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PSYCHIC APPARATUSES

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A genealogy of media studies is inconceivable without psychoanalysis – from Benjamin to Mulvey and Kittler, it is constitutive for film and media theory. Alongside such Freudian concepts as the uncanny and the unconscious, the Lacanian mirror stage and its register of the real, imaginary, and symbolic have been indispensable for film theory since the mid-1970s, as well as for media theory in the 1980s and 90s. The uncanny of the machine, medial specters, the cinematographic as psychic apparatus, the gender of the (filmic) gaze, (cultural) techniques as subjectivation, the optical, aesthetic and, more recently, the technological unconscious, non-knowledge of media – all of these concepts are constitutive for media studies. Moreover, psychoanalysis itself has developed models for the mediality of the psychic – for example, by Winnicott (intermediary area, transitional objects), Laplanche / Pontalis (primary fantasy, scene, seduction) or Abraham / Torok (cryptonymy, phantom) – whose possible consequences for media studies have not yet been fully explored. And yet the explicit reference to psychoanalysis has declined significantly in media studies in recent years. Precisely the problematization of a subjective interior in opposition to an external, objective world seemed to push the psychoanalytic model into the background.

In this vein, Bruno Latour has recently described psychology as the complement of epistemology and criticized both for seeking to control the border between interior and exterior, mind and world, a world of spirits and hauntings on the one hand, and a world of objective facts on the other: “While the one exaggerated the exterior world, the other unduly emphasized the interior world.” (Latour, *Existenzweisen*, Berlin 2014, 269). Latour

suggests instead that we refer to psychogenic networks which produce the psychic as interior worlds in the first place: psychosocial infrastructures, psycho-pharmaceuticals, the advice pages of magazines as well as novels, television series, and horror films, therapies and self-help groups.

Such questions regarding the materiality and technology of the psychic have been of interest to media studies for quite some time; moreover, they have been a part of psychoanalytic thought ever since Freud's "Project for a Scientific Psychology" (*Entwurf einer Psychologie*). Psychoanalysis is thus also a resistance and challenge to univocal categorizations and delimitations, especially to the one between a presumed subjective interior and an objective exterior world. The reference to the limitations of psychoanalysis should hence be understood rather as an attempt to control what psychoanalysis brings into play.

Following Derrida, we may refer to a forgetting of psychoanalysis in media studies, in which more than simply a specific object of study is at stake. Studies in the history of science have described psychoanalysis as an historical knowledge formation; yet this does not entirely answer the question of its theoretical intervention and continued significance. Psychoanalysis and its temporal models of the interminability of the past, of the transgenerationality of experiences, and, above all, of the temporal otherness of the unconscious also have to be understood as challenges to the historiography of science itself, its chronologies and genealogies.

Psychoanalysis is a matter of thinking and recognizing other dynamics, not fully foreseen spaces and non-linear times, in which alterity is neither excluded nor annulled, but retained and enabled. Freud's postulate "Psyche is extended; it knows nothing of it. [Psyche ist ausgedehnt, weiß nichts davon]" also means that we should understand the spatiotemporal agentiality of the psychic beyond the distinction between interior and exterior, and that we should release the demons, witches, monsters, and specters, which have been attributed to the projections, phantasms, and chimeras of an exclusively interior reality, into a world beyond these dichotomies. The psychic is not an interior

world, but a part of the relational becoming of world, of the medial entanglement of inside and outside, of Eros and Thanatos, the symbolic and the imaginary, absence and presence, the individual and the social. For wherever theories of the psychic are not merely practiced as narratological or figural analyses, something else emerges: a fundamentally relational perspective that not only enables a description of relationships between human beings, but also of their relation to apparatuses, indeed to the psychic itself as an apparatus or machine, a type of description, furthermore, that does not deny alterity, strangeness, and non-integratability.

To this extent, the question of psychoanalysis has to be posed in a different way: Where is it forgotten, its spatiotemporal alterity brought into play, possibly even without remembering it? Have psychoanalytic concepts transformed, have the terms shifted? Where do they return? Interestingly, references to them vanish at precisely the point where they have been or could provide a framework of thought: the proximity of the affective turn to approaches in neuroscience has already been problematized (and it is worth asking what happens in affective computing with fantasies, ego-ideals, and, in recourse to Deleuze/Guattari, with desiring machines). While feminist (film) theory has read, revised, (re-)interpreted and appropriated psychoanalytic texts as well as written *differently* (Irigaray, Kristeva, Cixous), psychoanalysis also represents a central point of reference and movement of thought for Judith Butler – identification, subjectivation, mourning / melancholy. Queer Studies seeks to rework the concept of the drive and regards emotions as political, that is, as not merely individual but permeated by norms that affect every single subject. Thus can we inquire into the productivity of bad feelings. The psychic, moreover, is virulent in discussions about depression and burn-out, in concepts of the object, in non-Western concepts of the unconscious and spirits, in theories of (psycho-)pharmacology that can be questioned by both media studies and psychoanalysis.

Open, experimental texts are highly encouraged.

Possible topics:

- the psychoanalytic concept of repetition in film and television studies; *The Poor Man's Couch* (Guattari)
- non-Western psychoanalysis and the question of spirits; ethnopsychanalysis, migration and the unconscious
- queer/affect studies: new versions, reformulations of the concept of the drive; political theories of emotions
- the connection between gender studies and psychology since the 1960s; medical/psychological evaluations
- the invention of forms of therapy and concepts of childrearing in conjunction with cybernetic concepts of control (Bateson, Malabou)
- depression, melancholy, burn-outs: maladies of late-modern, neoliberal psyches (Ehrenberg, Kristeva); fates of identification and mourning between sociality and individuality (Butler); productivity, practices and objects of bad feelings (Cvetkovich) and cruel optimism (Berlant)
- (psycho-)pharmacology: practices of subjectivation and technologies of the body; better functioning, becoming other, transformation? (Preciado, Stiegler)
- concepts of the object: “transitional objects,” “object-relations” (Klein, Winnicott) and the (new) materiality debates
- notations / writing under the sign of the unconscious, detaching speech and writing from paradigms of objectivity: écriture feminine, queer writing
- psychoanalysis of the institution (with and against Legendre): mother tongues, doctoral fathers, the paternalistic logic of the best, of standing the test

Please submit complete essays with a length of approximately 25,000 characters by February 28, 2017.

Editors of the special issue: Kathrin Peters & Stephan Trinkaus

Stylesheet and additional information:

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