

Clemente Ciarrocca

Politics in the Closet

composed on occasion of Clemente Ciarrocca's & James Krone's

If Tomorrow's Sun Finds You Within My Boundaries

on view at Obelus 2, Berlin, 26 April — 17 May 2025

This version of 'Politics in the Closet' was transferred from text to sound through a neural text-to-speech model and played back from inside a locked closet placed in the exhibition space. The dialogue was intervalled by a second sound piece selected by James Krone and entitled 'Enchanted Mirror'. James Krone's intention is for Enchanted Mirror to remain without transcript.

The closet remained locked for the duration of the exhibition.

Five people lock themselves up in a closet to get sober, forget the world (too big, too much anyway) and experience total darkness.

*[The landscape of their conversation varies: whatever the voice can go over.
Vibe: "Q: Are you Christifying yourself? A: Everything is traceable to everything else" Lucas Samaras' Self Interview
Free Press 125 Newbury [Cute Show [Good Gallery [Would Be Cool [To Show Here [Imagine [My People [Proudly Flying Over [New York [Stinks Inside Out [Everyone Lies]]]]]]]]]]]*

(voiceover) **A:** So, I have been thinking of – Porn

(lip sync) *To sell (Pernanai)*

(voiceover) 'Porneh' meant prostitute, and originally 'bought, purchased'. Acquired and acquired I have A certain knowledge

(lip sync) *Sell, to...
Consume*

(lip sync) **D:** *FOR SALE...
The act for sale*

(voiceover) **A:** Consumption as life ripped from a personal experience of love and loss, apparently. And vice-versa. Easy? So with porn we have the ultimate cinema-be still in the dark of your velvet seat watch the world go by as slowly or fast as it wants (you) to. Keep watching safely. You might rehearse, have something to rehearse, later on, after noon, every dusk but it's already evening now so we must be brave. Sirens drooling on like roses unfurling too early, cold: the one real threat. Too fast so just keep-watching. So yeah... I have been thinking of this one act packed up, for sale, its acquisition, the having of it, this act and the gaze as channel. And what if now the gaze turns
Onto you
That I see
Onto you
That I sea
Straripano queste relazioni
Relationships overflowing

(voiceover) **G:** I have been thinking of the cage and Pound in a cage in Pisa, lit up day and night, and him setting his world up to a sort of cool soft flame no? Warping and rapping, luring, shedding and lighting, never charring. Yeh, Pound in a cage in Pisa. His mentions of the eyes – he says –

(lip sync) *drip drip, drip*

(voiceover) "Yo creo que los reyes desaparecen", I think Kings will disappear – that there came new subtlety of eyes into his tent, that – at carnaval – no pair showed any anger, and he saw but the eyes and stance between the eyes, and the green of the mountain pool that shone from the unmasked eyes, in half-mask's space, and your two eyes would slay me suddenly I may the beauty of hem nat sustain

(voiceover) **D:** I have been thinking of him

(lip sync) *Mussolini*

(voiceover) hung by his feet in Piazzale Loreto. Finally, having of the people. A body usually (previously-habit) so guarded, withheld, now, suddenly, all happens so suddenly, all rushing down an ancient architecture by then ready, smooth and saturated with premonition, filled by the infinite tension, trepidation and expectancy of the flame—all of a sudden there is the body, there for acquisition and consumption...

[a short pause]

(voiceover) **A:** But mostly I have been thinking of you, of course, and how I don't need you any longer. I saw you, I finally saw you and sublimated the need I had for you, so that now all I have to do is be away from you, don't ignite the fire, don't bring the fire back. I must not be reminded. It is so that my need for you sublimates into this beloved need for deployment. And now

(voiceover) **L:** Here's my kinky role-play—

[a short pause, everybody attentively awaits silence]

(voiceover) **L:** I am an honest person. I am not ashamed of myself, the things I did, the things I failed to do, the things I create, the things I am not able to make. This makes my life very easy to live. I do not have to lie or withhold truth from the people I love and who love me. Wherever I am resting, wherever I am laying, I just get up and live my truth. I know how to rest. I stopped drinking coffee a long time ago and I don't miss it. I am a nice person who does decent things without ever feeling the need to compromise. I mind my business. I find happiness in small things. It is very easy for me. I love the sunrise and the sunset. I love to go on weekend vacations with my friends. These things make me happy. When the sun sets at night, a deep feeling of anxiety does not wash over me. I recognize I am very lucky and happy. When people say nice things about me, I hear them, accept them, and let them soak into me. I have everything I need in this life. I don't need a job because I am so happy. I see what I desire as something that is always, already in my hold. I am attracted to water. I am a hydrosexual. When water flows on me hard, I cum bursting into the world. It feels so good. I know to recognize moist

in everything around me, physically as well as mentally.
That is why I am so horny all the time. I have a house in
the city crossed by a river and I swim in the river where
the current blows stronger and I let myself be carried
downstream while I cum over and over and that is my purpose
which I recurrently fulfill and never tire of.

[a short pause]

(voiceover) **J:** No one needs no one wants you to be kinky here

(lip sync) **L:** *[fish face in the dark]*

(voiceover) **D:** *[nervously giggles around]*

(voiceover) **G:** Ideal New World
The New Ideal
A morphology carved by a water stream
Exists in my mind
Its intelligence curling up like a wave in me
See how it flows
The place where our dark, New Village is located is the
site of a sand castle from the past. Is always a site of a
sand castle from the past. To its rear is a red screen. It
is a three-tiered area, called upper castle, middle castle,
and lower castle by locals. The second level extends down
to the stream, at the screen's foot. The flow of the stream
wraps around three sides of my mind in the shape of a
horseshoe, making it appear as a peninsula and isolating it
from the outside world because the joint is constantly
forgotten. When entering this New Village, you need to
cross the stream. In the rainy season, the season of tears,
the stream is wide. The depth of the stream during this
time is unknown and travel across it is extremely
inconvenient. Even in today's satellite images, the
surrounding area is still green, and human traces are rare—
an area even more remote over a century ago.

(voiceover) **L:** Dear bliss,

(voiceover) **J:** How can the porn-
How does the porn-

(voiceover) **D:** How did porn happen? It's weird
As a category

(lip sync) **L:** *Love*
Taking place
Invading streets

(lip sync) **D:** *Fantasies*

(voiceover) **A:** Well por-no-gra-phy is a loose genre still kind of lacking a
clear definition. Always has been. Today, 'pornographic'
primarily denotes mass-produced, commercially distributed
explicit material intended primarily for sexual arousal.

But this intention is far from easy to prove. Turn ons are highly specific and personal. Plus what would *not* turn us on... *[everybody giggles nervously]* Literally anything can arouse because arousal isn't the effect of a one thing, of something finite, but an outcome of its assembling, its configuration, of its survival and surfacing, of its framing, I could go on. What arouses is the falling into place of things, shape; all one needs is a cookie cutter or a blade.

Does this mean, then, that all explicit representation, anything wide open and stretched, en plain air, anatomic, faithful to the flesh should be considered pornographic? I don't think so. So where does one draw the line?

According to Klossowski, we trade in living currency: arousal not only underlines but justifies and capacitates all transactions. In this sense, over the last half a century, half a century of image prominence and prepotency, of the body obsessively, financially imaged, half a century of just getting us closer to the edge, an edge where there can be no grace but urgency. On this edge, 'pornography' is revealed for what it really is: the biggest jewel of the Crown of Sale and Purchase; the principle of transaction in its bareness, the principle of inflow down to its core. But what is purchase? What relationship to the holiness and opacity of the real, of matter, is purchase? Who has the right to sell anything? What is acquisition, and what is consumption, and why is it appealing? Why does it work?

[everybody reflects silently on the above]

(voiceover) **D:** "Yet but none the less you shall have what you ask.
And take this warning: if tomorrow's holy sun
Finds you or your offspring inside my boundaries, you die.
That is my solemn word. Now stay here, if you must,
This one day. You can hardly in one day accomplish
What I fear you for."

(voiceover) **L:** "Do you think that I would have ever fawned on this man
Unless I had some end to gain or profit in it?
I would not even have spoken a word to him, or grazed him
with my finger.
But he has got to such a pitch of foolishness
That, though he could have neutralized all my plans
By exiling me, he has given me this one day. One day
To remain here, and in this day I will make dead bodies
Of three of my enemies. I have many ways
Of death which might be suited to them,
And do not know, friends, which one to take in hand;
Whether to set fire underneath their bridal mansion,
Or sharpen a blade and thrust it to the heart,
Stealing into the palace where the bed is made.
There is just one obstacle to this: if I am caught
Breaking into the house and scheming against it,
I shall die, and give my enemies cause for laughter and
joy.

It is best to go by the straight road, the one in which
I am most skilled: make away with them by poison.
So be it then."

(voiceover) **G:** I think I am beginning to forget... But I now can see a little
light coming in from that hole

(voiceover) **J:** Which light?

(voiceover) **L:** This hole

[L places presses a finger against the closet's key hole]

[a short pause. A does some throat-clearing]

(voiceover) **A:** The word "pornographos" in ancient Greek specifically meant
"one who writes about prostitutes" or "one who depicts
prostitutes." It was used to refer to writers or artists
who created works about prostitution or depicted
prostitutes in their work. 'Pornographic' documentation of
courtesans wasn't primarily erotic in nature but rather
historical and cultural. Female courtesans, the *hetairai*,
occupied a unique position in ancient Greek society—they
were among the few women who could participate in symposia
(male drinking parties) and intellectual discourse. Many
were educated, cultured, and wielded significant social
influence. (But were they also 'sex workers'? If so, were
they so any more or more frequently than men or young
boys?)

At any rate, the term wasn't used to categorize material
intended primarily for sexual arousal, nor sexually
explicit material in general. This was because, back then,
explicit imagery always had a tighter, narrower function
than personal, pre-confessional arousal; tighter, narrower
than the general and abstract function of purchase and
transaction. Consumption was just not a relational category
when it came to anything cultural – or anything at all, I
guess. And the line distinguishing nourishment from
consumption may run an unexpected course, may overlay and
be fragmented but, I am sorry, it is always sharp. The
question isn't even when have we become so abstract
(because this answer is clear—we became abstract as soon as
somebody needed us to, and gave us an abstract game to
play, and us, just kids, picked up the toys), but *why* did
we. Where is the idea from?

[a short pause – everybody repositions in the closet]

(voiceover) **A:** When Sade's *Justine* was published in 1791, it was described
as a "roman philosophique" (a philosophical novel) despite
its explicit content. The French police records from
investigations into his publications used terms like
"ouvrages obscènes" (obscene works) rather than
"pornographie." The modern application of 'pornography' to
sexually explicit material developed a little later,
primarily in the 19th century, when the term was repurposed

to classify ancient erotic artifacts being discovered and cataloged from the excavations of Pompeii and Herculaneum. When archaeologists uncovered sexually explicit frescoes, statues, and various objects both seemingly functional and devotional, late-Georgian and early-Victorian-era authorities were scandalized and fascinated at once. In 1819, the King of Naples Ferdinand I established the "Gabinetto degli Oggetti Osceni" (Cabinet of Obscene Objects) within the Naples Museum—later known as the "Secret Museum"—to house these items.

Only "persons of mature age and respected morals" — i.e. men of the upper class — could view these collections. Women, children, and the lower classes were actively excluded. Do you start seeing the close tie between pornography and censorship? When soon-to-be King Francis I of Naples visited with his wife and daughter in 1819, the women were escorted away while he viewed the explicit artifacts alone. Visitors generally needed special permission and sometimes had to pay additional fees. Modern pornography thus began as an act of censorship aimed toward control. Objects and images which could not be seen, objects and images full of potential to corrupt morals, corrupting of those who needed to be controlled, assets not to be spoiled, even less so lost to their own power. Over the 150 years that followed the opening of the Secret Museum, censorship gave way to consumption as a control technique. Today, the image, the object, the consumed looks back at you, holding its gaze, and staring, it has begun to consume you.

[a short pause — everybody undresses, sound of clothes and skin rubbing]

[A opens Lynda Williams's Hard Core and begins to read from it. Everybody's astonished at A's ability to read in the dark]

(voiceover) **A:** "Toward the beginning of Denis Diderot's 1748 fable *Les Bijoux Indiscrets* (The Indiscreet Jewels), the genie Cucufa seeks to gratify the desire of the sultan Mangogul to have the women of his court speak frankly of their sexual adventures. The genie pulls out of his pocket a silver ring:

"You see this ring," he said to the sultan. "Put it on your finger, my son.

When you turn the setting of the stone, all the women on whom you turn it will recount their affairs in a loud and clear voice. But do not believe for a moment that it is through their mouths that they speak."

"Through what else then, by God, will they speak?" exclaimed the sultan.

"Through that part which is the most frank in them, and the most knowledgeable about the things you wish to know," said Cucufa; "through their jewels."

[a short pause – people rub gently against each other, A keeps reading from the
Lynda Williams]

(voiceover) **A:** "In marked contrast to the elaborate sexual innuendo of Diderot's fable and its wordplay with jewels and genitals, we might consider an American hard-core pornographic feature film, *The Opening of Misty Beethoven* (by "Henry Paris," a.k.a. Radley Metzger, 1975). Near its beginning we meet the female protagonist, Misty Beethoven, in a sleazy Place Pigalle porno movie theater where she gives "hand jobs" to male customers while they watch the film. The film that screens as Misty manipulates a customer to ejaculation is appropriately titled *Le sexe qui parle* (The Speaking Sex). Redundantly, it too shows an ejaculating penis. Like Diderot's elegant fantasy of the silver ring with the power to make "sex" speak, the fantasy of this film—as well as of its film-within-a-film—is also of a speaking sex. But whereas Diderot's naughty literary conceit figures its "sex" as a valuable but unmentionable part of the female anatomy that is compelled to speak the truth of its owner's sexual indiscretions, the pornographic film's sex originates from the male genitals and employs no such euphemism. The "sex" that "speaks" here is typical of the greater indiscretion of the filmic "hard core," of its seemingly more direct graphic display. (And this is what I mean when I use the word 'explicit'.) It would be futile to argue that Diderot's fable and Metzger's film are both pornography—at least before attempting some definition of this most difficult and politically charged term. Yet both works partake of what the historian Michel Foucault, in his *History of Sexuality*, has called the modern compulsion to speak incessantly about sex. And it is this speaking sex that is probably the most important single thing to be observed about the modern phenomenon of hard core. As Foucault puts it, invoking Diderot's fable as an emblem,

for many years, we have all been living in the realm of Prince Mangogul: under the spell of an immense curiosity about sex, bent on questioning it, with an insatiable desire to hear it speak and be spoken about, quick to invent all sorts of magical rings that might force it to abandon its discretion.
(Foucault 1978, p 77)

(Here what is heard 'speak' is really not the voice but The Word, the voice subsumed into the word; what speaks was already logos, or logic) In this quest for the magic that will make sex speak, the most recent magic has surely been that of motion pictures (and later of video). With this new "magic ring," the modern equivalents of Prince Mangogul seem to be able to satisfy their curiosity about sex directly, to locate themselves as invisible voyeurs positioned to view the sex "act" itself rather than

only hearing about it, as Diderot's sultan must, in after-the-fact narration. With this magic it has become possible to satisfy—but also, Foucault reminds us, to further incite — the desire not only for pleasure but also for the "knowledge of pleasure," the pleasure of knowing pleasure.

*[for a long, indefinite time there is silence. Pondering perhaps, or forgetting.
Then the sounds of rubbing skin resume]*

(voiceover) **D:** *[whispering]* Your music makes me feel lonely

(voiceover) **A:** *[whispering]* again

(voiceover) **L:** *[whispering]* Out on the plain

(voiceover) **D:** *[whispering]* I have fallen in love with someone that doesn't exist

(voiceover) **A:** *[whispering]* again

(voiceover) **J:** *[whispering]* You're never as powerful as when you know you're powerless

(voiceover) **L:** *[whispering]* horses massage the earth with their hooves
We can't see landing between these blades
Of grass

(voiceover) **J:** *[whispering]* Oar on

(voiceover) **D:** *[whispering]* I didn't want to

(voiceover) **L:** *[whispering]* Out on the field

(voiceover) **D:** *[whispering]* I had no intention of breaking that beauty
To myself

(voiceover) **J:** *[whispering]* A drawn line blurs

(voiceover) **A:** *[whispering]* again

(voiceover) **L:** *[whispering]* where a rose feels
Impossible

(voiceover) **J:** *[whispering]* When solitude turns to loneliness

(voiceover) **A, L, G, D, J:** *[whispering]* and for years the day is nightless

[a short pause, sounds of rubbing skin continue]

(voiceover) **A, L, G, D, J:** *[whispering]* and for years days seem to have no nights

[a short pause, sounds of rubbing skin continue]

(voiceover) **A, L, G, D, J:** *[whispering]* and again the sky's the colour of bruises

[a short pause, sounds of rubbing skin continue]

(voiceover) **A, L, G, D, J:** *[whispering]* and again is one of those summer days when the air is so hot so thick so still, the sun overhead so white, that one doesn't so much see one's surroundings as hear and smell and taste them: the lawn-mowing buzz of the bees and locusts, the pungent scent of wild moist jasmine moist spreading from the shade of a bush, the oddly mineral flavor this heat leaves on the tongue, as if the mouth had just sucked on stones

What remains hidden in the land? What remains hidden by the land. What remains hidden, unseen and unknown, is all you ever wanted all you may ever, ever want, ever want, ever want, ever want, ever want, ever want, ever want, ever want,

[Everybody focuses on repeating "ever want," gradually softer but still saying it, gradually fading to the smallest degree of sound in everyone's mouths without ever stopping, decreasing decreasing and still present, eventually oscillating around the minimal. Sounds of rubbing. Lowering down and pressing against each other in the far corner of the closet, L and A begin a separate conversation – whispering to each other]

(voiceover) **A:** Why are you so monstrous to me

(voiceover) **L:** *[embarrassed]* ugh... Well within the famous Benjaminian point that exception is actually the rule, which excuse me but I think has never been as relevant as today, so let's REMEMBER this one, let us stop being surprised – in this context to think a tyrant is a monster is to miss the point entirely; we must resist the fantasy and hope that horror comes in singular form, that devastation and genocide are singularities provided by exceptional (*actually* exceptional) conditions – the reason is always structural, netted and reiterated, never singular. To think that a tyrant is a monster is also to think a tyrant has no roots and no logic in history, that a tyrant is a deviation, an unsupported deviation, a tragic intercourse, an accident of course, an unfortunate event, and let's hope it won't happen again etc etc ...

(voiceover) **A:** But you're not a tyrant to me... You're a saint. You burn me. You burn me: I cannot stay, I cannot remain, I cannot be still, I am and will never be the same. And I have learnt that to all the people around me, and even, or maybe especially to myself, this is monstrous.

But then I guess we are all monsters, in the sense that we all manifest beyond normalcy, that we are all traceable as deviations from an axis. There seems to be something productive in the oscillation generated around this axis, by the need to pull back to center, to this normalcy. But

what if normalcy could just move away, yes move away from a notion of majority, which feels so lame, or the already seen, so that the axis is not expected to be tomorrow in the same place it was yesterday – why should normalcy be so static? Why should the heart be still, not pulsate? Then what makes normalcy, the axis, is a certain type of fire – it could be what we want it to be. To be in the fire, to learn to stay with the fire, is a sort of dance that is much closer to the oscillation you were just mentioning..

(voiceover) **L:** I think maybe you were mentioning that... But yeah... And it follows in this sense why we have this figure of the monster-slayer, right? It is somewhat the beginning of politics, of a logic by which the monster-slayer becomes a model – it has to do with taking life, and sovereignty. Which is an interesting concept for sure. Coming from an organism that is already, I mean, surviving or programmed to be functional, right? So we might put forward this thought: when returned to its true place beyond punishment and sacrifice, the monster shows us the first form of life taken into sovereign power, and keeps alive the memory of the first distinction becoming the first exclusion, which is precisely the birth of the realm of politics. The sphere of sovereign power was formed through a twofold exclusion, as an outgrowth of the worldly in the holy and the holy in the worldly, creating a space where sacrifice and murder become indistinguishable. In the sovereign's domain, one may kill without it being murder and without it being sacrifice, and the monstrosity of life—its only holiness, the oscillation referred to the center, understood by its axis, the grace of body and veil—life that may be ended but not given or offered up—that is life caught in this domain. Some call it Monstrous life, some call it Fugitive life, some call it Black life, which I guess in here we should since it's so dark *[giggles but stops abruptly realizing it might be inappropriate]*. Anyway what is seized in the sovereign's power is a human victim, always a human victim and the most human of victims, who may be killed but not sacrificed, who is ever needed, who cannot be officially disposed of because its disposal is precisely the daily matter of politics, its constant midnight that never lets in the new day. If we name the life caught in sovereign power 'bare life' or 'sacred life,' then we may also answer Benjamin's question about 'the origin of the belief in life's sacredness.' The life caught in the sovereign's grasp is life that was sacred from the beginning—that is, life that may and must be ended but not sacrificed—and in this way, the making of bare life is the sovereign's first act. The sacredness of life, which is claimed today as an absolute right against sovereign power, in truth originally means both life's submission to a power over death and life's complete vulnerability in being abandoned. But after all, do you feel sovereign? I guess this is also a point. Do you feel in charge? – Can you... There is and will always be something somewhat creepy and absurd in just

grabbing objects, in the idea that objects are just there
for us, available for us to grasp, look at, and use at will
– Can we switch?

[they switch]

[slowly they sync back with the others on their gradual “ever want” descent]

*[everybody eventually acknowledges that power swings are essential for the
World to come to feeling]*

END

G's recounting of Pound's eye-mentions on page 1 are quotes from
Canto LXXXI from *The Cantos*.

L's kinky role play on page 2 partly borrows from *I Love Shopping* by Lauren Cook,
integrating it with adjacent fantasies.

G's imagination of an ideal new world on page 3 borrows in structure and form from the
first paragraph of *The Ideal World* by Ou Ning, projecting the morphology of Kijo onto
the exhibition space. G's line in the same paragraph 'Its intelligence curling up like a
wave in me' is inspired by a line from *After I Died I
Tried To Become The Night* by Ariana Reines.

J's line on page 6 on the power of powerlessness is a line from *Crave* by Sarah Kane.

The group whisper on page 7 describing a hot summer day partly borrows from a
passage in the late pages of *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara.

L's final monologue paraphrases Agamben's theory of the state of exception and
sacredness, in particular how it is expressed at pages 53-54 of *Homo Sacer*.

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A is the author, the ass, the acolyte, the amber drop, the asset, the assumption...

L is Love, Logan, Lena, Lauren and many others

J is another version of Jude St Francis

G is a mysterious, hidden G-Spot

D is lost, anonymous, and unknown