Athena Athanasiou, Agonistic Mourning (»Women in Black«) v03

<u>Lit.</u>: Athena ATHANASIOU, *Agonistic Mourning. Political Dissidence and the Women in Black* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2017). **[= AM]**

Judith BUTLER, Gewalt, Trauer, Politik (2001/2004), in: DIES, *Gefährdetes Leben. Politische Essays* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2005 [engl. 2004]), 36-68. **[= GL]**

<u>weiterführende Literatur</u>:

Judith BUTLER / Athena ATHANASIOU, *Die Macht der Enteigneten. Das Performative im Politischen* (Zürich-Berlin: diaphanes, 2014 [engl. 2013]).

<u>Hinweis</u>: Für alle Zitate gilt: *Kursivierungen* stammen (wenn nicht anders angegeben) aus dem Original, Unterstreichungen und Fettschreibung wurden von mir hinzugefügt.

<u>Anmerkung PZ:</u>   Die Thematik und Struktur des »Trauerns« in der performativen Politischen Arbeit der Bewegung der »Women in Black« wird an dieser Stelle, d. h. am Beginn der Vorlesung, als Hinführung zur grundlegenden politischen Struktur der »einschließenden Ausschließung« (Agamben) verstanden, die die Thematiken der »Leerstelle«, des »Ereignisses« und der »Alterität« verknüpft. Diese Themen und »performativen Strukturen« bilden zugleich den roten Faden der Vorlesung in diesem Semester.

1   *[Judith Butler: Umschreibung von Trauer(arbeit):]* „Vielmehr trauert man vielleicht dann, wenn man akzeptiert, daß man durch den Verlust, dem man sich stellt, verändert werden wird, und zwar möglicherweise für immer. Vielleicht hat Trauern damit zu tun, daß man sich bereit erklärt, eine Veränderung durchzumachen (vielleicht sollte man besser sagen, bereit erklärt, sich einer Veränderung *zu unterziehen),* deren ganzes Ergebnis man nicht im voraus wissen kann." (Butler, GL 38)

Athanasiou, Agonistic Mourning – Introduction (p. 1-44)

[Zur Umschreibung von griech. »agon«: siehe unten #12]

2a   [The transnational feminist and antimilitarist movement »<u>Women in Black</u>« *(<u>Žene u Crnom</u>, ŽuC)* is] „mourning those [who are] socially instituted as impossible to mourn within the biopolitical archives of territory, nation, and war." (AM 1)

2b   „These activists set up networks of commemorative solidarity and camaraderie with the »other« community, or the others of a fractured community, who have been officially turned into »enemies« and violently disavowed as such." (AM 1)

2c   „*[ŽuC]* staged vigils for unqualifiable losses, creating critical spaces for responsiveness *[Empfänglichkeit, »Fähigkeit zu antworten«]* and dissent – or responsiveness *as* dissent. They gave and continue to give space for what leaks out of the cracks of the authoritative engine of national memory and might be transformed into a means of dissent and protest." (AM 3)

2d   „Their mode of protest is about accounting for loss – loss of others, real and imagined communities, sense of belonging in the world – that haunts the common intelligibility of memorable life." (AM 3)

2e   „Their protest is about responding to those irrecoverable and irreconcilable losses through reckoning the unequal conditions of grievability and the impossibility of taking the lost or traumatised other within oneself." (AM 3)

3a   *[<u>Was meint hier »Unmöglichkeit«?</u>]* „How to mourn impossible, then? And what to do politically through the possibility of impossible mourning? For Jacques Derrida, it is only through the impossibility to mourn that one can possibly engage with the dead other. But it is precisely through this aporia that he unsettles the logic of possible/impossible. […] [T]he dead remain discretely incorporated, entombed within the spirits of the living and, at the same time, they remain encrypted, irrecoverable, and untranslatable, as the »otherness of the other (person)« resists the available means and processes of representation in mourning. And so it is a matter of responsibility toward the other to respect their resistance (cf. Derrida, Memoires – für Paul de Man)." (AM 3)

3b „So, the work of mourning […] | emerges as a question of **how** »to leave the dead alone« without »abandoning« them: »a double injunction, then, contradictory and unforgiving« (Derrida, Work of Mourning, 225).“ (AM 3f)

4a *[Die Frage nach der Performativität, nach dem »Wie«:]* „**How** might mourning turn from a language of proper gendered and national identification into a disruptive performative catachresis expelled by and actively opposed to the very intelligibility of the political and its gendered, economic, ethnic, and racial configurations?” (AM 1)

[Katachrese: »semantisch unstimmiges Bild/Metapher«, das eine sprachliche Lücke füllt / etwas Neues zum Ausdruck bringt]

4b „**How** does the radical mourning for the lost other engage in the endless complexities and complicities | that are inherent in the unequal relations of address-abilitiy and response-ability?“ (AM 1f)

4c [This book traces] „**how** the practices of <u>trans-border commemoration</u> <u>refigure and reactivate the political</u> in the border regimes of military rule and ethno-national violence, as well as in post-war moral economies of »transitional«, transnational reconciliation. **How** might we account for the <u>political performativity through which mourning turns</u> from a universal(ising) trope of humanist metaphysics <u>into a *dispositif* of a post-identity, post-humanist collective agonism</u> within embattled contexts of transnational distribution of life and death? **How** could we capture the <u>performative power implicit in processes of turning the impossibility of mourning into an incalculable and unquantifiable political potentiality</u> that <u>appropriates and, at once, deconstitutes</u> its interpellating terms and contests state-nationalist authoritarianism? And, finally, what is the challenge that the critical methodology of this feminist political movement in post-Yugoslavia presents for the available theoretical and political vocabularies of agonism?“ (AM 2)

5 *[Zielvorstellung:]* „to consider mourning-work as both foreclosed and open to political potential. […] to illustrate how the political subjectivity of *ŽuC* turn grief […] into a performative resource for a politics of dissent.“ (AM 4)

ŽuC-Praktiken und Selbstverständnis

6a „The political subjects *[of ŽuC]* […] use mourning as a means to acknowledge inconvenient plurality as opposed to absolutist homogeneity; to publicly acknowledge the disposable« victims of the »other side«, those marked as abject and dehumanised ethnic enemy, instead of solely those of »their own side«.“ (AM 10)

6b *[Women in Black-Statement, 10. Juni 1992:]* „Women wear black in our countries to show their grief for death of the loved ones. We wear black for the death of all the victims of the war. We wear black because people have been thrown out of their homes, because women have been raped, because cities and villages have been burnt and destroyed.“ (AM 10)

6c *[Zitat von Adriana Zaharijević, Aktivistin, Prof. f. Phil., Belgrad:]* „*ŽuC* mourning is subversive. The public standing in the centre of the city offers an alternative meaning to the black colour and, in fact, the act of mourning itself. Yes, women wear black when they mourn. But *ŽuC* activists mourn otherwise. Conventional mourning is done with crying, it has to be heard. In the way of *ŽuC,* however, activists (women but also men, as in *ŽuC* there have always been men too) are standing without weeping, just standing in silence. They are standing not shouting destructive slogans or saying »give us back our sons«. Perhaps this happens because many *ŽuC* women are not mothers themselves or, if they are, they do not put particular emphasis on motherhood. Quite the contrary, we have to critically rethink motherhood and so desist from thinking motherhood in nationalistic terms.“ (AM 11)

7a *[(Gegen-)Erinnerung als politischer Akt:]* „These activist embody a radical stance toward memory that cannot be reduced to literal or figurative practices of digging up the past and burying or exhuming the dead. There is more to their practices than remembering those officially expunged from the homeland of memorability – not only »their« dead but also the dead of the »other side«. They also seek to displace and actively remake the biopolitical norms that regulate which bodies, subjects, and collectivities are admissible to established spaces of intelligibility, including the space of political subjectivity and public protest. Hence, far from signalling a retreat from politics, these subjects come collectively into play in animating the possibility for an experience of <u>the political **as** agonism.</u> In so doing, they challenge conventional liberal sensibilities of politics." (AM 12)

7b *[Gibt es eine Performativität des Politischen?]* „A <u>performative poetics of responsiveness</u> is at work as these feminists refuse the post-war closure of mourning and keep it open to the contingency of a different future. This <u>performative modality of counter-memory</u> is probably the <u>only place where mourning is not »at home«</u>. It forms a scene of address not subsumed under the naturalising hold of the familiar and the familial. […] this is about performing mourning without mourning. Ultimately, this, I would venture, is about <u>a performative and transformative engagement with the political,</u> which induces other presents and futures by rendering possible what it simultaneously crosses out." (AM 14)

»Mourning« und Vulnerabilität als politischer Ort nicht-souveräner Subjektivität

8a „Why do loss and mourning matter politically after all? How might working on the register of uneven grievability attend to the experience of becoming a political subject engaged in pursuits of critical agency? […] Non-sovereign subjectivity – while clearly involving the modalities of mutual susceptibility and vulnerability – does not refer to a subjectivity identifying with, or reduced to, suffering and destitution. Nor should it be equated to self-negation, although | it decisively relies on relationality and it questions the liberal devices of individual, unilateral selfhood. Rather, in the context at hand, it indicates a performative mode of subjectivation which is always already intersubjective." (AM 14f)

8b *[eine These Athansious]* „I certainly do not mean to do away with all sovereignty *tout court,* especially insofar as it is tied to collective claims of popular sovereignty and courageous, revolutionary struggle of self-determination. […] So my point is to ask how we might think of sovereignty differently: namely, alongside the intricacies of finitude. The notion of finitude enables us to do so, and […] in ways that open (rather than close) the space of the political." (AM 15) – „In addressing the commemorative agonism of the activists […] I seek to account for the possibility of non-sovereign political agency that is not bound to an antecedent sovereign self, not attributable and not reducible to the individual's internal possession." (AM 18; vgl. dazu AM 38ff)

8c *[Forts.:]* „Attending to the deconstruction of sovereignty, in all its manifold and ambivalent inflections, does not have to vitiate the ethical and political value of all self-determination. It might, however, enjoin us to reinstate self-determination as determination with the other, as an interminable and indeterminate finding of oneself with/in the other. In this sense, I have been concerned in my research with **how** the *ŽuC* concerted political work […] yields an <u>ek-static and transformative mode of social belonging</u>.

For *ŽuC, stajanje* – the activist practice of standing still in public – as standing in place and as standing beside oneself vis-à-vis the Yugoslav archives of war and post-war, entails […] the engendering of a new sensorium of non-sovereign political subjectivity. Their standing disrupts the ways in which bodies are interpellated to engender and inhabit the nation. […] Collective resistance rises from loss and also from enduring loss and accounting for loss through creating alternative ties of belonging." (AM 39)

»Stasis« (Bürgerkrieg / Stillstand) und »Re-Membering«

9   *[Agonistic politics of mourning]* „the challenge for political subjects is to question the congealed norms and totalisations that determine what is »common« about popular sovereignty and political identity […]. They do so not in order to prescribe a definitive answer but rather to <u>performatively introduce an open-ended agonistic contestation</u> at the very level of the established matrix of intelligibility. The horizon of their agonistic politics is not confined to deliberative genres, democratic constitutionalism or even democracy as a juridical doctrine. Their agonistic politics cannot be reduced to moral(istic) outrage either. Rather, it is about <u>an embodied performativity of becoming other</u>, as a political <u>call to respond to what most needs a response</u>: the <u>exclusionary processes</u> upon which identification is premised. In that respect, these <u>political subjects are constituted through a performative dis-identification</u> vis-à-vis the sedimented power structures that have authorised the norms of identification, articulation, and belonging. Their loss is a condition of self-estranging, becoming other to themselves:

> ›When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost »you« only to discover that »I« have gone missing as well.‹ (Butler, Precarious Life, 22; dt.: GL 39)
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>> [*Forts. des Zitats im Buch von Butler (Anm. PZ):* ›Auf einer anderen Ebene ist <u>das, was ich »mit« dir verloren habe</u>, für das ich kein fertiges Vokabular habe, <u>vielleicht eine Relationalität</u> *(relationality),* <u>die</u> weder ausschließlich aus mir noch aus dir besteht, sondern <u>als *das Band (the tie)* vorgestellt werden muß</u>, durch das diese Ausdrücke differenziert und aufeinander bezogen sind.‹]

But what other ties emerge out of the affective intensities associated with the activist performativity of accounting for uncommon loss?" (AM 41)

10   *[Die »stasis« (Bürgerkrieg / Stillstand) als performativer Ausdruck des politischen »Bands«:]* „These activists | perform the spectral potentiality of displaced and disconcerted memory: one that incalculably complicates the way in which people »come together« in the *polis* […]. In spectralising the conventional friend/enemy distinction and in occupying the disturbing subject position of the designated »internal enemy« […] they depart from where they (un)belong in order to relate and respond to those estranged as external enemies. They become their phantom residues; they occupy the space created by those absent.

By positioning their bodies at the centre of the city to signal those turned into enemies […], they actualise the multilayered modalities of stasis as a means of embodying their own and others' dissident belonging. […] stasis, in this context, involves an embodied practice of inhabiting the *polis* through contestation and dissent." (AM 41f)

11a *Motto von »Agonistic Mourning«, Kap. 2:*
„*[Homi Bhabha:]* Remembering is never a quiet act of introspection or retrospection. It is a painful re-membering *[»Wieder-Eingliederung, Wieder-Teilnahme«; Anm. PZ]*, a putting together of the dismembered past to make sense of the trauma of the present." (AM 89)

11b *vgl. auch den Epilog des Buches: »<u>Agonistic Re-Membering of the Political«</u> (AM 289-312)*

12   *[Athena Athanasiou: Umschreibung von griech. »agon«:]* „As a response to the agonies and injuries imposed by power, agon (in the sense of dispute and struggle) is not about a fully present and realisable event of transcending or overturning power. Rather, it indicates a precarious exercise of subjectivation and de-subjectivation, which haunts, while remaining haunted by, the normalising constraints of power but also of the absent presences of other, de-realised subjectivities." (AM 293)