity which is hermetically sealed from outside influences, and therefore autonomous.

7 Hydrocommons are bodies that share a world through water and are always connected through water.

(mesoderm). All three of the connections I made during the reading of Flussers science-fictionary essays. I connect Flusser's writings with that of Neimanis'; nevertheless, both are writing with different approaches – where the former is starting from actuality to create virtual Ideas, the latter is beginning from virtual Ideas to create actuality. I seek the similarities in their concepts, which leads us to a liquidation of dichotomies:



and its environment, it gives "the illusion of a hermetic seal"⁸ and leads us as human subjects to conclude the Body as whole and separated. It describes a molar subject, representing a Body as a whole, within a temporal and spatial frame. It is the Body's common perception as an enclosed entity, which is complete in itself and contains our subjectivity.

The endoderm with Flusser's description of its secreting and absorbing abilities, I connect to Neimanis bodies of water, which "are always, at some level, implicated."⁹ These bodies are all "collaboratively worlded."¹⁰ Hydrocommons, in this sense, are bodies that share a world through water and are always connected through water. Water, here, is what connects being and becoming.

The mesoderm, the layer between both described ectoderm and endoderm, is used for orientation and action with-in the world. I connect this to Deleuze's notion of disorganization. Disorganization is the state in which the border of a Body, which strives to be a hermetically sealed entity, is disrupted. This disruption happens perpetually, as soon as we eat, pee, cry, masturbate, menstruate, ejaculate, shit, etc., but also because we – as bodies – are not separated from culture, language, traditions, historical flows, race, sex, gender, sexuality, disability, economics, etc.

Deleuze proposes the molar Body to be a *coherent body*¹¹ that needs to be disorganized.

Deleuze and Merleau-Ponty break up a "human subjectivity as one expression, or one capture, of bodies."¹² A Body is "always some-

8 Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), p.46

9 Neimanis, p.38

10 Neimanis, p.38

11 Neimanis, p.48

12 Neimanis, p.45

thing other than what it is; it is never hermetically sealed.”¹³

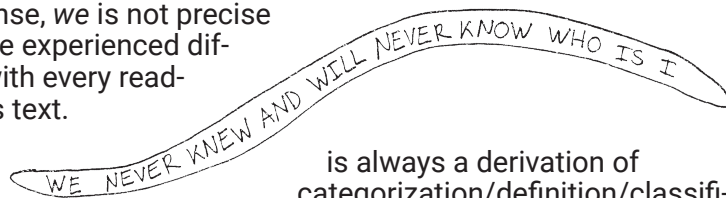
Therefore, the mesoderm isn't a separating layer but a combining layer, which brings endoderm and ectoderm together and acts upon them. The mesoderm, in this sense, is a tool for navigation.

disorganization / we

Disorganization also follows the thought that our shared understanding of being a Body as a sealed *sac of skin*, an entity, is never fully achieved. The Idea of a Body as a container follows a similar picture of a Body that contains our self, so identity¹⁴. “We conceptualize the interior of the Body as a kind of space or container, which consists of many entities: mind, soul, words, emotions, thoughts, etc.”¹⁵ Skara points out that our movement and languages are based on the Body as a whole, towards the earth as a whole. We refer to our surroundings through the axis head-foot, right-left, front-back, which shows us the human Body's centrality in our understanding of the world.

Since perceiving the Body as a container is an image well embedded in Western thinking, *I* see myself as a container resulting from the information *I* ate, the experiences *I* felt, and the sensations *I* imagined. *I* label myself as human, and therefore *I* can say that *we* exists. But *we* only and always comes with the question of inclusion and exclusion. *We* is never fully defined, and *I* can never fully know if that way *I* perceive a person is also how they define themselves in that particular moment or if they want to define themselves at all. *We* always comes with a certain unknown ability. In this sense, *we* is not precise and will be experienced differently with every reading of this text.

We



is always a derivation of categorization/definition/classification, which goes hand-in-hand with

generalizations. When we look back on pioneers of queer theories,

¹³ Neimanis, p.48

¹⁴ Identity is the result of psychological and physical experiences together with cultural influences. Identities are always incomplete and contextual. Identities are always influenced and created in connection to gender, sexuality, racialization, social-economic class, ideologies, norms and culture. Because identities are influenced by our environments, they are never set and will always change. (Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele/Jen Theodor (translation), *Queer – eine illustrierte Geschichte* (Münster: Unrast, 2020), p.60-61)

¹⁵ Danica Skara, *Body Metaphors – Reading the Body in Contemporary Culture*, in: *Collegium Antropologicum* 28 Suppl. 1, 183–189 (Croatia: Croatian Anthropological Society, 2004), p.185

Audre Lorde, Judith Butler, and Adrienne Rich describe the problems that are coming with it. We see white heterosexual women speaking of women generally, which excludes people of color, disabilities, different sexualities, non-western traditions, and religions. It is not enough to build new categories that seem to be whole in themselves because they are just underlining a dichotomic system that always comes with exclusion.¹⁶

Humans, with their Bodies are striving for what Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze describe as *organization* or *rightness*. Which often leads to the dichotomy of *We/Other*. We need this loose unity, without which “our experience of the world would be fragmented and largely incomprehensible.”¹⁷

But the urge for rightness is only existent because bodies are never “a static or sealed entity, [they are] constantly transforming.”¹⁸ We have to accept that we are living in a spontaneous Body. It is a Body that is not a finished one or a Body with boundaries but a Body in constant change—a Body that is allowed to be sick, which is allowed to fall, which has accidents.¹⁹ As Deleuze stresses, we need to disorganize, so stop following a molar Body image, which we can never achieve. We are disorganized all the time because we are *transcorporeally* engaged in the world.

bilateria / monumental axis

According to Flusser, eucoelomates²⁰ are all part of the group of the Bilateria²¹. “All of the Bilateria are worms, including men, and in this, medieval theology is not mistaken. That is: they have a longitudinal axis, a monumental axis, a right side and a left side. This differentiates them from the Radiata, in which several rays radiate from a center. For us Bilateria the world is bilaterally symmetrical: there either “is” or “is not”, and the third is excluded. The dialectic of the worm.”²²

¹⁶ Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele/Jen Theodor (translation), *Queer – eine illustrierte Geschichte* (Münster: Unrast, 2020), p.77-80

¹⁷ Neimanis, p.48

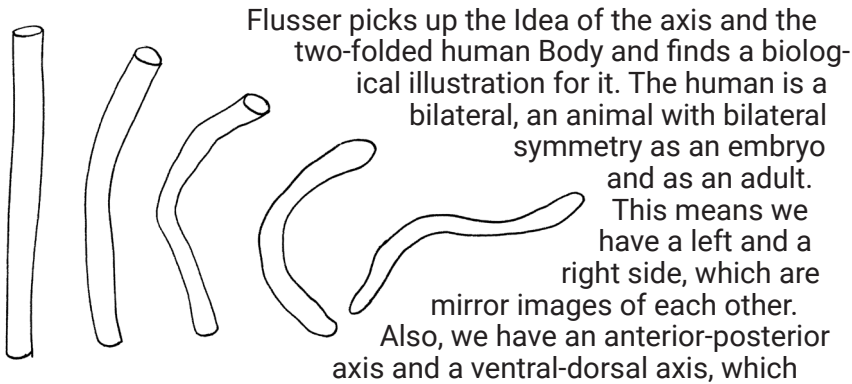
¹⁸ Neimanis, p.48

¹⁹ Margret Grebowicz, lecture: queer(ing) ecology (London: School of Advanced Studies, 2019), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_JyQPdYeBs&t=2398s [21.01.2021]

²⁰ Again, the term eucoelomates here is borrowed from Flusser, and describes animals with three tissues. In my understanding Flusser did use the term to describe triploblastic animals, but didn't make the distinction between eucoelomates, pseudocoelomates and acoelomates.

²¹ Bilateria are animals whose bodies are symmetrical organized, the right and left side are mirror images of each other. Most of Bilateria are triploblastic, they consist of three germ layers: ectoderm, mesoderm and endoderm. They also possess a complete digestive tract with distinct mouth and anus. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bilateria> [13.02.2021])

²² Flusser, p.25



Flusser picks up the Idea of the axis and the two-folded human Body and finds a biological illustration for it. The human is a bilateral, an animal with bilateral symmetry as an embryo and as an adult. This means we have a left and a right side, which are mirror images of each other. Also, we have an anterior-posterior axis and a ventral-dorsal axis, which

Skara describes as front-back and head-foot.²³ We are not the only bilaterians. We share this composition with most animals, excluding sponges, ctenophores, placozoans, and cnidarians²⁴. As most bilaterians, we have a mouth, digestive system, and anus. Same as the Worm. The Worm is an Idea of every other Bilateria.

It is the monumental axis, which makes humans separate from Worms? The monumental axis can be the spine or backbone, which enables us to stand upright. European languages reflect on the importance of the spine and the distinction between up and down. The spine is the crucial element for a feeling of superiority, strength, and bravery. "Someone who is spineless lacks determination and the willingness to take risks."²⁵

When comparing the up-down movement of freedom-repression with the distinction between human-Worm, we as humans are looking down on Worms, the invertebrates. Or, more generally speaking, living matter over the surface is superior to those under the surface. We forget here that the biomass under the surface outnumbers the biomass over the surface. (Again, surface here – metaphorically speaking – is a mesoderm to create simplified binaries, which allow us, as humans, to separate inside from outside.)

virtuality / difference

The Worm in this text stands for a less or more developed human. I follow the Worm to explain our *transcorporeal* and co-worlding existences simultaneously as same and different – as the basis for *virtuality*.

23 Skara, p.183

24 sponges, ctenophores, placozoans, and cnidarians are animals, which don't share the symmetrical body composition, which is the basis for the classification of the animal kingdom.

25 Skara, p.187

In Deleuze's theory of repetition and difference, *virtuality* plays a vital role in understanding that all repetition creates difference because it is virtual.

Virtuality is a replacement for the *possible* because the possible seems not to be *real*. The virtual is real in its virtuality and still holds all possibility.

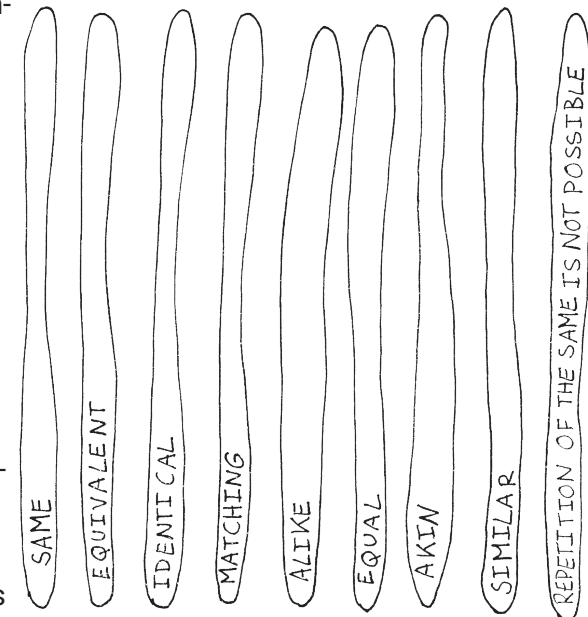
Repetition contrasts generality, which describes an equivalence or resemblance between particulars. Generality, or generalization, is, therefore, a reduction, whereas repetition is connected to difference. It is a question of the smallest possible against the largest possible. Generality equals cycles, equalities, and laws, and human behavior manifests in norms and laws achieved by habits.

Repetition is a repetition of singularities because an eternal return of the same is not possible. Repetition withholds all virtuality and difference because there is no representation of the same.

This is why repetition and difference always come before identity. Every subject is first repetition of difference before building its identity. Repetition is defined as "difference without a concept."²⁶

Idea, consequently, is a concept following difference. In Deleuze's reading, I find that virtuality is the characteristic of the *Idea*. An Idea does not align with the concepts of identity, unity, or contradiction but is based on difference.

To be clear: Difference is not a secondary characteristic, which unfolds when comparing pre-existing things. Difference exists without prior concept, and therefore, is difference in itself. When thinking about repetition, we think about repetition of the same. But every single Worm is different and holds a multitude of differences in itself. We define through the differences between things



26 Deleuze cited in: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Difference_and_Repetition [14.02.2021]

and their relations. So existence comes with relations, and repetition is relational, and therefore continually different. We set physical and non-physical in relation. We try to position and understand the world we live-in. By identifying, finding analogies, opposing, comparing, we judge in sameness; we categorize. Deleuze argues that all repetition is difference because all repetition is a movement concerning each other. Difference is created because relation creates possibilities.

Worm / Idea

Worms, for me, are an Idea, which even after its actualization, remains virtual. Worms are a creature in their actuality, where I as human cannot differ any identities, (except for the categorization of species). Worms remain an Idea in the human perspective, and therefore for me, hold a multitude of possibilities for identities. The actuality of the Worm remains an Idea because human cannot be Worm.

The actualization of a virtual Idea is when it comes to the individuation of concretely existing entities. The Idea defines the being of a thing. This means that Ideas lay the basis for behavior patterns of systems. Because through the repetition of a virtual Idea, which is based on difference, the actualized Bodies are a possible incarnation of a multitude of possibilities for Bodies of that Nature. This is when individualization results.

Both virtuality and actuality are real: The actual derives from the virtual as one possibility.

The Worm and Worm-like beings are virtual. Astrida Neimansis describes the concept of virtuality like this: "virtuality is a body's could-have-been and might-become; it is the zone of potentiality from which bodies are selected and actualized."²⁷ The *Idea* of Worm is not the same as the *actuality* of Worm but withholds it. I use Worm as an Idea to connect Bilateria and *hydrocommons*, molar bodies and *transcorporeality*, subjectivity and co-worlding.

Deleuze differentiates between Idea and concept, in the sense that concept is based on generalizations,

WORMS ARE A TOOL TO MOVE THROUGH IDEAS AND THOUGHTS COMING WITH THE ENGAGEMENT OF FLUID IDENTITIES.

through reproduction and repetition such as habits, whereas Ideas are multiplicities. A multiplicity is a complex structure that does not arise from a prior unity and is opposing the dichotomy one/many. Ideas are related to the virtual, whereas concepts are necessarily related to the general, making them less complex. I want to note here that I am sticking to the term concept throughout this text because Ideas remains a concept.

For me, Worm connects with this concept of virtuality, because as Flusser said, "all of the Bilateria are worms, including men."²⁸ He described the Worm, with its cylindric, tubelike bodily form, based on all physical forms that Bilateria express. Worm incorporates the difference all Bilateria are deriving form.

The Worm is the basis of our bilateral lives (April 7th, the very first bilateral fossil finding was announced, it is a Worm-shaped animal in the size of a rice corn)²⁹, from which all bilaterians developed. Therefore, Worm holds multitudes of possibilities and differences in its repetition throughout time and space because it is *actual* and *virtual* at the same time.

In its actuality, we perceive Worms as real animals, despite not having a spine, because it shares the bilateral existence with us and possesses organs. They are "true organisms." All other animals outside of Bilateria and Radiata groups are composed of several cells and several tissues but do not have organs. The *missing* organs are enough for us to "deny such animals their right to be animals: we despise the animal nature of the sponge. The vast majority of the animal kingdom is composed of single-celled animals, the Protozoa, but as we are not capable of perceiving them without microscopes, we do not accept their existence, although we know we live thanks to them, and that we will end up being eaten and absorbed by them."³⁰ (Flusser uses here the term animal for single-celled creatures, which are biologically excluded from the group of animals.)

individuation / identities

Suppose Ideas are the virtual basis for individualization and identities. In that case, I conclude that if Ideas are changing, or respected as what they are (opposition to a dichotomic system), then Western thinking in binaries is a violent act against the virtual.

Deleuze mentions humor and irony as something which creates a

28 Flusser, p.25

29 BBC, Fossil worm shows us our evolutionary beginnings, (London: BBC online, March 2020)

30 Flusser, p.25

27 Neimansis, p.47

distance from laws and norms, even through their re-enactment. If laws and norms always come along with their betrayal or violation, and people use humor and irony to escape them, we understand that repetition and difference are forces – positive forces, as Deleuze puts it – to which we are bound and interact even as individuals. And these forces are what make our bodies disorganized because organization equals reduction, generalization, cycles, equalities, norms and laws.

law / norm

In a Western understanding, the human Body concludes with the skin, which we identify as a single fixed entity. This view on our bodies started with the background of social terms and conditions through law and order. (Law needs single autonomous subjects to act-upon them.) Michail Bachtin describes the medieval carnival as days where law and order were temporarily lifted and used as escapism of bodily borders imposed by the ruling class. During these days, physical openings and extremities with their bodily fluids are becoming essential and may lead to attempts to escape these physical constraints. Instead, a fluidity between bodies unfolds. The medieval carnival was a time where virtuality was celebrated. Because on those days, the possibility of being more than one Body on a cultural level became visible and was experienced. The molar Body was disrupted, but it was an intentional and restricted release designated to the carnival timeframe. People's ongoing desire for those days show us the construction of the bodily borders by strict rules acting-upon us and force us to be autonomous individuals.

The concept of difference and repetition is underlining the post-human feminist concept of both/and instead of either/or. By acknowledging difference and negating the same, we learn that either/or cannot exist anymore. Either/or is rooted in a culture that "constant[ly] [demand] repetition and sameness, while the biological is inherently interactive and dynamic."³¹

When we look at Worms and their way of moving, we see a continually contracting and releasing of muscles, allowing them to move. In this movement, the active and passive parts are present simultaneously. Worms are not either/or, but the two at the same time. It is hard to understand a third a different possibility apart from *is* and *is not*. But this is what I want to explore in this writing: fluidity of living.

A similar concept we find in the formulations of Vilém Flusser on informing Nature to form culture. Even though he does not speak about difference, every informing process is a singular one, and every outcome is different because information is virtual. Flusser describes in "Die Informationsgesellschaft" the Worm as a tube with mouth/entrance/beginning, informative system/digestive system, and anus/exit/end. The Worm illustrates us as humans, who also consist of mouth, digestive system, and anus. Flusser describes our time of information as such. Nature enters the mouth and will be digested so informed by Ideas, Ideals, and Values and will be excreted as culture.

In my mind, I repeat the concepts of Deleuze, Neimanis, Haraway, Flusser, teachers, family, friends, acquaintances, and many more I will not be aware of and reorganize. I repeat them differently. I repeat the concept of Difference and Repetition towards this text.

This text is real because I am writing it. The text is a way to materialize the thoughts I am thinking. But are those my thoughts, or are they conjunctions of thoughts and sensations? These thoughts are real because I am thinking them.

Opposed to the possibility, Deleuze uses the term virtuality to stress that material and immaterial is real. Concepts are real, too, because we are thinking them, and thinking is an embodied act. We understand concepts because we can experience them. Concepts are embodied. We are able to understand them because we are in some way living them. "We have to understand these conceptual frames as somehow also arising from lived experience."³²

To understand this last citation, we need to discard the "idea of bodies as only human, as contained within our skin, as beginning and ending in the 'I'"³³ and acknowledge that our bodies and identities are entwined with-in the world. Embodiment, therefore, is based on lived experiences happened and happening somewhere, sometime, and somehow.

As I wrote in the introduction, we react to something with a physical experience when sensually connecting to something. This experience is what I mean by embodiment.

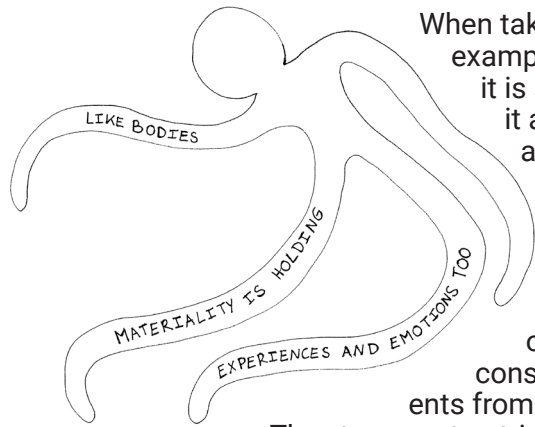
When we want to understand these very physical sensations' function, we need to begin with our materiality first. We are life-forms all based on the same materiality, which already embodies experiences

31 Luce Irigaray, quoted in Neimanis, p.72

32 Neimanis, p.41

33 Neimanis, p.41

and so emotions. However, materiality is not just matter but includes race, sex, gender, geopolitics, historical flows, and culture.



When taking the earthworm as an example, we might think categorizing it is simple because we describe it as a molar entity – the same as we try to do with our bodies – but if we look at it and its entanglements in the world, we see that Worm as human are *transcorporeal* bodies. An easy example here is one of earthworms that burrow by consuming soil, extracting nutrients from decomposing organic matter.

They transport nutrients and minerals from below to the surface, and their tunnels aerate the ground. So concretely, the minerals and nutrients their bodies incorporated will then also integrate our food, and soon our bodies.

actuality / intersectionality / transcorporeality

We need to return to our actuality, our concrete existence, to understand the concept of embodiment. And go back to our materialities and their virtuality as a tangible way to learn that bodies are not something we have, but something “we inescapably are.”³⁴

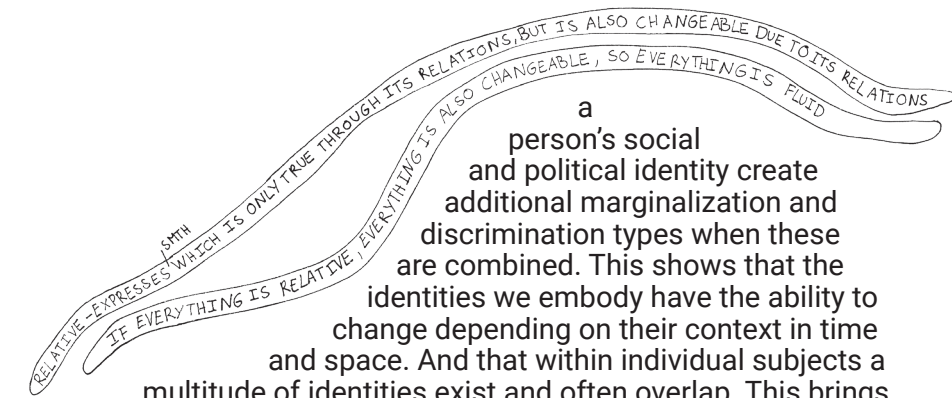
This inescapability depends not only on our bodily material and its connection to elements, physical and biological occurrences, flowing through our and other bodies. But also on politics of location to which bodies are tethered. Adrienne Rich’s “need to understand how a place on the map is also a place in history within which [she as] a woman, a Jew, a lesbian, a feminist [she is] created and [tries] to create.”³⁵ When speaking about our bodies, we learn to acknowledge our material, such as race and sex, our geopolitical situatedness, and historical flows that formed our multiple identities and belongings.

The Idea – of complex interactions between identities and always differentiating relations of power that influence and shape our lived experiences – is coming back to Kimerlé Crenshaw’s concept of intersectionality³⁶. Intersectionality describes how different aspects of

34 Neimanis, p.44

35 Adrienne Rich, Notes towards politics of location, in: Blood, Bread and Selected Prose 1979-1985 (New York: WW Norton & Co, 1994), p.212

36 Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, p.51



a person’s social and political identity create additional marginalization and discrimination types when these are combined. This shows that the identities we embody have the ability to change depending on their context in time and space. And that within individual subjects a multitude of identities exist and often overlap. This brings me back to the separation of inside and outside, depicted with the endoderm and ectoderm layer: Intersectionality shows that inside and outside cannot be separated by a hermetically sealed mesoderm but are connected by a porous mesoderm. And inside and outside are in a constant interplay. John Gagnon and William Simon described a similar interplay regarding human sexualities: They brought up the theory that the social world constructs sexuality by a continuous interplay between the cultural, the personal interactions, and the inner psychics.³⁷

Deleuze states that “bodies are congeries of all kinds of physical, material, cultural, and semiotic forces, and how they become is more interesting than what they are.”³⁸

The Body is always multiple because our identities are always “located in multiple places.”³⁹

Neimanis explains this multiplicity by describing that race, age, sexuality, “the geopolitics that situate [...] and historical flows of global power that imprint upon [our] skin”⁴⁰ are materializing our bodies, forming our subjects, “index [our] multiple belongings, and anchor [our] subjectivity in multiple places.”⁴¹

While our bodies are always concretely situated, we are never a sealed entity. Our bodily matters, air, water, bacteria, viruses, toxins, drugs, nutrition, dust, and other materials, words, concepts, sexuality, gender, culture, definitions, historical events and flows, emotions, experiences, and so forth are entering and leaving Bodies. Bodies change continually and are always with-in the flows of other bodies. As Haraway puts it, there are always various *bodily interfaces*, as “biology and mood and culture and context,”⁴² which “are always

37 Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, p.44

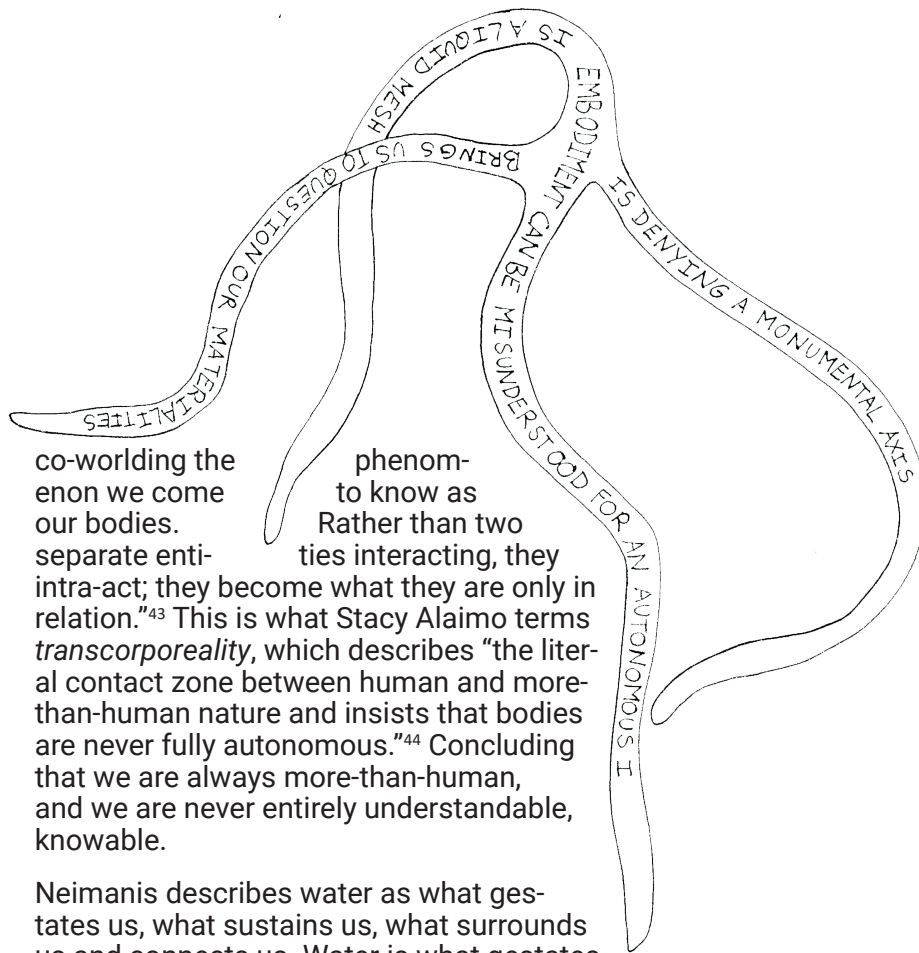
38 Neimanis, p.44

39 Neimanis, p.32

40 Neimanis, p.31 f.

41 Neimanis, p.32

42 Neimanis, p.34



co-worlding the enon we come our bodies. separate enti-intra-act; they become what they are only in relation."⁴³ This is what Stacy Alaimo terms *transcorporeality*, which describes "the literal contact zone between human and more-than-human nature and insists that bodies are never fully autonomous."⁴⁴ Concluding that we are always more-than-human, and we are never entirely understandable, knowable.

Neimanis describes water as what gestates us, what sustains us, what surrounds us and connects us. Water is what gestates, sustains, surrounds, and connects life-forms, Worm and human. Gestation, expression and potential are embodying the was, is, and yet-to-come and all different expressions exist simultaneously, always. Here, the Worm is more of an embodiment of these states and expresses them as the human expresses them because water is the common liquidity.

These are the more apparent flows between bodies, but there is also embodiment on a much smaller scale. We find that a "molecular affectivity of water and its capacity to embody emotion"⁴⁵ is real. If the water I drink in the morning was once embodied in a tapeworm in a dinosaurs' gut, what experiences and emotions is this molecule carrying to my gut now? Water is limited on earth and circles through

43 Neimanis, p.34
 44 Neimanis, p.33
 45 Neimanis, p.52

all kinds of bodies. Experience is then always a more-than-human matter.

gender / Nature

Timothy Morton describes Nature as a fantasy that helps to construct the binary of gender and sexuality. Nature is capitalized to make it look less natural because it forms ideologies based on inside-outside structures. This distinction between inside – mind – and outside – Nature – goes back to Derrida's understanding of supplements, which describe additions to the normative. Inside, which is considered normal, natural, is hierarchically superior to outside, the weird and strange. Opposition pairs are valued through their interaction which other opposition pairs: masculine/feminine, strong/weak, rational/emotional, heterosexuality/homosexuality.⁴⁶

Nature as a construction is also underlining a binary model of genders. Nature performs man and woman as two oppositional roles, where *the biological masculine* can be "Man."⁴⁷ Grounding the social construct of male and female in Nature acts like it is no performance. Its intent is to look natural. "Masculinity performs no performance.[...] Masculine is Natural. Natural is Masculine."⁴⁸ Masculinity is defined, as the unmarked Nature is too, as "outdoorsy and extraverted, heterosexual, able-bodied – disability is nowhere to be seen; physical wholeness and coordination are valued over spontaneity."⁴⁹ This Ideal of an untouched, unmarked, is proliferated by organicism⁵⁰. "Organicism articulates desire as erasure, erasure-desire."⁵¹ It is an erasure of everything that looks messy, uncommon, weird, to maintain a clear image of a harmonic Nature and argue in binaries through which masculinity is natural and homosexuality is not. Nature as being untouched should erase all desire, but simultaneously this "virginity" becomes a desire. Untouched Nature, therefore, is founded on exclusion (erasure) and the exclusion of the exclusion. To propose Nature as a product, therefore, is always violent, an acting-upon. This violence is familiar. We are always acting and accordingly also being acted upon. As Judith Butler puts it, language is the first act of violence that we experience. We are not deciding if

46 Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, p.95
 47 Morton, p.279
 48 Morton, p.279
 49 Morton, p.279
 50 Organicism derives from organism, and follows the position that "the universe and its various parts – including human societies – ought to be considered alive and naturally ordered. [...] Vital to the position is the idea that organicistic elements are not dormant "things" per se but rather dynamic components in a comprehensive system that is, as a whole, ever-changing." (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organicism> [14.02.2021])
 51 Morton, p.279

we want to take part in the communication through language. From the start on, we are vulnerable to name-calling. We are name-called by having our gender defined and learn to perform it through that.⁵²

The constraints coming with that name-calling is putting us into a situation where it is expected to act within the requirements for being normal. While banning the notion of normal as natural, Worm is an example of a being of none, or many sexes and with the ability to change sex during mating. Worm is working outside of the logic of language, which can help us free ourselves from name-calling and take Worm as a concept to think outside the definitions put upon us. If Worm is something which we are too, it may help to eat that language acted upon us, but also shitting it out again.

liquid life / mesh

By pointing to Butler's separation of inside and outside to explain heterosexist gender performance, Morton describes that Nature is also based on similar boundaries and distinguish between inside and outside. When looking at evolution, we cannot oversee that life-forms create life-forms, that entities are always mutually determining, because they depend and derive from each other. So we can also conclude that all forms of life are authentic, but not autonomous because nothing exists independently. We can infer that the border between the inside, the human, and the outside, the environment, is a fantasy. There is only a diversity of differences, all *meshed* together in a *liquid life*.

"Life-forms are liquid."⁵³ Life-forms are comprised in a mesh of "inter-relations that blur and confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the non-living, between organism and environment."⁵⁴

The discussion about Living and Non-living will not be expanded because it would go beyond this thesis's scope. But I want to note that the separation between life and non-life cannot be confidently drawn, as it is being discussed in different fields, biological and philosophical. Two strong arguments which are contradicting themselves: 1. Life-forms are based on RNA or DNA ("Every life-form is familiar since we are related to it. We share its DNA, its cell structure, the subroutines in the software of its brain"⁵⁵). 2. Life-forms are every-

52 Judith Butler, When Gesture becomes Event, in: Magnolia Pauker (ed.), Julien Alliot (ed.), Anna Street (ed.) Inter Views in Performance Philosophy (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p.175-176

53 Morton, p.275

54 Morton, p.275

55 Morton, p.278

thing that embodies movement, even objects. The first argument is excluding stones, while the latter includes them. Object-Oriented-Ontology⁵⁶ makes a step further by disclaiming that everything, even living cells are objects to step outside of a human-centric view and act.

Describing the distinction between life and non-life as a spectrum wouldn't be appropriate either because it would underline a hierarchal structure, which brings up ethical questions about how to treat other-than-human life-forms.

strange stranger / familiarity

Morton substitutes the name animal with Derrida's term *arrivant*. That he translates to *strange stranger*, with which he poses himself against the before described hierarchal structures and a human-centered view on life-forms. "Strange strangers are uncanny, familiar, and strange simultaneously. Their familiarity is strange, their strangeness familiar."⁵⁷ As strange strangers are, we, too, are composites of different strange strangers. Every life-form is familiar because we are related. "We share its DNA, its cell structure, the subroutines in the software of its brain." This relation, *unicity*, makes us all able to participate in a collective community. This *biotic community* is not about harmony or equilibrium but existence. And "for the sake of the whole, parts might be left to die – the whole is bigger than their sum, after all."⁵⁸ These *intimacies* are describing symbiosis, but also what Donna Haraway refers to as *companion species*⁵⁹. It argues that all life-forms and the environments they are comprising and inhabiting are resisting inside and outside boundaries. This describes the moment where "the environment becomes intimate,"⁶⁰ it is not excluded from our bodies – and environment is no longer environment since it is not happening around us. Intimacy is denying the separation between inside/outside, which is a violent act of imposing ideologies.

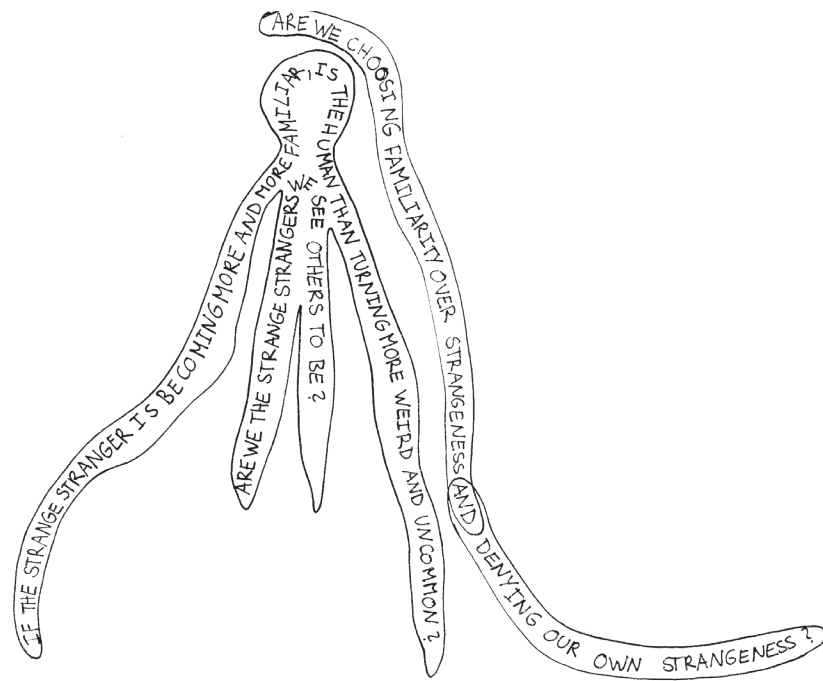
56 Object-Oriented-Ontology, short "OOO (and its intertwined companion Speculative Realism) is dedicated to exploring the reality, agency, and "private lives" of nonhuman (and nonliving) entities—all of which it considers "objects"—coupled with a rejection of anthropocentric ways of thinking about and acting in the world. [...] For OOO, your skin cells are objects, and so are you, and so is the population of the nation you live in, and so is the very idea of a nation. [...] OOO asserts a radical and imaginative realism that not only claims that things do exist beyond the purview of human conception, but that this existence [...] is almost entirely inaccessible to our understanding." (https://www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/the_big_idea/a-guide-to-object-oriented-ontology-art-53690 [12.02.2021])

57 Morton, p.277

58 Morton, p.277

59 Donna J. Haraway, Companion Species Manifesto, in: Haraway, Manifestly Haraway (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2016), p.91-198

60 Morton, p.274



Avatar

I am like a child starting to love the word “why,” while the parents are not taking me seriously because it costs them too much energy to answer every single question. Going back to the playground and experimenting with Worms, as I did as a child, is also a way to get rid of daily routines: from rigidity towards flux. It is a search for something one could call Avatar (based on Bruno Latour’s writing: *An Attempt at a “Compositionist Manifesto”*).

Latour gives us an Idea of an Avatar separated from the human, which has a Body. Latour’s Avatar (starting from James Cameron’s film *Avatar*) results from “modernized and modernizing humans that are not physically, psychologically, scientifically, and emotionally equipped to survive on their planet.”⁶¹ Humans need to rearrange and redefine themselves, from scratch on. That is the point where Avatar, in my interpretation, can help because Avatar embodies concepts of a collective, difference and repetition, re-construction, transcorporeality, and so on (because it is not about reinventing humans on an individual level, but it revolves around their virtuality and the liquidity of identities.)

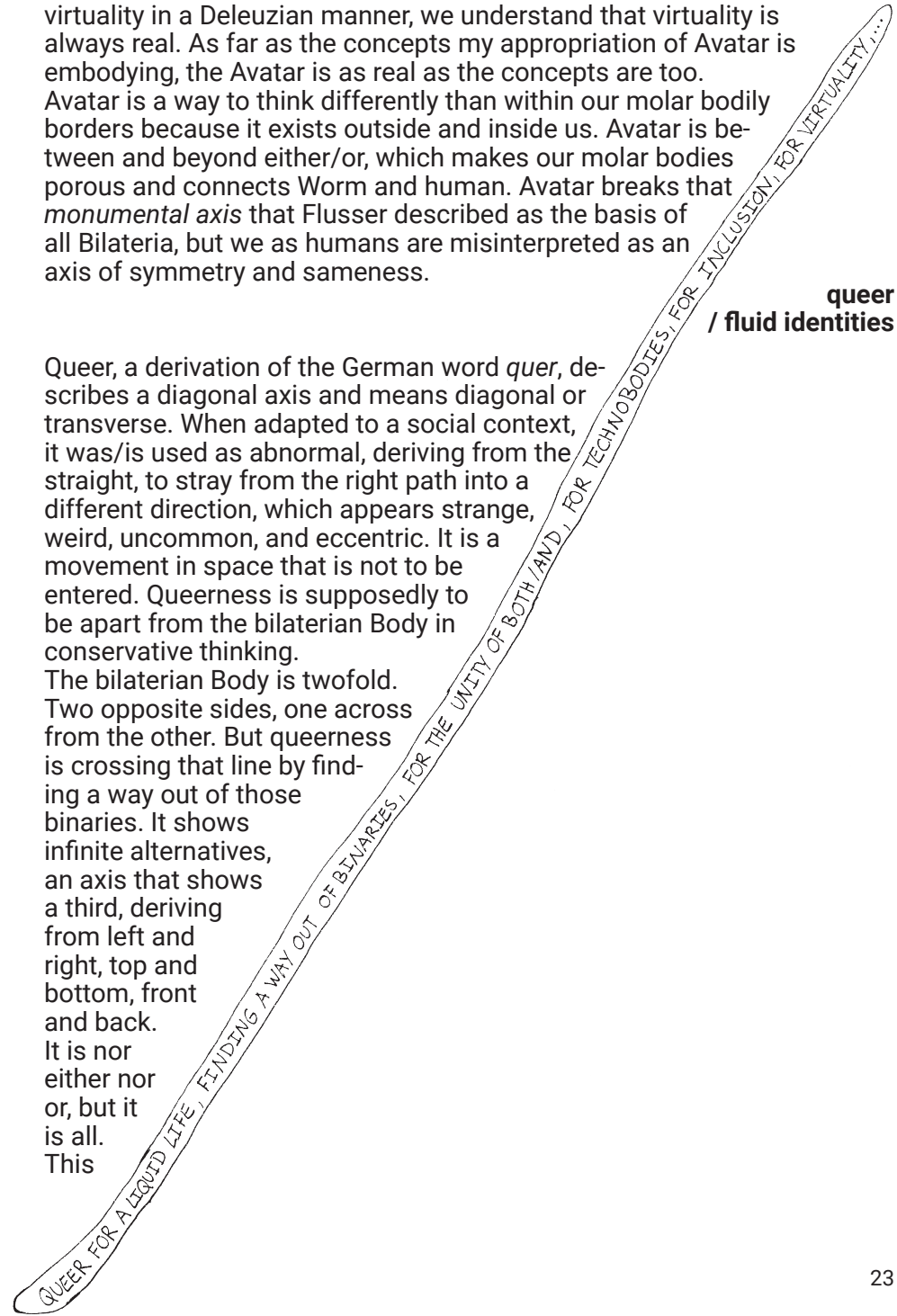
In common sense, Avatar is a substitute for an actual person in a virtual world. These virtual worlds are mostly non-physical ones, why we consider them being *unreal*. But when reconsidering the term

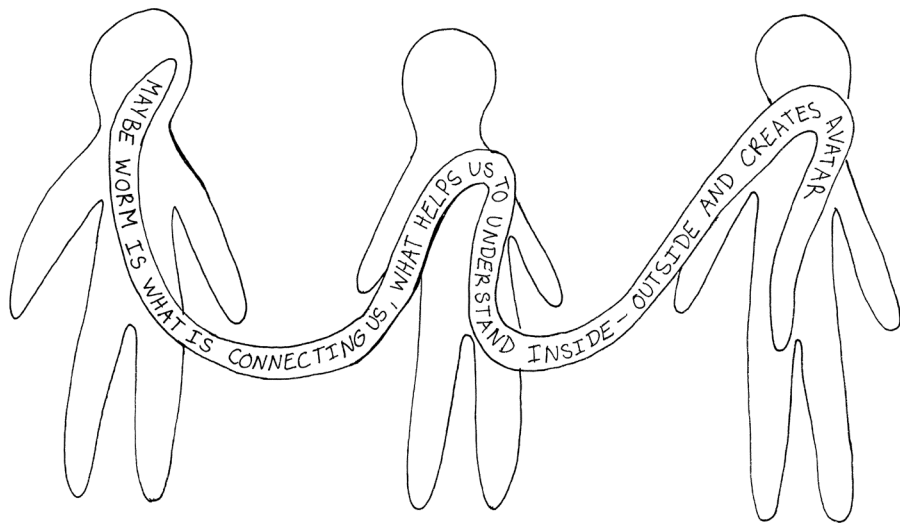
⁶¹ Bruno Latour, *An Attempt at a “Compositionist Manifesto”* (Mexico City: Gato Negro Ediciones, 2016), p.5

virtuality in a Deleuzian manner, we understand that virtuality is always real. As far as the concepts my appropriation of Avatar is embodying, the Avatar is as real as the concepts are too. Avatar is a way to think differently than within our molar bodily borders because it exists outside and inside us. Avatar is between and beyond either/or, which makes our molar bodies porous and connects Worm and human. Avatar breaks that *monumental axis* that Flusser described as the basis of all Bilateria, but we as humans are misinterpreted as an axis of symmetry and sameness.

queer / fluid identities

Queer, a derivation of the German word *quer*, describes a diagonal axis and means diagonal or transverse. When adapted to a social context, it was/is used as abnormal, deriving from the straight, to stray from the right path into a different direction, which appears strange, weird, uncommon, and eccentric. It is a movement in space that is not to be entered. Queerness is supposedly to be apart from the bilaterian Body in conservative thinking. The bilaterian Body is twofold. Two opposite sides, one across from the other. But queerness is crossing that line by finding a way out of those binaries. It shows infinite alternatives, an axis that shows a third, deriving from left and right, top and bottom, front and back. It is nor either nor or, but it is all. This





derivation means that there are more possibilities than the ridged binaries – virtuality. Queerness is inclusive instead of exclusive. It is about moving in different directions like the Worms are wandering around to find a way. Their ways are never straightforward, but they are always searching, stepping in one direction to then change the direction for another change. By contracting and releasing their muscles simultaneously, they are creating a third between these two states. One state cannot live without the other, and the existence of the *opposites* can only shape a third. A third means that movement is not about rejecting the structures, but by adapting them and using them differently, it is about navigation. Movement is a negotiation between states.

The Worms are moving by contracting and releasing their muscles at the same time. This tension and releasing of muscles show us the actuality of change. Movement is understood, not only in the sense of moving in space and time but as an act of changing and evolving (evolving not only as moving forward but also back). It is a question of navigation when we look at it within the structures of our society. The movement is a choreography with strict rules, terms, and conditions. There is constant tension because neither contraction nor releasing can exist without the other. We have Ideas, ideals, and values structuring our life in the human Body. The Idea of Avatar as a force embodied by living and dead matter helps to navigate differently, differently not as opposed to the cultural system, but as an alternative to the system's rigidity. To think in flux, make borders, boundaries fluid means to make them questionable and therefore changeable.

Morton points out that we can find queerness in its varieties within

the biological substance. By describing evolutionary processes and different gender and sexual diversities in cells, plants, and animals, he argues that when we want to stick to the notion of *normal*, we see that not only during evolution but also in the present, the world is non-heteronormative. This means that we are no longer able to assume heteronormativity⁶² as the natural.

Homosexuality and disability are not considered a problem for our DNA. What makes us look away from considered *abnormalities* such as disabilities, homosexuality, transgender identities, etc., is that it frightens us because we don't know it due to our erasure-culture towards a male and heteronormative elite. Not only are animals queer because they are having sex or are involved in sexual activities outside of their reproductive function, are reproducing without a sexual partner (clonally, asexually), or are changing sex during their life – but also humans are. Humans are not always and not entirely of one gender, speaking of attributes, hormones, sexual organs, but we try to “righten” these aspects. Anne Fausto-Sterling argues that – in humans – many sexes exist because every Body's composition of chromosomes, hormone response, and hormone uptake, the genitals, in the brain chemistry and structure, is not alone of one masculine or feminine.⁶³

intimacy

This is where to get intimate, get rid of Nature, look closer, and see the queerness and weirdness all around us and within us. In Morton's sense, intimacy means to reject an organicism in which we are only part of a whole as individuals. When getting intimate with Worms, we – as bodies – see that we are never autonomous individuals, but rather like Worm, many concepts are intersectionally embodied. Moving, eating, digesting, and shitting.

To get intimate, in my understanding, means to deny dichotomies while disorganizing. We need to get intimate with the Worm to see the strange stranger we are. Suppose we allow us to see that Bilateria, like humans and worms as Worms, do not need to rely on a binary system and understand through oppositions. Worms do not need to *go back to Nature*, in order to find their *true natural self*, because they are already part of it. When thinking through the concept of Worms: Worms are breaking up the boundaries of inside and outside by getting intimate with the bodies we are.

62 Heteronormativity describes the worldview where heterosexuality and the binary gender model (woman/man) is considered as the norm.

63 Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, p.116-118

neither / nor

As illustrated before, those boundaries between inside and outside are defining gender⁶⁴ and sexuality. As we now got rid of this separation, we need to look at different genders outside of this dichotomy: Non-binary is used in describing one's gender identity. The socially more accepted categories are man and woman, based on male and female biological sexes, argued through the differences in sexual organs. Non-binary intersects with transgender, but not every person identifying outside of the binary system, identifies as transgender. A transgender person identifies with a gender other than the sex they were identified with at birth. People whose gender identity aligns with their birth-assigned sex are cis-gendered persons. Non-binary does not describe any male and female genders, even though their representation can be considered as masculine or feminine. Non-binary characterizes genders in between and beyond the binaries.

Looking at the concept of both/and as the depreciation of either/or, non-binary

extension of that thought as neither/nor,

is an

but

which aligns with the concept of both/and. Non-binary, however, doesn't mean to be of two sexes, but rather to be not of two categories, man and woman. As identifying as non-binary can be intersecting with the identification

⁶⁴ Difference between gender and sex: with the term sex stands for the biological attribution of one sex which is being attributed at birth. The term gender indicates the social gender, which is independently from the biological sex. Both sex and gender are social constructions, based on traditional representations/reproductions of male and female.

as transgender, I think it makes sense to dive deeper into the prefix trans. Trans, as in the term *transcorporeal*, is a prefix used with three different meanings, across, changing, and between. Like the word queer, the prefix expresses a negotiation between two states, which never exist alone. In this sense, non-binary expresses no fixed category but opens up a multitude of possibilities and identities. Because it is not fixed, identities are always changing and evolving. Being non-binary, for me, is a reinterpretation of Deleuze's concept of difference and repetition and its included virtuality. Non-binarism is virtual because it is open to multitudes of possibilities.

Rejecting the binaries of gender is also described in gender fluidity, which characterizes a non-fixed identity, where gender is not aligning with any of both normalized sexes. It describes the possibility of change in either a person's gender identity or expression, or both. Gender fluidity incorporates the notion of not being fixed. This changeability resists a breakdown into a spectrum, which could be seen as hierarchal based on the two endpoints, male and female. Fluidity can be found in the human Body, as an inter-acting entity, as one moves away from established norms and sees the self in a state of constant change and exchange.

liquidity / fluidity

Both of the described concepts describe a state of unknowability, a moment, in which identity is not expressed through opposites. This unknowability is uncertain, it is frightening because we cannot define, place boundaries, and so we do not know who or what it is. Lists of different gender identifications and expressions, as well as the use of different pronouns show us that infinite possibilities exist, but are far from socially known, accepted or even desirable. It is hard to grasp and to imagine, as it is hard to imagine a liquid life. Both imaginations have something in common: open-mindedness; I use this term knowing that having an open mind is a metaphor based on the Body as a container with closed boundaries. But being open-minded, in my understanding, is a refusal of borders and boundaries, as other-than-human life-forms are refusing those constraints too.

It is a concept against exclusion, which has the problem of not having a foundation in Western society and is fragile within conservative thinking that supports a conventional norm based on tradition. It is seen apart from the considered natural and normal. Again, this separation is based on dichotomous thinking, natural/unnatural, normal/unnormal, familiar/strange, known/unknown, common/uncommon, which makes everything that isn't part of the known and accepted

norm Other⁶⁵. The Other is based on the dichotomy of either/or, but both cannot exist simultaneously. If they both exist and are real, one is always hierarchically superior to the Other.

Fluidity, liquidity, and queerness cannot be fixed and known, making it complicated to find connectedness. When comparing dichotomies to boxes, so every box is standing for one of the oppositional terms, such as male/female, heterosexual/homosexual, affiliation is more comfortable when a box can be closed. But if it remains open and the content is always in flux, which box will you choose, or is it necessary to have any boxes?

While writing this thesis, I feel affiliated with the texts and theories I read. I could create a temporary and porous box where I feel safe for the moment, knowing that the content – and so myself – can change. Like the Worm, I am moving through texts and thinkers, with a constant contraction and releasing, which allows me to navigate together with the collected embodiments.

technobodies / protheses

Like the before described *transcorporeality* and all various arguments that show us that we are always more-than-human, Paul B. Preciado refers back to McLuhan, Fuller, and Wiener in the 1950s described the technologies of communication as bodily extensions. However, Preciado continues that thought and looks at the individual Body as “an extension of global technologies of communication.” Here he refers to the term *technobodies*. *Technobody*, in Donna J. Haraway’s terms, is “a *technoliving* system, the result of an irreversible implosion of modern binaries (female/male, animal/human, nature/culture).”⁶⁶ If every contemporary Body is a *technobody*, then Deleuze’s virtuality becomes crucial on a more prominent level where binary categorizations are no longer valid.

Preciado writes about how we construct Body fictions or narratives through various prostheses, including Ritalin, Viagra, dildos, or contraceptives. These prostheses are what makes us always more-than-human.

⁶⁵ Other/Othering comes from the colonial time, where defining a person as a *subaltern native* and as Other than the *civilized man*, the white colonialist. The Other today describes every person not belonging to a cultural and socio-economic norm. Audre Lorde used the term to describe the result of differentiating between white women and women of color, which is a statement of an actual discrepancy of privileges and marginalization. LGBTQIA+ people today are Othered by not fitting into a heteronormative believe-system and therefore are often discriminated. (Meg-John Barker and Julia Scheele, p.47; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Other_\(philosophy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Other_(philosophy)) [14.02.2021])

⁶⁶ Paul B. Preciado, *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era* (New York: The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2013), p.44

Preciado calls the postindustrial global and mediatic regime in which we are currently living *pharmacopornographic*. Using this term, he describes the entwined influence and dominance of the pharmaceutical and pornographic industries. He indicates all the “inventions” from biochemicals, like hormones, pornography, internet, brainwashing, cyborgs, internet, plastics, toxics, drugs, cosmetics, and sexual surgeries, as technoscience. Technoscience, which is “transforming the concept of the psyche, libido, consciousness, femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality, intersexuality and transsexuality into tangible realities.”⁶⁷

What Preciado proposes with *masturbatory cooperation* is that all contemporary subjects are a result of biopolitical work. This is another argument that follows that bodies are never fully autonomous but part of a mesh of liquid life. If our subjects are fed by substances, cybernetic prostheses, and various types of *pharmacopornographic* desires, we will never be a hermetically sealed entity.

orgasmic force / Avatar

The Avatar in this text, extended from Bruno Latour, finds its similarities with Preciado’s *potentia gaudendi*, or *orgasmic force*. It describes “the (real or virtual) strength of a body’s (total) excitation. This strength is of indeterminate capacity; it has no gender; it is neither male nor female, neither human nor animal, neither animated nor inanimate. Its orientation emphasizes neither the feminine nor the masculine and creates no boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality or between being excited, being exciting or being-excited-with. It favors no organ over any other, so that penis possesses no more orgasmic force than the vagina, the eye, or the toe. Orgasmic force is the sum of the potential for excitation inherent in every material molecule. Orgasmic force is not seeking immediate resolution, and it aspires only to its own extension in space and time, toward everything and everyone, in every place and at every moment. It is a force of transformation for the world in pleasure – “in pleasure with.” *Potentia gaudendi* unites all material, somatic, and psychic forces and seeks all biochemical resources and all structures of the mind.”⁶⁸

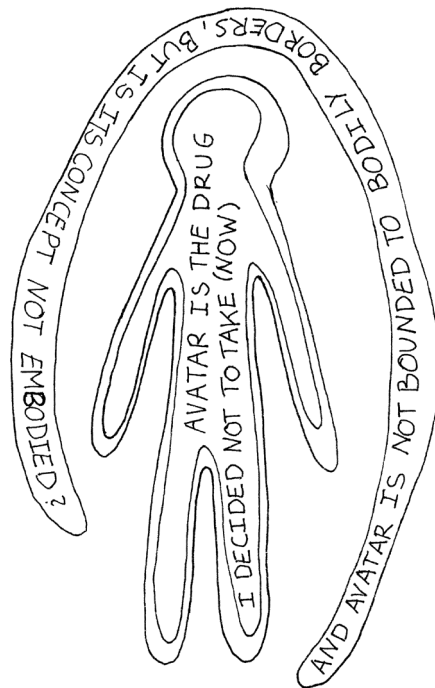
Avatar, like orgasmic force, is a force that helps complicating a simplistic binary because it doesn’t formulate itself in a Body nor expresses either femininity or masculinity, embodies the concept of both/and because it is expressing multitudes of possibilities and therefore cannot be described as something, because at the same

⁶⁷ Preciado, p.34

⁶⁸ Preciado, p.41 f.

time, it is also the other. Avatar is queer, trans, and pan⁶⁹ at the same time. It doesn't value. It embodies fluidity; it cannot be fixed. Avatar is embodied by everything material and immaterial. It expresses connections and relations and is, therefore, relative. It unites everything and everyone with-in the world and probably beyond. Avatar is queer (because) it is weird, uncommon, abnormal, and strange to the contemporary Western subject.

Avatar is a prosthesis that allows me to experience difference through the drugs in the form of concepts, Ideas, and embodiments. Avatar can speak for me without being me. While Worm is something we need to accept to be, Avatar is created out of merging liquid lives. Worm is the tool of navigation, while Avatar is the multitudes of outcomes through this navigation.



69 Pan is an abbreviation for pansexual, which describes sexual attractions detached from gender.

conclusion / output / excretion

For me, Worms are a tool to move through Ideas and thoughts coming with the engagement of fluid identities. To put the experienced sensualities into the Idea of Worms gave me a break before the next step of disorganization.

I embrace disorganization as a force – which isn't lazy, sloppy, flawed – which helps me to break up dichotomies in my own and others' thinking. The Worms, as active disorganizers, teach that organization and rightness come with exclusion while creating categories.

Worms accept being affected by positive forces of repetition and difference, making them the true disorganizers of rigid lives. Worms incorporate movement towards a fluidity of living – and fluidity of identities.

We are bound to these positive forces, which demonstrate queerness as the norm – because difference is the basis of every living and non-living thing. Queerness, therefore, is a positive force. Worms inform us to go beyond our bodily borders because those too are a result of binaries and generalizations – which again nourish exclusion.

The Worms' movement inspires us to break the boundaries between inside-outside and acknowledge that we too are always more-than-human, or never fully human – as hydrocommons, intracorporeal beings, and technobodies – because we are always somehow, somewhere, sometimes implicated – we are contextual.

When appreciating being more-than-human, we can see our bodily extensions and being technobodies that are always connected to the positive forces of repetition and difference.

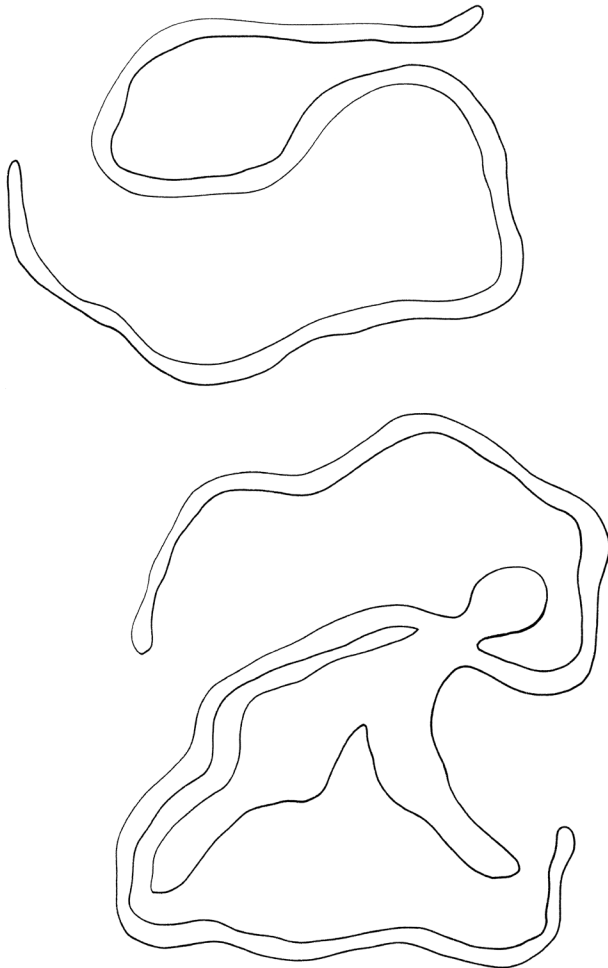
Avatar is what is difference in itself. It is the imagination and later actualization of our liquid lives. Through Worms, we navigate and understand, and through Avatar, we are liquid. This liquidity is possible because it lies in the virtual. While Worm shows us through its movement that nothing ends on one of two opposition points, we can follow through Avatar and navigate in a diagonal. Avatar is the queerness that enables us to step out of binaries.

I use Avatar as an incarnation of imaginative worlds. Because these images are Ideas, Deleuze gives hope while putting virtuality as a reality. That the virtual is as real as the actual, this virtuality allows me to say that Avatar is real – and so my imaginations.

Worms and their inherent liquidity are helping me try to take apart

norms and put those parts in a new form, far away from dichotomies into queerness.

Worms as navigators guided me towards Avatar as prothesis. This prothesis is allowing me to actualize my gender identity and expression to be fluid, grounded on liquid lives.



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MY MEMORY ABOUT VISCIOUS RUNNING LIES TOWARDS

DRUNKEN FROM LICKING POROUS SKINS

A THROBBING GROUND UNDER MY LIQUID FEET

BUT I REMEMBER ARE FOGGY

A SMELLY FUTURE