

**Birth and Death of an
Autonomous Protesting Anorexic Subject:
Anorexic Body that Matters**

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Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies

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Budapest, Hungary

2011

Abstract

In this thesis I start from the observation that feminist accounts of anorexia that focus on the dominant cultural image of female body theorize anorexia as paradigmatic of feminist body politics. I analyze accounts such as Bordo's (1993), Grosz's (1994), McRobbie's (2009) to see how they paint a figure of a protesting female anorexic subject. I look at the assumptions of such readings about resisting agency, which I call "liberal". I note, following Wilson (1998), that feminist cultural readings of anorexia overlook biological body in an antiessentialist move and that instead matter can be seen as dynamic. Through her notion of "morphology" I propose sexual difference is one of many, not crucial difference in anorexic body. Through her notion of "brain in the gut" (2004) I theorize on biochemical effects of starvation and how this shifts the notion of mind/brain's control over body in protest. I argue there is no single theory of anorexia, nor a coherent anorexic subject (not mentally disordered nor feminist protesting). I look into ethical issues around anorexic body, considering Keywood's analysis (2000) of medico-legal discourses on treatment without consent of anorexic bodies. Through seeing matter as performative (Barad 2003), I argue that legal enactment of autonomous/autonomy-lacking human subject is a material-discursive performance. Following Deleuze and Guattari (1987) I see anorexia in terms of biological-political experimentation or practice between bodies, not determined a-priori as any condition. Consequently, ethical issues concerning anorexia could be seen as a negotiation between bodies in a local context.

Acknowledgments

A big thank-you to my supervisors, Anna and Eszter, for guiding me through my rambling, chaotic thoughts.

Thanks to Andreja, for listening to my monologues about the topic, and sharing her thoughts on it.

Thanks to Maria, for engaging in discussion on the topic, and telling me what is it that I am actually arguing.

Thanks to *Northern Exposure*, for keeping my motivation up during the writing period.

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Introduction

Feminist theorists might dispense, then, with the attempt to offer some general etiological account of certain body practices, such as anorexia. (Colebrook 1998, 58)

The motivation for this thesis came from an observation about the treatment of what we think as “anorexia” (a concept which comes from the psychiatric discourse where it is figured as “mental disorder”) in various feminist accounts that I have come across. I was surprised at how easily “anorexia” comes to be theorized by feminists as an example of gender oppression, ie. a symptom of violence of the oppressive cultural representations of female body. Indeed, I propose to see a number of feminist accounts that I analyze in this thesis as taking anorexia as a paradigmatic example of feminist body politics.

The accounts that I analyze can be said to offer “cultural” readings of anorexia since they theorize it as a symptom of culture, not individual pathology, and a female symptom. I will consider here a range of readings with different foci, such as Bordo (1993) and McRobbie (2009), who focus on oppressive cultural representations of female body, Grosz (1994) who offers a psychoanalytic understanding of the relation between body and image, Dias (2003) and Ward (2007) who analyze anorexic voices of pro-anorexia web sites, and Keywood (2000), who analyzes anorexia in medico-legal discourses on treatment without consent. What these analyses do, as I read it, is to paint a political figure of female protesting anorexic subject. Therefore, I will engage in an analysis of their discourses to see from what kind of assumptions this figure emerges, ie. what local sociohistorical conditions enable such feminist knowledges about anorexic body politics, which they use as an example of body politics more generally. I will explain why we can see these assumptions as “liberal” since they paint specific notions about autonomy, agency, resistance, will to freedom. For this purpose I will also draw on and analyze feminist authors who

do not theorize anorexia per se, but theorize notions that I mention above, as well as those of embodiment and subject-formation, as a way of thinking the body and body politics. These authors are Butler (1990) (1993), Brown (1993) and Mahmood (2001).

Furthermore, I argue that the feminist “cultural” readings of anorexia show a conspicuous evasion of biological body. In this move, which I read as not wanting to posit biology or “nature” as something determined or fixed, biology gets to be excluded from theory and relegated back to the field of scientific and biomedical knowledges, which cultural readings of anorexia set out to contest. In this reading I follow Elizabeth A. Wilson (1998) who argues that feminist accounts of eating disorders which evade biological body make a naturalized antiessentialist move whereby they paradoxically posit biological body as something essentialized. In contrast to this, she sees biological matter as dynamic and changing.

Based on this, I formulate my main questions that I am concerned with in this thesis. First, what are the liberal assumptions of feminist cultural readings of anorexia; second, does bringing in the biological body in these readings of anorexia change the figure of autonomous protesting anorexic subject; third, if the answer is yes, as I propose - how we can see anorexia differently.

I propose to see anorexia not in terms of some universalizing “anorexic subject” but in terms of body practices. Consequently, ethical issues concerning anorexic body practice, if not predetermined as “mental disorder” nor “protesting girl” could be seen only as a negotiation between bodies in local context. In these propositions I consider that nature and culture cannot be separated, whereby I draw on feminist theories that bring biological body as dynamic into social theory.

Thus, I argue that feminist notion of anorexic embodiment, as a way of thinking through the body (Bordo 1993), (Grosz 1994), should include what Bordo briefly mentions as “biochemical component” or “biochemical effects of starvation”, but which she does not theorize. I argue this

biochemical component of anorexia, and of body more generally, should be included in social theory, whereby in my analysis I rely on authors who theorize matter as dynamic: Wilson (1998) (2004), Colebrook and Bray (1998) and their reading of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), and Barad (Barad 2003). These different authors allow me to, in particular chapters, engage with particular assumptions and concepts of (anorexic) body politics.

In Chapter 1 I show how Bordo (1993), Grosz (1994), McRobbie (2009), theorize anorexia as female subjugation/resistance to gender norms, and I argue, based on Mahmood (2001), that agency as resistance can be seen as a liberal assumption. According to them, anorexic protest is an embodiment of impossible yet negotiating female position in a culture where a split is made along the lines: mind-representations-masculine and body-materiality-feminine. To this position, which implies mind controlling the body, I bring the biological body by showing how, according to Wilson (2004), the neuroscientific brain-body relation is open for transformation. Also, her notion of “morphology” (1998) sees sexual difference as one of many, and not crucial difference in anorexia. I argue that no single account of anorexia is possible, and therefore we can abandon seeing anorexia as gender protest.

In Chapter 2 I argue that accounts of Dias (2003) and Ward (2007) present anorexic girls as coherent subjectivity structure, which I read in contrast to McRobbie’s (2009) critique of commodification and normalization of such subject. However, I see how McRobbie keeps the notion of unconscious rage in subject-formation of young girls, which she takes from Butler (1993). I consider Wendy Brown’s critique (1993) of identity politics, which let us see all liberal subjects easily mobilized as raging. I propose different anorexic body politics from McRobbie’s, through the thought of Deleuze and Guattari (1987). They see anorexia not through subjects but as biological and political experimentation, abandoning the idea of unconscious rage, but this raises a question how ethics would be enacted of anorexic practice in relation to other bodies.

Chapter 3 is takes up the ethical aspects of anorexic body practices by looking at Keywood's analysis of treatment without consent enacted in law on anorexic bodies, and based on psychiatric ethics. While she proposes a resignification of anorexic bodies in law drawing on Butler, I question whether resignification also entails bodily reconstitution. I consider Colebrook and Bray's (1998) and Barad's (2003) take on Butler's discourse-materiality relation. I follow Barad in seeing matter as performative and apply her theory to legal enactment of the lack of rational human autonomy of anorexic body. I propose that seeing biological matter as performative, through Wilson's mapping of brain-body relation (2004) questions this autonomy. I propose that ethical issues around anorexic body be seen as a local negotiation between bodies, not in terms of some law.

Concerning methodology, I emphasize Wilson's deconstructive approach to biology in which she situates herself (Wilson 1998), on which I rely in my own analyses. She outlines three aspects of her deconstructive approach. First is a double gesture of a critic: a conjunction of the impossible yet necessary relation to concepts, such as the feminist relation to essentialism. Secondly, no final empirical or theoretical solution should be expected from deconstruction, only a strategy without finality. Thirdly, there is a recognition of a critic's own complicitness with the structure they examine, because deconstruction is always done from within. In this way, the structure is neither simply refused nor accepted. Therefore, a deconstructionist method which works with a particular binary structure does not provide a solution to the binary, nor pursues a synthesis. Instead, it inflames the binary, undoes it and shows the point at which such a division becomes unworkable or incoherent (Wilson 1998, 26). Also, she adds, deconstruction is not a generalized methodology but rather interpretation of particular texts and local discursive knowledges. This deconstructive approach informs my analyses of feminist discourses of (anorexic) body politics, to which I turn next.

1 Mind and body between discipline and resistance

Feminist politics of anorexia has had a history of using the political implications of mental DISorder as an opposition to the presumed gender order. In this chapter I analyze feminist analyses of anorexia of Bordo (1993), Grosz (1994) and McRobbie (2009), who see anorexic female agency as an ambivalent subjugation/resistance position to the dominant cultural image of female body. I argue, based on Mahmood (2001), this position can be seen as a “liberal” assumption¹.

Next, I see how due to this assumption of resisting agency, Bordo’s and Grosz’s accounts of anorexic embodiment (as thinking through-the-body), which want to challenge the mind-body split, might be seen as reeanting it. The split is challenged because of the feminist reading of mind=masculine=representations vs. body=feminine=materiality.

Further, these analyses I propose to call “cultural” because they evade anorexic biological body, leaving it thus to the sphere of biomedicine which they set out to contest. I elaborate on what Bordo calls anorexic “addiction to biochemical effects of starvation” (1993), and bring biology to anorexic embodiment, through E. Wilson’s notion of “morphology” as natural-cultural body (1998) and her transformation of brain-body relation of neuroscientific discourses (2004).

Finally, I propose that no single theory of mind-body relation, and consequently of anorexia, is possible and therefore it is not possible to see it as a paradigmatic example of gender oppression.

1.1 Anorexic agency

In theorizing anorexia, Susan Bordo (Bordo 1993) draws on the Foucauldian notion of disciplinary power, working on the level of individuals through the mechanisms of production of

¹ In relation to this, I note that anorexia is seen as a “western symptom” in the DSM-IV-TR manual of the American Psychiatric Association (2000) as well as in the feminist interpretations of anorexia, which I analyze here and which point to “western” cultural ideal of female thin body.

certain kinds of individual bodies which are active, in the practices of self-surveillance and self-correction to the norms. In this sense power is disciplinary and normalizing through what Foucault terms “technologies of the self” (Rabinow 1984), and Bordo identifies them in the cultural regimes of dieting and beauty, the disciplinary impact of which is bigger on female than male bodies in her analysis. This is why she moves the active anorexic female self-fashioning, in this sense read as empowering, from an immediate context of anorexic girl, and from the biomedical narrative of individual pathology, into the social field of masculine domination.²

Bordo decides to focus on cultural productions of the ideal thin and lean female body, disseminated in visual pop-cultural media.. To run counter the psychiatric classification of anorexia as “mental disorder”, Bordo argues that anorexic women do not misperceive their bodies but rather read the dominant cultural standards of femininity all too well, and therefore their “pathology” is rather a specific historical “crystallization of culture” (Bordo 1993, 139). She compares “epidemics” of hysteria and anorexia calling them sister-phenomena because they gain widespread visibility in historical periods in which cultural disciplinary backlash against the redefinition of traditional gender roles is enforced, which would be for anorexia in 1980s, after the emancipatory achievements of 2nd wave feminism, and for hysteria during the 1st wave. She compares the cultural female body ideals of the Victorian period and practices such as wearing corsets, with the impact of contemporary visual thin body images on female body, linking this to the masculine control over female sexuality, for which hunger serves as a metaphor. Therefore, Bordo’s idea is that going too far in this form of masculine control could be read as a parodic enactment, exaggeration of the construction of femininity, and therefore an unconscious political protest, against the normative femininity (Bordo 1993, 170) .

² Anorexia nervosa is classified as “eating disorder“ in the current edition of DSM-IV-TR of the American Psychiatric Association (2000), which is taken as the authoritative point of reference and system of classification for psychiatric practice in western medicine. It is figured as disorder which affects primarily adolescent women, while it potentially affects men in less than 10% of cases.

The notion of “parody” as a form of political protest is similar to Judith Butler’s idea of possible subversion in the performance of gender. For Butler (Butler 1990), gender is a performance, and gendered “I” does not exist as some inner core, but comes into being through the acts of repetition of gender norms. She extends the Foucauldian idea of the body as an inscription of culture, to talk about gender as a “corporeal style or act” (Butler 1990, 139). Following Foucault, gendered subject for her is an effect of power and a disciplinary position, but is not determined by this position. Rather, agency of the subject consists in the possibility to repeat gender with a difference which contradicts the norm, such as for example a drag, who exposes there is no original gender which would precede the copying repetitions. By exposing this, a drag enacts a subversion of the normative gendered identity, resignifying the norms, and as such puts on a political act. This is very similar to Bordo’s arguments about anorexia, as simultaneously enacting normative femininity and exaggerating it, and I note this because both authors draw on the Foucauldian tradition of thinking the body. The idea of subject agency which they posit is also similar insofar as the impulse to resist the disciplinary power is assumed, which can be critiqued as a liberal position, the point on which I expand later. Before that, I look into another author who proposes a cultural reading of anorexia.

Angela McRobbie offers a critique of what can be called “postfeminist” readings of anorexia, which see anorexia as a matter of women’s individual deliberate choice and lifestyle, and where social gender equality would be presumed³. She argues that what she terms “postfeminist disorders” (McRobbie 2009), referring to young women’s self-harming practices, where she includes anorexia, are more social than ever and certainly not a simple matter of individual choice, but of young women’s consumption of oppressive cultural representations of female body. These representations, primarily fashion photography, McRobbie says, play out the script

³ I analyze two of such “post-feminist” readings of pro-anorexia web pages in Chapter 2, suggesting that what lies behind the idea of “individual choice” (where gender equality would be presumed) is a feminist impulse, because it preserves the idea of anorexia as subjugation/resistance to the social gender norms. (Dias 2003), (Ward 2007).

of Butlerian “compulsory heterosexuality”, which McRobbie sees in the structure of the gaze behind the photograph which is always phallic, and therefore heterosexual. McRobbie keeps the notion of “oedipalised family” from Butler, emphasizing that young women are in their social places within such families (McRobbie 2009, 95), and Butler in her theory explains how through such family subject is constituted as gendered, on which McRobbie builds her argument.

Butler (Butler 1997) takes the Freudian idea of melancholia, in which subject experiences loss and an incorporation of the lost object and expands it to a gender constitution theory, saying that what is lost in melancholic gender constitution, in identifying with one gender and desiring the body of another gender (presuming the normative sex-gender coherency), is the possibility to grieve the loss of homosexual love. McRobbie then uses this to say that anorexia, as a postfeminist disorder, entails the loss of feminism itself, the ideas of the necessity for equality and coupled with that, the possibility of lesbian love, because of the compulsory heterosexual interpellation, (McRobbie 2009, 115), which she sees, as I understand, both in cultural visual representations and in oedipalised families. Because of that, McRobbie says, the unconscious rage, which bubbles beneath the melancholia because of the impossibility of grieving, gets to be enacted in such female self-harming practices as starvation, which then can be read as “lost feminist rebellion” (McRobbie 2009, 117). For her then, I suggest, these women’s agency is written on the body as a symbolic language which just needs to be interpreted properly.

Now, what I want to argue through the analysis of Bordo and McRobbie is that they paint in this double move of female “anorexic” activity a very specific notion of agency, which operates as either subjugation or resistance to the normative cultural construction of female body, and in the case of anorexia as both at the same time. This specific notion we might want to call “liberal” with the insight of critique which Saba Mahmood offers of this feminist notion of agency, as I discuss below.

Mahmood (Mahmood 2001) wants to challenge what she calls secular-liberal notion of agency that feminist project posits: the idea of necessary resistance to the relations of domination and the presupposed universality of desire for freedom from the structures of male domination. In this project, Mahmood argues, feminists always seek to find in particular conditions of what they see as male oppression, either how women participate in reproducing their own domination or how they act in a way to resist it. She says a double move is made in this liberal notion of agency: equation of agency with emancipatory politics, and equation of self-realization with autonomous, individual, free will⁴. Therefore she wants to decouple agency from liberation, and self-realization from individual free will, and see whether it is possible to think of agency as a capacity for action that historically specific relations of subordination enable and create (Mahmood 2001, 203). She draws here on Butler's Foucauldian analysis of subject-formation and agrees with Butler who locates "individual autonomous subject" as submitted within the structure of power and produced as an effect of power. However, she critiques Butler because she sees her positing resistance as a paradigmatic example of (disciplined) agency, which entails a universal desire for freedom and can be seen as a specifically liberal assumption (Mahmood 2001, 211).

Mahmood's analysis offers a good insight why feminists such as Bordo or McRobbie (who draws on Butler's arguments), which we could with this insight refer to as "liberal", paint anorexic female agency as an unconscious gender protest: because of the oppressive cultural representations which discipline women, it is assumed they have the universal will to freedom from oppression and therefore resist. Still, this resistance is seen as unconscious since it is not explicitly politically voiced, but is rather written on female bodies. Consequently, feminist theories pointing this out are a potential consciousness-raising factor for anorexic women, as well as for the social perception of them, which is that of "deviancy" which feminists challenge, presenting anorexics as disciplined and at the same time as emancipated.

⁴ I come back to anorexic agency seen in terms of an autonomous, self-determining agent in chapter 3.

Furthermore, in Mahmood's analysis of a women's religious Islamic movement I find another important point in relation to anorexic body. She suggests that what she terms secular-liberal feminist politics cannot be so easily applied to a religious agent, who can be seen as submitting themselves to transcendental will. I note the similarity with historically observed female fasting practices, which could in the Middle Ages be read as a religious ascetic practices of saints, and throughout the Victorian period as cases of "fasting girls", as Joan Jacobs Brumberg analyzes (Brumberg 1988). Nowadays, after what we might call secularization and medicalization in "western" culture, an ascetic fasting practice is more likely to be read as a psychiatric disorder/feminist protest. If we look at anorexia in terms of fasting practice, Mahmood's arguments about Islamic women body performances are insightful (Mahmood 2001, 212). She looks at their bodily comportment in terms of enacting restraint and modesty, and practices such as wearing a veil. She argues, if we see these women as embodying the traditional Islamic (and therefore from the liberal position oppressive) feminine ideal of shyness, we can see that their bodily practices come to constitute what we see as their will or consciousness, because body learning is at the same time body-sense (Mahmood 2001, 214). Mahmood in this analysis relies on Butler's theory of gender performance, which I discussed earlier (in relation to Bordo). For Butler, gender performance comes to constitute subject's inner core. However, Mahmood notes that Butler's emphasis is on the repetitive character of performances, in terms of successful or failed repetition, and in case of failed – on potential resignification of the norms. Mahmood rather wants to emphasize the cumulative or sedimenting character of repetitions which brings the inner and outer of the body into unity as a material formation of the embodied subject (Mahmood 2001, 216). Therefore, a universal will to freedom from an oppressive bodily performance of shyness cannot be assumed because shyness is embodied through the unity of consciousness and body. The assumption for freedom is liberal. If we imagine anorexic body as a fasting agent, we could also say that resisting agency cannot be assumed.

However, while Bordo and feminist psychoanalysis such as Elizabeth Grosz's, theorize anorexia through the notion of embodiment as a unity of body and mind, they preserve the liberal assumption of resisting agency to the dominant image. In this way they can be seen to re-enact the mind-body split they want to challenge, through the ideas such as mind's control over body, or body seen as socially repressed. I elaborate upon this in the next section.

* * *

1.2 Reading disorders

If all representations are phallogentric, if thought is disembodied, how
do women read and think? (Colebrook 1998, 49)

Bordo (Bordo 1993) emphasizes that what is important in “anorexic” sense of empowerment is what the body means, how it is perceived, lived, experienced, felt, affected, which challenges the Cartesian split enacted in biomedical discourse where body is seen in mechanical terms, according to which it is possible, as in DSM-IV-TR (APA 2000, 584) to posit the factor of “normal weight”. Bordo thus proposes that specific anorexic embodiment, or what we might call thinking-through-the-body challenges the biomedical normalization. However, at the same time she says that anorexia is exerting a kind of masculine control over female body (Bordo 1993, 178), because the values of self-control, mastery and self-transcendence are traditionally coded as male. But if Bordo keeps the idea of the masculine control over female body, she is still keeping the mind-body split that she set out to challenge.

In analyzing how this separation is re-enacted, I follow Colebrook and Bray's argument (Colebrook 1998). They say that anorexia is so easily taken up by feminist analysis as a form of masculine control over female body because it assumes the idea of the philosophical rational

disembodied Cartesian cogito as masculine, which is able to know the body, and consequently to objectify and subdue it, so that it becomes read as repressed, feminine, emotional and irrational. This keeps the Cartesian split along the lines mind=masculine=reason vs. body=feminine=irrational⁵. The masculine mind, which in extension is equalled in feminist psychoanalytic readings with phallogentric culture, language and symbolic, operates then on the level of cultural representation as producing an oppressive body-image for women.

Thus, Elizabeth Grosz (Grosz 1994, 40) argues that anorexic may risk her life in approximating the ideal body-image. She also sees it in terms of protest, at the social meaning of female body, and a kind of mourning for pre-oedipal full body (and union with the mother). In her psychoanalytic post-Lacanian reading, anorexia is taken as a trope of feminine, repressed body in general, which is lost through the entrance of subject into the phallic symbolic structure, the entrance into language through sexual difference. Since Grosz bases her argument on the theory of sexual difference, her reading of anorexia makes a universal move in telling us something about female psychology in general, which is that all women repress their bodies because of the dominant phallogentric female body representations.

As Colebrook and Bray argue (Colebrook 1998), this kind of reading puts representations of body-image over bodily materiality because body-subject is always constituted in relation to its symbolic representation. In this way, they argue, theorists such as Grosz through psychoanalysis, and Bordo through a cultural reading, which both emphasize cultural representations, do not really challenge binarism which they want to and can offer just a reactionary kind of feminist politics to the binary mechanism (Colebrook 1998, 38). They explain that Grosz's arguments are

⁵ Colebrook and Bray refer to either anorexia or eating disorders as examples taken up by feminists for speaking about the female body more generally. I emphasize that precisely *anorexia* is taken as paradigmatic by feminists, and not for example bulimia, which is somewhat randomly referred to (Bordo, Grosz, Dias, McRobbie), and always acts a sort of sidekick to the paradigmatic anorexic. I propose two reasons for this. First, bingeing and purging behaviour is in the DSM-IV-TR (2000) also classified as one of the two subtypes of anorexia, the other subtype being the restrictive one (alongside bulimia as a separately classified eating disorder). Second, anorexia is paradigmatic because for feminists it dramatizes the presumed masculine control of mind over body, control which in bulimia is lost. By subsuming the bulimic bingeing-purging behaviour under the rubric of anorexia (as in biomedical discourse), the idea of "control" is preserved.

invested in the Lacanian construction of the subject: positing of primary identification of self through image – in the so called mirror stage, through seeing him/herself in a mirror, ego of a child identifies with a coherent imaginary ego, which posits the constitution of ego. This is why in anorexic identification with images, the cultural representations of femininity behind which there is always a phallic gaze weigh crucially upon female psychic mechanisms. This, Colebrook and Bray argue, present female sense of self as dependent on an act of consumption of images, and presents anorexic women as not engaging in pathological eating practices but in pathological *reading* practices (Colebrook 1998, 51). According to them, feminists are concerned with anorexia precisely because it demonstrates the typical repression or negation of the body according to the dominant image, and a celebration of the bodily corporeality and irrationality gets to be figured as a sort of neo-Romantic protest against phallogocentrism⁶. Rather, they argue the representation-materiality dichotomy itself should be questioned⁷, because this dichotomy organizes the theories of sexual difference and leads to “uncritical celebration of the body as an inherently liberatory site” (Colebrook 1998, 56). I follow their reading which shows how theories of female anorexia are invested in the mind-body and representation-materiality binaries because of the assumptions of female resistance, and circularly how these binaries in psychoanalytic readings universalize the sexual binary in the first place. Therefore, it would be useful to abandon universalizing these binaries in theorizing anorexic body.

To abandoning these, I want to add another component, which the theories of anorexic embodiment do not consider, but Bordo briefly mentions as a “biochemical component” of anorexia (Bordo 1993). I want to see how this component, and the notion of biological body more generally, also shifts feminist ideas of anorexic gender protest, as invested in the mind-body

⁶ Colebrook and Bray refer here to feminist psychoanalytic readings such as Irigaray, Grosz, and Braidotti (Colebrook 1998, 47).

⁷ I come back to the challenge of representation-materiality dichotomy in chapter 3, as discussed by Colebrook and Bray, and Karen Barad.

binary. For that purpose, I elaborate on E. Wilson's notion of "morphology" (1998) and on her transformation of brain-body relation in neuroscientific discourses (2004) in the next section.

* * *

1.3. Brain in the gut

Perhaps all biology wanders. (Wilson 2004, 13)

Bordo importantly notes, that anorexic sense of empowerment as an intoxicating, habit-forming experience also clearly has a biochemical component (Bordo 1993, 180), since it contains a dimension of "physical addiction to the biochemical effects of starvation". This component of anorexia is described in the DMS-TR-IV in the following way: "Observations of behaviours associated with other forms of starvation suggest that obsessions and compulsions related to food may be caused or exacerbated by undernutrition." (APA 2000, 585). This further complicates the idea of mind controlling body in protest because it brings in biochemistry as a specific causality to anorexic embodiment, which entails time component – we could imagine it perhaps as something sensed immediately in the body. This means, anorexia cannot be theorized just as a social meaning of the body.

Thus, the biochemical component adds to anorexic embodiment because it adds to the meaning making of anorexic body – effects of starvation might make the body feel good and empowering. For example, I noted that feminist analyses of pro-anorexia online forums, that I discuss in chapter 2, put emphasis on meaningful embodied experience, but do not engage with biochemical effects. In my own research into a pro-ana web forum in Croatian, I note these effects can be read. For example, one participant says: "I like it when I lie down in the evening,

when I don't eat anything, and when I feel it in my stomach, it is such a good feeling..." (my translation) (*Pro-ana forum*)

Biochemistry brings into focus the biological body, which should not be excluded from feminist theories of "eating disorders", and in the cultural analyses it has been. While cultural interpretations of anorexia set themselves up to contest the biomedical discourse by emphasizing culture and evading biology, this seems to relegate the sphere of biology to something fixed and unchangeable. Elizabeth Wilson thus (Wilson 1998, 52) suggests that in the move of feminist theories about eating disorders to focus on the gendered regimes of health and beauty, they consider the cellular processes of digestion, the biochemistry of muscles and glands to be the domain of factual and empirical verification. In this feminist "naturalized antiessentialist" move (Wilson 1998, 15) biological body ironically gets to be posited as essentialized and fixed factor by the very act of its exclusion from theory. Every further project of "feminist psychology" then is to be concerned with theorizing about female psychology separating it from seemingly neutral or unsexed knowledges. Therefore, Wilson proposes to intervene into these very sites of neutrality, because such "neutral" sites are no less implicated in what we think as patriarchal presumptions than marked sexed knowledges. Her "feminist psychology" is therefore engaging with the nature of cognition itself. She proposes, in psychology to "ask feminist questions not only about women, but also about cognition, learning, the brain, statistics, the rat, the perceptual system" (Wilson 1998, 19).

Wilson proposes to see biology as writing itself inseparable from culture, and vice versa, so that we can only see body as always already living in its bioculturality or biopsychicality, without the possibility of separating the two. The model of this inseparability Wilson finds in Irigarayan notion of "morphology", as that which is always natural-cultural lived and experienced body, not

biologically determined nor simply cultural inscription⁸. She explains that the idea of morphology entails a careful articulation of bodily anatomy, and should not be seen as an originary fixed anatomy nor as secondary gendered production, but rather as a “particular biocultural instantiation of the body” (Wilson 1998, 64). Such idea of morphology offers us, I argue, the vision of biological matter which is not fixed or stable but rather dynamic. This has implications on the notion of sexual difference, which cannot be posited as universal, but rather enacted locally and contextually. This makes us think about anorexic body as just possibly and not necessarily female, as it has been theorized by theorists as Bordo, Grosz and McRobbie.

In relation to this, and the feminist comparison of hysteria and anorexia as female disorders which I mentioned earlier, Wilson discusses an important point about Freud which has been neglected by feminists. In examining how early Freud treated psychosomatic illnesses (in which psychic disturbances are seen to result into somatic symptoms, such as conversion hysteria), and I propose here we could see anorexia as psychosomatic⁹, she observes that he noted the occurrence of male hysteria, which, she proposes, could offer a generalized theory of psychosomatic conversion. This means detangling hysteria from the female body and thus from being a marker of sexual difference, of the “wandering womb” (Wilson 2004, 13). In fact, psychosomatic mechanisms point to the possibility, as Wilson suggests, that indeed “proclivity to conversion (diversion, perversion) is native to biochemical, physiological, and nervous systems” (Wilson 2004, 13). She adds that this proclivity to conversion Freud discussed in terms of “somatic compliance”, referring to the complicit and complicitous character of the man’s body. In other words, based on this I propose, first, biological matter, which we can see as dynamic and not stable, does play a complicit part in the psychosomatic mechanism such as anorexia, and it is

⁸ As Wilson notes, Irigaray uses the notion of morphology in her theory of sexual difference, on which Elizabeth Grosz builds upon. I mentioned earlier that Colebrook and Bray (Colebrook 1998), read Grosz as positing sexual difference as a universal marker. I read Wilson as seeing sexual difference differently, as important only as one possible (not universal) component of morphology, which should always be seen in a local context.

⁹ I propose we think of anorexia in terms of psychosomatic relation, which also DSM-IV-TR (2000) points to. Its symptoms there are distinguished in terms of physiological and psychological, and the causal relation between them is not clear.

not psyche that we simply posit as the cause or control; second, this mechanism is observed in a body where what we think as female or male can play a role as a part of the body morphology, but cannot be reduced to this difference. Considering this, as Wilson says, “feminism can be deeply and happily complicit with biological explanation” (Wilson 2004, 14).

Further biological explanation of the psychosomatic, as proposed by Wilson, bring us to how brain-body relation is mapped in neurosciences, and how this relation can be open to transformation. She looks at what is the mechanism of psychosomatic conversion in Freud’s early case of female conversion hysteria (Wilson 2004), arguing that then he still tried to explain it in both somatic and ideational way, which he later abandoned focusing on the ideational origin. This was the case of Frau Emmy whom he treated for hysteria, and one of her major problems was gastric pain and consequently loss of appetite. Now, the conversion relation between the brain and the gut (presumed to go from brain to gut by Freud) is crucial for Wilson, and she proposes we look into how this relation in neurosciences is mapped as between the central nervous system or the brain and the enteric nervous system, which she calls “brain in the gut” (Wilson 2004, 31)¹⁰. The brain in the gut is perceived to act somewhat autonomously, “a rebel”, from the brain, but not completely since it is still a peripheral nervous system. So, while CNS controls the upper and ending portions of digestive tract (esophagus, stomach, anorectum), what happens in between (in the small intestine and colon) is seen to be regulated by the ENS. This suggests that neurology of the gut is the psychology of the gut at the same time, as she says, not (directly) under the CNS control. Wilson suggests there is simply no adequate scientific model which would completely grasp this, so far perceived center-periphery, connection.

Also, serotonin, a neurotransmitter which is said to influence mood, and a drop in its levels in the brain is linked to depressive moods, is, as Wilson discusses (Wilson 2004, 36), mainly made,

¹⁰ Wilson takes this phrase from popular science discourse.

stored and metabolized in the gut, and most of the serotonin in the brain is derived from the gut. If we think of this in relation to anorexia, we could see that if biochemical effects of fasting influence serotonin levels in the gut, this is at the same time a psychological effect. Then this serotonin should be added to anorexic embodiment - how the body feels and makes meaning. The meaning of empowerment, of “intoxicating, habit-forming experience”, as Bordo notes (Bordo 1993, 178), also comes from the gut serotonin levels, and feminists should acknowledge that. Furthermore, since serotonin from the gut is also linked to depressive mood, Wilson discussed this in terms of “gut depression” (Wilson 2004, 43). She proposes to see antidepressant drugs which are said to regulate serotonin in the brain, as absorbed in the gut, so that in fact they influence psychology of the gut, and not simply the brain. I add here that anorexia is in psychiatric discourse cross-diagnosed with major-depressive disorder (APA 2000), and Wilson also notes how Freud emphasized the connectedness of digestion and melancholia, observing that “anorexia nervosa of young girls is the nutritional parallel of melancholia” (Freud in Wilson 2004). Also, Freud referred to anorexia as loss of appetite, not a control of it, which again points to the somatic compliance and complicitness in anorexia, not to brain control.

What Wilson further proposes in the gut-depression link is that biochemical explanations do not contradict psychodynamic ones (with which psychoanalysis works), on the contrary: everything matters. So she says we can see digestion as the system of our relating to the world and other people, since it is the system which bridges what we see as inside-outside subject boundary. We can see others as “ingested” or “absorbed” into our system (and depression is psychiatrically figured as disturbance in relating to others). Then letting food pass through the system would not be just a symbolic way of relating to others, but an actual biochemical-psychological mechanism of relating, relations entered enterologically (Wilson 2004, 45). Disturbances in digestion are often perceived as disturbances in relation to others, and I add here, anorexic women are often perceived as isolated from others and depressive, but following Wilson’s argument, we can see

them differently. She argues to see “a schema of depression in which the failure to eat doesn’t represent a breakdown of connection to others, but is seen as a direct interruption to the process of remaining connected to others.” (Wilson 2004, 45) Yes, and this can be applied, in my opinion, to the sense of anorexic empowerment as well – it is relation to other bodies that are entered biochemically in the system, and inextricably linked to eating and to serotonin, and to feeling good (as well as feeling depressed).

In other words, what I tried to explain here, and struggled because as Wilson suggests, there is no appropriate scheme to map out psyche-soma relation adequately, there is no simple etiological explanation of anorexia. The nature of psychosomatic Wilson describes like this: “It is this cohabitation of mood and parent and therapist and serotonin and food that seems to elude both psychoanalytic and neurogastroenterological accounts of gut disorder” (Wilson 2004, 47). I believe this applies well to anorexia if we see it as anorexic body practice to be treated in psychiatric setting.

Put simply, everything matters: psyche, nerves, gut, other bodies, images. The idea of morphology, as natural-cultural body, allows for sexual difference, but only in a specific local context. This can be a rather “liberating” notion for feminists to engage with biological body, which has previously been excluded from the discussion on anorexia, and body more generally. Furthermore, I think Wilson’s insight let us see no universalizing or single theory of anorexia can be given, nor of mind/brain – body relation. Therefore, I propose the idea of anorexia as a paradigmatic example of protest against gender oppression can be abandoned. Consequently, since no universal structuration of anorexic body is possible, I propose abandoning the universalization of “anorexic subject” as well, in the next chapter.

2 Of raging subjects and right molecules

Since I proposed in the previous chapter no single theory of anorexia is possible, I also propose abandoning the universalization of “anorexic subject”. I analyze here two feminist accounts of pro-ana web pages (Dias 2003) (Ward 2007) and note their impulse to grant the “anorexic subject” voice and narrative. I read them in contrast to McRobbie’s (2009) critique of normalization and commodification of anorexic subject.

Then I see how McRobbie keeps the notion of presumed unconscious rage of subject-formation, for which she draws on Butler (1993), and how she mobilizes this rage of self-harming (including anorexic) young girls. I compare this to Wendy Brown’s (1993) insight into how rage is easily politicized in all liberal subjects, and whether feminists might think politics differently.

This difference I find in Deleuze and Guattari’s thought (1987). They see anorexia not in terms of subject, whereby they also question the idea of the unconscious, but in terms of body practice or experimentation. Biology is in their account a dynamic part of this practice.

Finally, I see how their theory, through bringing in biology, opens up ethical questions of what certain body practices, such as anorexia, do in relation to other bodies, if we do not have some predetermined ethical principle (such as anorexic female bodies who resist the dominant body-image, in McRobbie’s account).

2.1 Ana-girls in the attic

Feminist discourses about anorexia as a symptom of oppressive cultural representations of female body, such as Bordo’s in the 1990s, has been continued in the 2000s with a special emphasis on pro-anorexia web sites, a cyberspace where anorexic women are seen to negotiate

their embodied disciplined/resisting experience in relation to the dominant cultural female body image. The two analyses that I will discuss present themselves in terms of “post-feminist” approaches, because they emphasize the ideas of anorexia as individual deliberate choice and lifestyle, which would mean that an individual rather than gender would not be an analytical tool for analysis. However, I propose to see them as feminist because they share the same liberal assumption which I discussed in the previous chapter about women’s agency as resistance to the dominant cultural body image.

Karen Dias (Dias 2003, 34) defines pro-anorexia websites as a genre of websites disseminating information about eating disorders, primarily anorexia nervosa, and providing girls and women with a forum to discuss and share information about ana. She further refers to these cyberspaces as an alternative to dominant pathologization which silences these women’s voices. There in the cyberspace, their personal narratives and voices can finally be heard, and she interprets them as enacting agency through negotiations of their identities. The emphasis is, I note, on individual agency, but feminism seems to be underlying this, because, as Dias says, she is researching women’s behaviour in the websites in the light of whether it can be considered feminist and concludes that although pro-anorexia website users “do not (overtly) declare their motives to be either feminist or political, their behaviour can be read as strategic acts of agency” (Dias 2003, 41). Katie Ward (Ward 2007) follows this line of interpretation of pro-ana sites, adding also some new concepts to it. She proposes a “post-feminist agenda” stating at the same time that her agenda compliments feminist rather than biomedical approach. She explains her “pro-ana approach” as researching a radical, underground web-based pro-ana movement, where anorexic condition represents a form of stability and control (Ward 2007, 1). By enabling women to share their narratives and voices about ana, which is an outcome of their personal choice, these pages also enable “the emergence of an embodied anorexic ontology and epistemology”, ie. “pro-

anorexic girls and women can begin to realise, and own, an identity and embodied subjectivity as an anorectic” (Ward 2007, 3).

I note two moves in these two accounts that I want to analyze. First, both emphasize anorexic girls’ personal narratives and their voices that feminists want to hear. Second, as Ward notes, these girls are anorexic subjects, which assumes we can posit some kind of universal structuration of “anorexic subjectivity”.

To see why feminists stress anorexic voiced narratives, I think it is useful to compare it to the feminists’ treatment of hysteria. I noted in the previous chapter how Bordo (Bordo 1993) notes the similarities between hysteria and anorexia, and Grosz (Grosz 1994) also sees anorexia as a contemporary popular form of hysteria. However, it is useful to see how hysteria was treated in some feminist literary theory, because it was also connected to giving hysterical women voice and narrative. Gilbert and Gubar thus (Gilbert 1984) set up a figure of “madwoman in the attic”, which is a figure of the Victorian hysterical woman, and affirm it as a figure of female author/writer insofar as we think of hysterical women as those whose voices were silenced by the patriarchal culture. Therefore they want to affirm “hysterical” women’s voices and narratives, taking the notion of deviancy away and affirming the idea of female authorship. The notion of hysterical female body as silenced is important for their argument, the same as for Hélène Cixous (Cixous 1981) because she also uses it as a trope of female oppression. However, she says it is a feminine construct, but nevertheless, the notion of silence provides her with an impulse to urge women to speak, to laugh, to write – and in a particular feminine way - writing their bodies¹¹.

What I want to suggest, by comparing the treatment of hysteric woman by literary scholars, who urge them to write their narratives, and the treatment of pro-anorexic women by analysts of

¹¹ I just want to briefly clarify here that Gilbert & Gubar and Cixous have different approaches. Gilbert and Gubar engage in gynocriticism, which is an affirmation of women writers, while Cixous's theory of *écriture féminine* deals with a specific kind of feminine (not female) writing. But both refer to the hysterical female body as a trope.

popular culture, who interpret their voices and narratives, is the same kind of feminist impulse to take up and affirm the notion of female embodied subject, through granting them voice and narrative which has been silenced by the dominant psychiatric discourse. I am not suggesting further similarities between literary theory and analysis of pop-cultural phenomena (I also note here popular autobiographical fictional accounts about anorexia), just a similar feminist impulse to reappropriate a “disordered” female figure and give it voice. I propose, following this, feminist accounts of pro-ana girls see them almost as “madwomen in the attic with a laptop”.

* * *

2.2 Raging melancholic subject

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover
what we are, but to refuse what we are.

(Foucault in Rabinow 1984, 22)

I come back now to the second move of pro-ana analyses, the notion of “anorexic subject”, and the ideas of “embodied anorexic ontology and epistemology”, which make anorexic subject emerge as a universalizing and coherent structure. Feminists tend to present it this way in order to grant it resisting agency, but I propose feminist accounts of “anorexic subject” might want to be more self-reflexive towards the production of this subject and look into the genealogy of its “identity” production.

Angela McRobbie (McRobbie 2009), whom I discussed in the previous chapter as offering a critique of the post-feminist emphasis on the anorexic individualized agency, by saying we should look into the cultural oppressive representations of female body, makes an important point about normative pathologisation of femininity. Basing her arguments upon Foucault, she argues that

the popular public domain presents female “pathology”, such as eating disorders and other self-harming practices (alcoholism, drug abuse) as normality, as a part of normative femininity (McRobbie 2009, 96). In this way public tolerance, and almost expectedness is created towards phenomena such as pro-ana sites and female celebrities’ statements about their eating disorders. In this way, McRobbie says, the category of the girl is produced, whose madness is now just normal, and this category is easily commercialized across the media. Taking cue from McRobbie here, I think we can see the feminist tendency to present the pro-ana girls as a negotiation of their identity as also perpetuating the commercialization of the now normal “anorexic subject”. This subject is individualized, but the cultural body-image does remain in the background. McRobbie brings it to the forefront, arguing that this “normative madness” is inscribed in the fashion photography, eg. in the detached look on the faces of fashion models.

At this point McRobbie takes up on Butlerian psychoanalysis to explain what is the psychic structuration of the young girls’ normative pathology. As I discussed in the previous chapter, she says that girls who enact in self-harming practices such as anorexia, are melancholic, and beneath that raging, because their normative femininity entails the loss of feminism and the loss of lesbian love (since the social field is patriarchal and heterosexual)¹². McRobbie is quick to notice that Butler does not talk about young girls, but about gender per se, meaning that all gender constitution for Butler is melancholic, but for McRobbie reading young girls through this light “seems to leap out of her pages” (McRobbie 2009, 115). Therefore, McRobbie implies young girls are particularly melancholic, due to their consumption of the dominant body-image, and their self-harming practices such as anorexia, are political texts speaking of injury.

I believe it is useful now to look into Butler’s account of subject-formation and consequently her critique of identity politics, since McRobbie builds her argument about injured anorexic young

¹² I noted in ch. 1 that McRobbie takes Butler’s notion of “oedipalised family”. However, Colebrook and Bray (1998) propose we question the universalization of oedipalised family.

girls upon Butler's theory of gender melancholia. I already discussed in chapter 1 how for Butler gender constitution as an effect of power is melancholic because it entails a pre-emption of the possibility to grieve the loss of homosexual love. Furthermore, gender is a performance, a repetition of norms through which a subject comes to be constituted, ie. there is no original gendered subject that would precede the acts of repetition. Since a subject is an effect of power, Butler says that identity categories in feminist politics should not be taken as foundational, but rather always looked through a critical genealogy of how they came to be naturalized (Butler 1990, 147). However, through psychoanalytic reading, Butler keeps the idea of melancholia and rage as part of gender subject constitution. Since gender constitution is enacted through an interpellation of normative and compulsory heterosexuality, for Butler homosexuality is particularly injured. She sees the possibilities of relieving this rage in a gender performance, such as drag, which resignifies the gender norms, exposes there is no original gender and subverts identity. Therefore, parodic enactment, as a subversion of identity, mobilizes the rage in the sense that it relieves it or offers the possibility of grieving which was pre-empted in subject-formation (Butler 1993).¹³ The potential of parody or hyperbole as a subversion of identity for Butler, I suggest from this then, can be read as mobilized on the notion of rage. McRobbie is taking this notion, as an effect of compulsory heterosexuality (to which she adds the phallic gaze) – which is then enacted in young women's self-harming practices and which she mobilizes through a critique of the oppressive cultural images of femininity. However, I propose that with an insight of Wendy Brown into how injury is easily mobilized in *all* liberal subjects, we could think whether we want to mobilize rage either around identity or subversion of identity politics.

Similar to McRobbie, Wendy Brown explains through the Foucauldian notion of disciplinary power how individual desires are produced, commodified, and mobilized as identities, and how

¹³ I want to note that McRobbie is not interested in seeing an anorexic girl potentially as a performative hyperbolic act of femininity, or a subversion of identity, which could potentially relieve the rage, but rather in the bodily consequences that self-harming practices have on girls' bodies which leads her to critique the cultural female body images (McRobbie 2009).

this production spurs “a fantastic array of behaviour-based identities ranging from recovering alcoholic professionals to unrepentant crack mothers.” (Brown 1993, 393) As I said before, McRobbie adds to these behaviours self-harming anorexic practices of young women. Brown continues, these identities, individualized and social at the same time, are easily politicized within the liberal political system, to seek inclusion into what we think as discursive formation of universal justice. Identities previously seen as a complement or supplement to the universal “we” (Brown gives an example of homosexuals) are normalized to be included into the “we”. However, she continues, this normalization precludes in fact a critique of capitalist bourgeois cultural and economic system, because the middle class consumerist individualized identity, is taken for granted and embodies the ideal towards which all disciplinary spin-off identities gravitate. I add here, feminist accounts which treat “anorexic subject” in terms of normal choice and lifestyle might want to be aware of the perpetuation of disciplinary normalization and commodification of deviant identities, which is McRobbie’s point as well.

Brown argues further, we can see all liberal subjects (not just markedly disenfranchised ones) formed in a way to easily politicize their injury. She bases her argument on Nietzsche’s account of the logic of *ressentiment* (Brown 1993, 400), which is the moralizing revenge of the powerless. This means inscribing pain into subject-formation and therefore into identity politics based upon seeking universal liberal justice. All liberal subjects are vulnerable to resentment because their production by power and the liberal discourse’s denial of this production makes them feel failure, to self-make, self-realize themselves, which is taken for granted in liberalism, and therefore to feel themselves injured and sufferers. The logic of suffering always seeks a guilty agent, and produces affects of rage and righteousness. Following Nietzsche, Brown explains the logics of pain: before desacralization of all regions of life, the priest would direct the rage toward self-discipline and self-surveillance. But the desacralization turns the unrelieved suffering subject towards seeking an external culprit. Now, I find this very similar to McRobbie’s account of the production of raging,

self-harming anorexic young girls.¹⁴ Since for her, feminism is lost in their subject-formation (gender equality is presumed), their rage is pre-empted and turned into self-harming practices. But this is a political script which points to the need of feminist politics based on anorexic young girls' rage – an external guilty agent is sought and found: phallogentric cultural female body representations. My question following from this is: if injured subject is an effect, a production of disciplinary power, and a reaction to this power, do we still want to engage in this reactionary kind of politics which is mobilized from the culture of suffering, or we can think politics differently?

Brown points to a possible different politics, which would not organize around identity, because identity politics does not subject to critique the sovereign subject which deploys the technologies of individualization. Instead of politicizing who “I am”, she proposes to do politics based on “what I want to be, or want to have” (Brown 1993, 407). Also, she refers to Foucault and his idea that disciplinary subject does not necessarily have a will to freedom, but rather that freedom is something that is practiced (which also means agency is not necessarily resistance). So, I suggest, not to further perpetuate the politics of rage would be to do away with the identity-centredness and to focus on (not necessarily resisting) practices and wants/desires of and between bodies which come from the disciplinary positions. Foucault says: “The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and from the type of individualization which is linked to the state”. (Foucault in Rabinow 1984, 22).

My point from this discussion in relation to anorexia is that, first: feminists might want to be careful in reappropriating an anorexic subject, liberated from the biomedical narrative and as such

¹⁴ McRobbie bases her argument on Butler's Freudian psychoanalysis. But if psychoanalysis so well explains and interprets psychic subject-formation, and the liberal capitalist disciplinary system is that which produces such unrelieved subjects, could we then see one supporting the other in a circle of capitalist production and psychoanalytic interpretation of subjects?

an effect of power, as if we know what a coherent anorexic subject means, but rather look into the genealogy of its production; second: feminists might also want to be careful in politicizing rage (for liberation from the oppressive cultural images) as seen to be a part of anorexic subject-formation, since all liberal subjects can be seen as vulnerable to injury, which therefore spurs a reactionary pain-based politics. Also, if we would want to see anorexic as a subversion of identity, we could think if we want to mobilize the rage perceived in its formation.

Instead, I propose we could see anorexia not through subjects, as if we knew what a coherent “anorexic subject” is, but through practices that anorexic body does, and this might offer an affirmative (or if feminists would call it “liberatory”) kind of body politics. This politics is proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, who also dispense with the idea of the unconscious, and therefore abandon altogether politics which would mobilize rage of subject-formation. From the level of individualized micro-power, could we go to the level of the molecules? To this thought I turn in the following pages looking into what Deleuze and Guattari call anorexic “molecular politics”.

* * *

2.3 Becoming-anorexic

You will be organized, you will be an organism,
you will articulate your body – otherwise you’re just deprived.
You will be signifier and signified, interpreter and interpreted –
otherwise you’re just a deviant. (Deleuze 1987, 159)

Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze 1987, 151) propose to see anorexia as a form of biological and political experimentation, of making yourself a “body without organs”. For them, body without organs is that which is not stratified into a coherent organism, as social formation would have it,

which means that body without organs is not opposed to biological organs as such but to the organization of organs into an organism, into a subject. As they say, organism is a coagulation, sedimentation, from which medical doctors benefit, and which can be dismantled into a body without organs. What is important in/on the body without organs is the desires, affects and intensities which produces, and not what it means or signifies. Instead of positing consciousness which would pre-date the body, Deleuze and Guattari propose to see the body and what it does, what it practices, in terms of immanent desires and productions, which are made in connections with other bodies, so that we would not invest in the psychoanalytic readings of the unconscious as the source of meanings. They say that unconscious is something to be constructed and not rediscovered, as desires between bodies which are produced in their immanence (Deleuze 1987, 284), which also means we would not look for unconscious rage as a possible mobilizer of resistance.

To see anorexic body practice through this perspective, as making a “body without organs”, I rely on Colebrook and Bray’s reading of Deleuze and Guattari (Colebrook 1998). They say that action is productive rather than representational, and that we should ask what it does, not what it means, whereby they refer to Foucault (Colebrook 1998, 57), and I add here – instead of looking how anorexia is repressive/liberatory, we could see anorexic practice in terms of “practising freedom” (from signification). Colebrook and Bray argue that body is productive not because it expresses some interior depth but because it connects bodies, and these connections are not determined in advance but are the result of the play of singularities (Colebrook 1998, 58). Following this, here is their account of how anorexia can be seen through Deleuze and Guattari’s theory:

Rather than being the negation of some hidden meaning, they might be seen as productive, as forms of self-formation. This is not to valorize anorexia as some privileged or authentic form of resistant behaviour. On the contrary, **the point would be to do away with notions of ownness, authenticity, autonomy, and the rhetoric of alienation.** Anorexia would be one form of self-formation among others, and – as a

series of interconnected practices – would need to be considered in terms of what it creates or invents. (Colebrook 1998, 58, my emphasis)

Further they explain why they do not want to posit anorexia or deviancy as the new norm, which I propose feminist accounts might want to follow – the point of looking into body practices is a shattering of any general or totalizing account of what constitutes a self or thought. In other words, there is no “anorexic subject” as such, not deviant nor resisting – we cannot generalize what one body does in connections to bodies around it in terms of a coherent subjectivity which can then be deployed by feminists to talk about all young women in the “west”.

But, if we dispense with an anorexic subject, what kind of body politics is this? Deleuze and Guattari link the notion of “body without organs” to the idea of seeing the body not as “being” but as “becoming” (Deleuze 1987, 272). They argue that all becomings are “molecular” because becoming does not mean to identify with something, which would be “molar” politics. At this point they explain that it might be important for feminists to engage in “molar politics”, but also why it is important to strive beyond this politics toward “molecular politics”. They make the concept of “becoming-woman” for which they say is a starting point for all other becomings, whereby “becoming-woman” is not to set up woman as subject, but quite the opposite. The idea of taking “becoming-woman” in contrast to “man” as man and as human, I believe can be read as a feminist deconstructive string in their thinking, but insofar if we think of feminist as not promoting the idea of women as subjects, but going beyond binary politics. Indeed, they propose that we could see sexuality as n-sexes, as a way of becoming-woman of the man and the becoming-animal of the human. (Deleuze 1987, 278) At other place they also refer to becoming-animal as experiencing inhumanity in the body, which, I think, points to their moving not only subject from the center but also possibly moving human from the center of politics.¹⁵

¹⁵ I note this “inhuman” or “becoming-animal” vision in Deleuze and Guattari’s thinking because in Chapter 3, I elaborate on Karen Barad’s theory of becoming, which she calls “posthumanist” (Barad 2003). My interpretation is that both these theories move human from the center of politics.

Taking up on the idea of becoming, and seeing anorexic body in this way, let us see how anorexic body, if we see it as a trope of female body, which is what feminists do, can be seen in the light of Deleuze and Guattari's explanation of feminist politics between the molar and the molecular. Since we are in a social formation, Deleuze and Guattari argue it might be necessary for women to conduct molar politics as to win back "their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity". But, they should not confine themselves to such a politics since it is, as they ironically say, "moved by *ressentiment*, the will to power and cold mothering". (Deleuze 1987, 276). So, they also take up on the Nietzschean notion of *ressentiment* and propose to abandon identity-driven politics which inscribes pain into subjects. If we then think of an anorexic body, we could abandon the idea to politicize an injured female anorexic subject, but rather to see it as "becoming-anorexic" which never arrives at being anorexic, but is rather a constant experimentation and body practice.

However, this might not be that simple in the social formation or what they call "dominant reality" (Deleuze 1987, 160), and identities might not be that fluid, as it might seem in their proposal at first glance. If we see becoming-woman as a form of "deterritorialization" (away from a subject/organism), this cannot be seen as an easily-done dismantling of all stratification, because the bodies are also constantly being "reterritorialized" in a social formation – we cannot just simply escape this. What I read from this, we cannot posit "becoming" as a universalizing way to do politics, because knowledge is always situated within specific local power relations, which we have to be aware of, but at the same time having in mind the possible vision of "molecular women's politics that slips into molar confrontations, and passes under or through them" (Deleuze 1987, 276) Therefore, if we think of anorexic body, we cannot simply think of it in terms of "becoming-anorexic" but also think what anorexic body practice does in relation to other bodies, such as, for example, the friend, the parent, the psychiatrist, the image, etc.

Furthermore, what cannot be neglected in the process of “becoming-anorexic” or anorexic deterritorialization is also what we would say is a more literal interpretation of “molecular” – bodily biochemistry or biology.

* * *

2.4 Pharmacanalysis

It is necessary to choose the right molecule.

(Deleuze 1987, 286)

When Deleuze and Guattari speak about “the body without organs”, they do have in mind the biological body. The body without organs is about intensities and affects that it makes through experimentation. Because, if we see anorexic practices as experimentation, practices such as fasting, dietetic regimes, measuring the body, regulating the body, they also have an effect on body materiality, and on what I discussed in the previous chapter as “brain in the gut” or “biochemical component”, on the levels of serotonin in the gut and in the brain and on anorexic body feeling good. And, Deleuze and Guattari do see experimentation as fuelled by a positive desire, positive life force, a sense of feeling good in your body through deterritorialization.

Because, for them, the point of experimentation and inventing body without organs also means not ending up in what they call “empty body” (Deleuze 1987, 150), for which they give an example of a drug addict who through overdose feels no more intensities in their body, and therefore fails in making themselves body without organs. They also have the notion of “cancerous body”, which for them is body with fascist or totalitarian desires towards other bodies, an outcome of wild deterritorialization, and they say that drug addict can also potentially create a cancerous body. I suggest we can think of failed anorexic experimentation also in terms

of an empty body which feels no intensities, or a cancerous body, which makes other bodies worried or guilt-ridden.

Deleuze and Guattari argue that in deterritorialization we should be cautious and not over-do it. “You invent self-destructions that have nothing to do with the death drive. Dismantling the organism has never meant killing yourself, but rather opening the body to connections that presuppose an entire assemblage, circuits, conjunctions, levels and thresholds, passages and distributions of intensity, and territories and deterritorializations measured with the craft of a surveyor” (Deleuze 1987, 160). In this passage I read biological metaphors – metaphors which point to dynamic connections between cells, nerves, molecules, serotonin levels, in the body, and for example in an anorexic body, or to stay with Deleuze’s and Guattari’s example, in a drugged body. Therefore, for them, the point of becoming which entails drug use is not an overdose due to biochemical dependency, and the point of becoming which entails anorexic practice is not death due to biochemical effects of starvation. But how to “choose the right molecule” (Deleuze 1987, 286), how to know a body without organs from an empty body or cancerous body?

For that purpose they propose pharmacanalysis might be used in contrast to psychoanalysis (Deleuze 1987, 283), because these two analyze different kinds of causalities: the unconscious, for which they say we construct it, not rediscover it, and the biochemistry. The specific causality of biochemical matter in the examples of drugged body and anorexic body make these bodies feel good and empowering, which social analysis of these practices should acknowledge, but can also end up in a failed experiment. With a discussion about this, I believe Deleuze and Guattari are opening up the topic of ethical consequences of what certain body practices do (if we do not see for example anorexic bodies in terms of universalizing coherent subjectivities), and this is also because they bring up the notion of biological body into their theory.

Colebrook and Bray (Colebrook 1998) take up on the notion of “body ethics”¹⁶, and how we can see body practices in their positive multiplicities, such as anorexia, if they cannot be ethically determined beforehand in terms of some pregiven law. Such law would be an impact of cultural representations on female bodies in feminist analysis, or the notion of “mental disorder” in psychiatric ethics. They continue, if we would then want to consider what an ethics of encounter between anorexic body and biomedical discourse would be, this would mean engaging in the biomedical discourse and challenging its ethics, and seeing how various cures and theories of “anorexia nervosa” exist alongside the body practice of anorexia itself (Colebrook 1998, 62). I will consider such an encounter, more precisely between an anorexic body and a medico-legal discourse, in the next chapter.

In this chapter I argued that instead of an universalizing and resisting “anorexic subject” we could see anorexic body in terms of practice and experimentation (not a-priori resisting). In this way the presumed rage of anorexic subject-formation could also be abandoned. Deleuze and Guattari’s consideration of biological body as dynamic in body practices opened up an ethical aspect of what an anorexic body practice does in relation to other bodies. Therefore, in the next chapter I consider how seeing body matter as dynamic (and I will propose – performative) changes certain ideas about medico-legal discourses on ethics of treatment without consent of “anorexic patients”.

¹⁶ Colebrook and Bray take up the notion of body ethics also in relation to art. They say, if anorexia is seen as a creative disruption of normalized body practices, this implies a valorization of the practice as an aesthetic comportment (Colebrook 1998, 59), which they link with Deleuze’s ideas about art as a privileged difference and a site of ethical liberation in transgression (they discuss his work independent from Guattari). In other words, I read this as seeing body as a work of art. They further argue, art is not necessarily transgressive, nor can a question of body ethics be reduced to aesthetics. I agree, but also think this can be read from Deleuze and Guattari as well. When they talk about body deterritorialization, they call for caution because body is in its sociality and its biology: the main problem of their method which they call “schizoanalysis” is to be able to know body without organs from empty or cancerous body (Deleuze 1987, 165), and this I read as an ethical question about what certain body practice does.

3 Performance of human autonomy

I ended the previous chapter considering how the anorexic body practice opens up ethical issues in relation to other bodies. Here I want to consider Keywood's (2000) analysis of ethical issues of treatment without consent enacted in law on anorexic bodies. I see how she puts forward a feminist argument that "patient autonomy" is gendered, and proposes that anorexic bodies be resignified in law and read as hunger strikers. I ask whether this resignification also entails material reconstitution of the biochemical effects of starvation.

Next I argue that Keywood's focus on resignification, where she draws on Butler, sustains the mind-body and representation-materiality binaries, that Keywood wants to contest. I consider the authors who comment on discourse– materiality binary in Butler's theory of body performativity: Colebrook and Bray (1998), Barad (2003). I follow Barad in seeing discursive practices as always already material, and matter as performative.

Further I apply Barad's theory to enactment of "patient autonomy" in law, and show how engaging with biochemical compulsion of anorexic body can question the rational autonomous human subject – rendering it as local material-discursive performance. This not only questions psychiatric ethics (and its legal implications) but yet again the idea of "anorexic subject" as such. I propose the ethical issues around anorexic body be seen as a local negotiation between bodies.

3.1 Anorexic (lack of) autonomy

Materiality of anorexic body comes to matter in a feminist-driven analysis which I consider here, of treatment without consent of anorexic patients, as figured in psychiatric ethics and then

enacted in law¹⁷. Kirsty Keywood analyzes a series of cases of forced feeding, in the form of tube feeding under detention and restraint, enacted on female anorexic bodies in the English law in the 1990s. She wants to look at how social, clinical and cultural processes play a role in the production of the anorexic condition, and how anorexic identities are produced in law. She offers “through the potential of poststructuralism, to make space for the resignifying of anorexic bodies in law” (Keywood 2000, 495). In this attempt she also takes, as the feminist analyses that I discussed previously, anorexic body to speak of female embodiment more generally, and of broader deployments of power which constitute and discipline the female body in the law. She considers cases of anorexic bodies which under the English Mental Health Act from 1983, can be detained and treated without consent on the basis they lack mental capacity to make decisions, and in cases of minors irrespective of the mental capacity. What she says is crucial to produce anorexic identities in law is the notion of “patient autonomy” so I turn briefly to see how this principle is figured in psychiatric ethics.

Eric Matthews (Matthews 2009) explains the philosophical premises of psychiatric ethics. The key thing of liberal medical ethics is that doctors respect the autonomy of their patients, held to be sovereign and self-determining (in the sense as in political theory, he adds) as to make decisions about their own lives, which means they cannot be medically treated without consent. The respect of autonomy means also respect for human dignity, and proclaiming someone incompetent to make decision on their own life would make them less than fully human. (Matthews 2009, 166). He continues, the notion of autonomy, coming from a tradition within Enlightenment philosophy, is for Kant central to moral theory, which means that to have autonomy is not so much to have capacity to determine one’s own destiny but rather to choose moral principles which are universal rational laws of humanity, which is how human life is seen.

¹⁷ Matthews (2009) explains that treatment without consent in mental health acts is a legal enactment of the notions of psychiatric ethics, as I discuss later.

Interestingly, he gives an example of an anorexic girl, whose desire to starve herself is not intelligible in the way as that of a hunger striker, who makes a political and moral point of protesting against injustice, nor is she testing her limits of endurance as a religious mystic who goes on a fast (Matthews 2009, 169). As he says, what differentiates these examples, is that their reasons for endangering life are differently intelligible and valued in a culture – and this is what makes an anorexic girl lacking an autonomy. Therefore she is treated in terms of “humanitarian intervention” for her own good, to restore her human autonomy, since in refusing food, she is acting under “compulsion”, which Matthews explains in terms of not being able to rank values properly, in an intelligible way. He does note it is highly unreliable to predict what the patient “really” wants (if they had the autonomy) and that through appealing to universal values we could be actually sustaining conventional middle-class standards (Matthews 2009, 179), but also that by putting human life above everything, psychiatrists simply have no other alternative but to act for what they see as patients’ real welfare.

Keywood analyzes the notion of patient autonomy in her analysis of legal cases. She analyzes four cases from 1992-1997 of anorexic girls (two minors, two adults) who were by the English law proclaimed incompetent and subjected to restraint and tube feeding. On the other hand, she notes a case from 1995 of a man, diagnosed with personality disorder, an imprisoned offender, whose decision not to eat because he was said to be on a hunger strike was upheld by the court. What Keywood sees in this is that the self-determining, autonomous subject which is presented as universal and ungendered is in fact gendered – male. She continues, if we see this rational subject as based on the Cartesian mind-body split, this ends up in setting up the binaries (which I already discussed in 1st chapter as challenged by feminists): man/woman, reason/unreason, mind/body. She concludes, female gets to be equated with body, which is why anorexic women are seen as lacking autonomy (will, moral agency), and the scientific and philosophical projects of Enlightenment can be seen as hostile to women. (Keywood 2000, 502).

Therefore, Keywood proposes that in cases of anorexic women, biomedical and consequently legal discourses should consider feminist analyses such as Bordo's as well as what she calls feminist psychoanalysis, which proposed to see anorexic body as "protest against the confined role of women in 20th ct" (Keywood 2000, 506), suggesting that anorexic women be read as hunger strikers acting against injustice¹⁸. Then, the judiciary would see that women do have autonomy and can rationally decide on their life (since they have resisting agency), and do not simply act under "compulsion". This "compulsion" is deployed in the legal decisions on anorexic body, as Keywood notes. In the DSM-IV-TR it is figured as: "Observations of behaviours associated with other forms of starvation suggest that obsessions and compulsions related to food may be caused or exacerbated by undernutrition." (APA 2000, 585). I read two things from this. First, starving compulsion implies that body at a certain point takes control over mind – therefore there is no autonomy, which then means autonomy is that of the mind, or of the brain, if we see it through the neuroscientific discourse¹⁹. Indeed, Keywood notes, following Bordo, that anorexic woman is in a double bind – of exerting a form of masculine control over female body, but the failure to keep this control makes her mentally disordered and therefore subject to the control of law. But, if we want to challenge the mind-body split, as Keywood does drawing on Bordo, why do we want to present anorexic women as hunger strikers whose minds or brains would then be seen as autonomously controlling their bodies?

Next what I read from the DSM excerpt, is that compulsion from undernutrition is observed in "other forms of starvation". So, couldn't we imagine hunger-strike as one of this other forms of starvation? Which consequently means- how do we know hunger strikers also do not act under

¹⁸ I want to note that by comparison of anorexic and hunger striking bodies, not eating is seen in terms of a means trying to achieve a certain end (which is commonly voiced in hunger strikes), but what is not considered here is that not eating can be an end in itself.

¹⁹ In Chapter 1, I discuss how Elizabeth Wilson opens up the neuroscientific mapping between brain or the central nervous system and the enteric nervous system, which is seen to be the gut, and concludes that the neuroscience does not have an appropriate model of this relation, therefore instead of the idea of brain's control over the peripheral systems, we could imagine "brain in the gut" (Wilson 2004).

“compulsion” and therefore “do not have autonomy”? Keywood also notes that in the case of the male hunger-striking offender which she analyzes, his motivation was not made explicit (Keywood 2000, 506). So, instead of appealing to autonomy, a possible way to see “starving” bodies could be to acknowledge this biological compulsion and to acknowledge that biochemistry also matters in what we think of as starving embodiment, and this might challenge the mind-body split. Further engagement in biomedical and neuroscientific discourses (as I proposed in chapter 1) let us see that brain-body relation can be seen as opened up for transformation and not simply seen as brain’s control over body. This could contest what Keywood wants to contest – biomedicine seen as monolithic, universal and incontestable (Keywood 2000, 497), rather than supporting the legal notion of autonomy which is seen as based upon the philosophical and scientific mind-body separation in the first place.

A question to be asked is how “starving matter” comes to not only discursively signify, but also *matter*, in one case as anorexic body which can be forcefully fed, and in other case as autonomous striker whose matter is not be intervened into,²⁰ and yet in another case can matter as ascetic fasting? How is it possible that “biochemical compulsion” figures differently in all these “conditions”, or does it?

To illustrate this, I want to return briefly to Mahmood, whom I discussed in chapter 1, and to her point about a religious agent who does not easily fit into the secular-liberal model of (presumably resisting) autonomous individual rational will (Mahmood 2001), such as a fasting agent could be seen, I added. In relation to this, I noted how we can see anorexic body in terms of fasting practice, such as for example, female saints could be seen in the Middle Ages or “fasting girls” in the Victorian period, as Joan Brumberg explains (Brumberg 1988). Brumberg makes an

²⁰ Yet another question is possible from Keywood’s description of how the decision of hunger striker was upheld: sanctity of human life yielded to the principle of self-determination, and an autonomous decision outweighed any state interest in preserving life (Keywood 2000, 506). Following Foucault, we could ask how it became “state interest” in the first place to preserve life, and why suicide becomes that which cannot simply be neither prohibited nor allowed by state power, so it becomes politicized in the form of “individual right to die” (Foucault 1990, 138). This, I propose, might be more insightful than appealing to autonomy to potentially exercise this “right”.

important point, how after Victorian medicalization and secularization, some biomedical writers want to argue that “anorexia mirabilis” (fasting practice) and “anorexia nervosa” (mental disorder) are really the same kind of “illness”, applying the biomedical and psychological models across time and space as if there was certainty about the etiology of the disease. More interestingly, but also predictably, she says that some feminists very easily compare “anorexia mirabilis” and “anorexia nervosa” as the same “quest for female liberation from a patriarchal society” (Brumberg 1988, 43). In other words, in the liberal discourse framework, starving bodies are read either as autonomous individual hunger strikers or mental patients lacking autonomy. This has “material” consequences – in the first case, we could say that strikers exercise autonomy of their brain, in the other case we could see anorexics as being under “compulsion” of Wilson’s “the brain in the gut”, and therefore lacking autonomy. Considering this, what I argue through this comparison, is that the discursive concept of autonomy also entails the constitution of matter in two different ways, or we could say – matter is performed differently.

Keywood (2000) however, proposes a resignification of anorexic bodies in law, but does not consider that discursive resignification entails also material reconstitution. She proposes anorexic women’s stories should be heard because they are regularly absent from the courtroom, following upon the idea that hunger-strikers are read differently because they accompany what they do with words, with narratives which make them intelligible and understandable.²¹ For her, poststructuralist theories which critique categories of identity which juridical structures naturalise, whereby she refers to Butler, offer possibilities for competing and plural accounts of what in biomedicine and law is anorexic condition (Keywood 2000, 507). Therefore, she proposes women’s personal narratives of embodiment should be heard in the courtroom. In this way, poststructuralism provides space “in which bodies are constantly reconstituted and resignified”

²¹ I briefly note a similarity with what I discussed in ch. 2, where I referred to literary studies and analyses of popular culture - a feminist impulse to reappropriate a “disordered” female body from the master discourse where it was silenced, and give her voice/narrative/history.

(Keywood 2000, 507). While the focus is on resignification, I argue that reconstitution of matter is overlooked in her account, which therefore can be seen to keep the representation – materiality binary, upon which I elaborate in the next section.

* * *

3.2 Material-discursive compulsion

Language matters. Discourse matters. Culture matters.
There is an important sense in which the only thing
that does not seem to matter anymore is matter.
(Barad 2003, 801)

Keywood in her analysis draws on Butler and sees a potential in resignification of anorexic bodies in law, but she overlooks their material reconstitution. To discuss this, I consider Mahmood's arguments about Butler's body performativity and Colebrook and Bray's arguments (1998) about discourse – materiality binary in Butler's theory.

Mahmood in her analysis of body performances of shyness of religious women (Mahmood 2001) draws on Butler's theory of body performativity. Following Butler, she analyzes how body practices come to constitute what is the body inner core or consciousness, but also says that Butler emphasizes the potential resignification of discursive norms through body performance, while she wants to emphasize materiality of the body, and says that resignification of norms would mean to "retutor the body to behave in a different way to destabilize or disrupt the solidity of norms". (Mahmood 2001, 216). If we extend this to Keywood's impulse to resignify autonomy-lacking anorexic bodies in law as to paint them as hunger strikers, are we then not "retutoring" the biochemical effects of starvation as to say that autonomous hunger striking

bodies do not have them? In this sense, a body performance entails not just potential resignification, but also rematerialization.

Similar to Mahmood, Colebrook and Bray say that Butler's theory of body performativity puts emphasis on (re)signification and not materiality of the body. They argue that Butler's account of body performativity (Colebrook 1998) attempts to overcome dualism between discourse and materiality, by seeing that body materiality as prediscursive is an effect of discourse, where she draws on Foucault. However, they claim, in arguing that by keeping the notion that matter is other than discursive, she sustains the opposition of discourse and some "outside", which she terms "constitutive outside" (Colebrook 1998, 43). In this way, they argue, she changes Foucault's radicalization of the antidualist immanence of discourse, ie. his working of notions of discourse and materiality through one another, by arguing that he fails to account what has to be excluded from discursive intelligibility in order that it functions, in relation to some non-discursive exterior. In this way, they claim, she establishes an opposition between discourse and materiality, although for Foucault discourse is a dynamic configuration of events that includes the material and corporeal (Colebrook 1998, 44). The opposition discourse– materiality, which Butler makes by putting body as an effect of discourse but always already within in, they say, reduces eating disorders such as anorexia, or body more generally, in feminist theory to an issue of representation or signification, or what the body signifies and potentially resignifies. Rather, they suggest that discourse be expanded beyond the notions of representation/signification, as an active event or production, which they see in the thought of Deleuze and Foucault. In other words this would mean to see how discursive practices are always already material, and produce such notions as biochemical compulsion. I propose we see this through Karen Barad's notion of "posthumanist performativity of how matter comes to matter" (Barad 2003, 801) and her expansion upon Butler's theory.

Karen Barad (Barad 2003) proposes to draw on science studies and feminist studies as to offer a notion of performativity of bodies which accounts for how what we think of “nature” is performed. She proposes to think the social and the scientific in a connected way, which would go beyond the notions of these practices as representations of culture and representations of nature. Because, as she argues, both scientific and social constructionist approaches to the “material world” are invested in the idea of representationalism – scientific knowledge claims to represent things as they really are (nature), while social constructionists see objects as products of social activities (culture) (Barad 2003, 806). Also, representationalism is heavily invested in the Cartesian knowing subject who can know the world through language (rather than objects they are talking about). But, Barad asks at this point why would we assume that we have any more direct access to representations than to the objects they represent, because this is also a contingent fact of history, and it “takes a healthy scepticism toward Cartesian doubt to be able to begin to see an alternative” (Barad 2003, 807). We could see feminist investment in social constructionist approach as an impulse not to put body as a matter of biological determinism, but Barad offers an alternative - a performative approach whereby she proposes to expand on Butler’s performative account of materialization of sexed bodies to see how body “anatomy and physiology” is produced (Barad 2003, 809).

At this point Barad refers to Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* where he proposes to look into the history of bodies, meaning physical bodies, to

show how the deployments of power are directly connected to the body – to bodies, functions, physiological processes, sensations, and pleasures; far from the body having to be effaced, what is needed is to make it visible through an analysis in which the biological and the historical are not consecutive to one another... but are bound together in an increasingly complex fashion in accordance with the development of the modern technologies of power that take life as their objective. (Foucault in Barad 2003, 809)

Barad makes two points that she wants to build upon from Foucault. She says he doesn’t account for how precisely are biological and historical bound together, and how are biological forces

always already historical, and historical always already biological.²² This is why she proposes the notion of material-discursive practices. Second, she wants to acknowledge, which Foucault doesn't, that body's historicity in its materiality plays an active role in the workings of power, in its own materialization. Therefore she does not want to look just at how human bodily contours are constituted, but "how even the very atoms that make up the biological body come to matter and, more generally, how matter makes itself felt?" (Barad 2003, 810).

Barad therefore sees materialization of bodies as performative through "material-discursive practices" as "intra-active becoming" of the world (Barad 2003, 822). She emphasizes that matter is active in its becoming, and says that Butler's theory reinscribes matter as a passive product of discursive practices rather than an active agent participating in materialization. Also, she says Butler is focused on materialization of the contours of human bodies, while she proposes a "posthumanist" ontological performative account of all bodies, meaning human and non-human, notions which I will elaborate on below. She also reflects on Butler's notion of "constitutive outside", as a relation between nature and culture, matter and language, and similar to Colebrook and Bray, says that Butler reinscribes matter as subservient to the play of language. The failure to capture what is "outside" language opens up a possibility for agency, which is then human agency and amounts to resignification (Barad 2003, 825). She proposes to see agency differently, as well as human/non-human enactment, which I discuss below in relation to "patient autonomy" of anorexic body.

* * *

²² She says he makes a distinction between "discursive" and "non-discursive" practices, where discursive for him means local sociohistorical material conditions that enable and constrain knowledge practices such as speaking, thinking, calculating, measuring, and non-discursive refers to the social institutional practices, which distinction might not be useful for theorizing biology (Barad 2003, 819).

3.3 Wandering brain²³

Boundaries do not sit still. (Barad 2003, 817)

Barad proposes to shift the ontological unit that the social and the scientific posit, from that of a separate individual with inherent boundaries and properties – atom of science or individual of social theory, to see ontology as relational phenomenon, consisting of intra-acting components (Barad 2003, 815). Intra-acting means that matter plays an active role in its materialization. She says a local separation of agents within a phenomenon is done through material-discursive practices. This local separation enacts boundaries between bodies, and the activity of enacting boundaries is what she calls “agency”, which then for her is not a property of human bodies, but a material-discursive practice through which we can see how the boundary between human and non-human bodies is enacted. This local separation she calls “exteriority within” phenomenon, which gives no priority to either materiality nor discursivity. (Barad 2003, 825).²⁴

She is interested in a “genealogical analysis of the discursive emergence of ‘human’ , because ‘human bodies’ and ‘human subjects’ do not pre-exist as such; nor are they mere end products; neither pure cause nor pure effect but part of the world in its open-ended becoming.” (Barad 2003, 821) She sees bodies not as objects with inherent boundaries and properties, but as material-discursive phenomena, which does not mean that what constitutes “human” is a free-floating ideality, because there is causality in a phenomenon, which is neither determinism nor free will. She says that causal intra-actions leave marks on bodies, and agency which she sees in terms of enacting a local separability between bodies in a phenomenon (and which is not equalled with human intentionality or subjectivity) entails accountability for marks on bodies (Barad 2003,

²³ Instead of “wandering womb“, which was a metaphor for female hysteria, as Wilson discusses (Wilson 2004).

²⁴ I note that Barad is primarily interested in how scientific practices get to enact local separability between agents in a phenomenon.

824)²⁵. She says agency is an enactment, so I read this we can see human agency also as a local enactment, and not some universally figured will that can shape the world. But can we imagine what would it mean to be aware of the accountability of material-discursive practices that make a local separation between bodies? I try to apply this to the enactment of “patient autonomy” in law in relation to anorexic bodies, if we consider that the lack of autonomy can be seen in terms of “less than fully human” body (Matthews 2009).

As I discussed, anorexic bodies (as well as potentially all mental patients) can be figured under the mental health acts in terms of lacking autonomy to decide on rational universal human values (Matthews 2009), such as life, because of the biochemical compulsion, which I proposed we see in terms of “brain in the gut” (Wilson 2004) or biochemical effects of starvation. They are proclaimed incompetent to decide on their own life, and given to treatment without consent which includes forced feeding, which can be seen as making them less than fully human, and therefore a “humanitarian” intervention is enacted to restore autonomy (Matthews 2009).

Now, as I discussed in ch. 1, Wilson opens up the neuroscientific mapping between brain or the central nervous system and the enteric nervous system, which is seen to be the gut, and argues that the neuroscience does not have an appropriate model of this relation, so instead of the idea of brain's control over the peripheral systems, we could imagine “brain in the gut” (Wilson 2004). Now, we can see autonomy which we could call “human”, figured as that of the mind, in terms of autonomy of the brain, and not just any (since according to Wilson we do not have one), but that in the head, as opposed to the “brain in the gut”. In this sense, the tag of anorexic “mental” disorder might give us another meaning, different from that which I discussed in chapter 2 in terms of “reading disorders” (Colebrook 1998), which is seen as mis-reading of the female body-image, but rather it can mean “brain disease” in the sense of neurodisease, a disease

²⁵ Barad primarily refers to how scientific practices should be aware of taking part in the accountability of a local enactment which leaves “marks on bodies”, or marks the bodies as human or non-human.

of the neurons and synapses. This then potentially entails the idea that being autonomous human would be equal to being a brain which functions properly, and a malfunction of the brain would make a human less than fully human (since the lack of autonomy is figured as such – open to “humanitarian intervention”).

The notion of human figured in terms of being a brain is what Fernando Vidal discusses, proposing the term “brainhood” for what he calls “the quality of or condition of being a brain”, in analogy to personhood figured as individual person (Vidal 2009, 5). He says “brainhood” is a specifically modern phenomenon, and as such connected to the notion of individual as an autonomous agent of choice. He also argues that “brainhood” seems to be a western phenomenon, since he believes no other culture has proposed the reducibility of self to an organ of the body. The notion of “self” or “I” in western philosophical tradition, he continues, has been figured as a relation between mind and body as such that I or self has been equated with consciousness and self-awareness, while body is experientially significant yet ontologically derivative, as he says. Furthermore, in extension to this, I or self in scientific discourses gets to be equated with the brain.

Vidal traces a historical line of what he calls “the modern brainhood” saying its early emergence can be found in the mid-18th ct., and led to what today propels neuroscientific research, namely, that we are our brains (Vidal 2009, 14). He proposes also another notion for the condition of being a brain, which is “cerebral subject”²⁶, which he explains as the human being specified by the property of being and not simply having a brain. However, the “cerebral subject” as the modern self also has a competitor, as he interestingly continues – its strongest competitor in media, which popularize neuroscientific discourses, is “the genetic self” (Vidal 2009, 6), which would mean that we are our genes. Following from this, we can see the brain and the gene

²⁶ Vidal elaborates that he uses the notion of “cerebral subject” in the spirit of Nikolas Rose’s “neurochemical self”, referring to accounts of personhood such as when psychiatry gives up the distinction between organic and functional disorders and postulates that mind is what the brain does – making it a mantra of brainhood ideology (Vidal 2009, 27). For more on Rose’s notion of “neurochemical self”, as well as his “biological citizen” see: (Rose 2007).

compete as to which one makes autonomous individual human self, or the “disordered lack” of autonomous self. Expectedly, popular media discourse on the cause of anorexia present the same competing explanations of its etiology – whether it’s the brain chemistry or the gene.²⁷

Let us imagine the “cerebral subject” with the property of brainhood in a phenomenon (in Barad’s sense) of legal enactment of “patient autonomy”, or better to say – the lack of autonomy, due to a dysfunction of the mind/brain, or a “disorderly” biochemical arrangement between the brain in the head (cerebral) and “brain in the gut”. In this way the ethical issues around mental patients autonomy could be seen through the perspective of what Vidal discusses as the emerging field of “neuroethics“, which is concerned with what are the ethical, social and legal consequences of neuroscientific knowledge which, as Vidal adds, is based upon very little evidence of “brainhood ideology“ (Vidal 2009, 9). It is important to note at this point that while Wilson displaces brain from the head into the gut, her keeping the notion of brain could also be seen as a move of “brainhood ideology“. This could be read in the light of her deconstructive approach, according to which she acknowledges complicity with the structure one examines and a work from within, as I discussed it in the introduction (Wilson 1998, 29). In other words, the notion of brain is still kept, although it is deconstructed for her²⁸.

So if we consider this “deconstructed brain” in what Barad calls a local enactment of agent separability through material-discursive practices, we could trace a genealogy of what “human body” is (which is what Barad is interested in) because we could say that there is a separation between “human” and “not fully human” (Matthews 2009). In other words, this would mean to see that what comes to mean “human body” and “less than fully human” is not some universal

²⁷ For example, on the BBC news web page, under the rubric “Health“ we can find articles such as “Brain chemistry link to anorexia“ or “Anorexia has genetic basis“, which give references to neuroscientific research and to results published in scientific journals. See: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-13208401>.

²⁸ Also, what I discuss in ch.1 that she does – combining insights from psychoanalysis with neuroscientific brain-body relation, can be seen in light of what Vidal calls “neuropsychanalysis“. He describes it as one of the emerging neuro fields, which try to “reform the human sciences on the basis of knowledge about the brain“ (Vidal 2009, 22), for which there is little evidence, he adds. In her case then we could see this knowledge of “the brain“ as deconstructed in a way.

given, but an effect of local enactment. Therefore, an appeal to “patient autonomy” of anorexic body is not an appeal to some universal humanity, but to a material-discursive performance which is based upon the notions of autonomous rational individual self which fuel political theory as well as psychiatric ethics, but themselves also have a history, and we can refer to them as “modern” (Vidal 2009) or “liberal” (Matthews 2009). In this sense, the notion of what “human body” is, can be seen as politico-medical construction.²⁹

Therefore, instead of putting forward an argument about the gendering of the autonomy, as Keywood does, we could consider a different approach to enactment of psychiatric ethics on anorexic bodies. We could engage with and acknowledge what Barad calls the active role of matter in its materialization, ie. biochemical effects of starvation (and not leaving them for the sphere of biomedicine), precisely because they point to how “autonomous human brainhood” is a local material-discursive performance. Thus, anorexic body practice due to “brain in the gut” question the authority of the human autonomous/ autonomous-lacking subject of the biomedical and legal discourses.

Furthermore, this let us see that “patient autonomy”, as well as “mental patient” or “anorexic patient” are local material-discursive performances. In this sense, we can see it is not possible to universalize “anorexic subject”, not deviant nor resisting, as I already proposed. We can only see anorexic body in terms of its body practices. The ethical issues surrounding anorexic body then would not be seen as some predetermined principle enacted in law, but as a negotiation between bodies in a local phenomenon.

²⁹ For possible implications of the reduction of rights of the political construct of “human“, and the notion that “less than fully human“ potentially resides in every „human body“, as well as the notion of „brain death“ (in contrast to „brainhood“) see Agamben, Giorgio: *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. (Agamben 1995)

Conclusions

Knowledge under deconstruction becomes a perversion:
It has no natural aim/solution, and it is always already
dislodged from its source/origin. (Wilson 1998, 29)

This is a point at which to look back and see whether and how the questions from the introduction were answered in the course of the three chapters of this thesis.

My analysis started from the observation that feminist cultural readings theorize anorexia in terms of a protesting female subject against the dominant masculine body-image. I argued that assumptions of the subjugation/resistance anorexic position can be read as liberal, and therefore not universal.

Following E. Wilson, I argued that biological body should not be excluded from feminist social theory about anorexia, because body is always already natural-cultural, and that matter could be seen as dynamic, not stable and fixed. This brought certain notions into cultural readings of anorexia which question the figure of autonomous protesting female subject. Thus, I elaborated that through Wilson's notion of "morphology", sexual difference is just one of many, and not crucial difference in anorexia. I took up on Bordo's mention of biochemical effects of starvation, which bring in a specific causality in anorexic body, which is not social. I theorized how this causality can be seen in terms of the relation between Wilson's "brain in the gut" and brain in the head – the relation which shifts biomedical assumptions about autonomous mind/brain and mind/brain's control over body. I argued that seeing matter as performative, through Barad's account, let us see the notion of human autonomy as material-discursive performance. This has implications for both feminist discourses that see anorexia as a political protest, and for medico-legal discourses on treatment without consent that see anorexic bodies as autonomy-lacking.

Following from this, I conclude no single theory of anorexia can be given, and no coherent universalizing anorexic subjectivity posited, neither as "mental disorder" nor "feminist protest". I

propose we could see anorexia in terms of body practices – what body does in relation to other bodies, which could be a way to see bodies more generally. This in Deleuze and Guattari’s theory opens up an ethical question of what certain body practices do (make other bodies guilt-ridden, or make themselves an empty, potentially fatal body), if we would not have predetermined laws about them. I propose ethics of anorexic body could always be seen as negotiation with other bodies in a local context.

At this point I believe it is clear I did not want to propose yet another (feminist or other) theory of anorexia, nor of the body more generally. How I offered to see anorexic body practice is not a solution to phenomenon of anorexia, which in that case could even be seen as ceasing to exist. Rather, I am aware that a deconstructive approach, which in my reading is similar to Deleuze and Guattari’s proposal of “becoming” and not being anorexic, works always in a local sociohistorical material context, and is not some universalizable strategy.

Now I would like to reflect on certain methodological and epistemological questions that came up in the course of my analyses of anorexia. As I said in the introduction, I was informed by Wilson’s deconstructive approach to what we think of as nature-culture binary, and her particular deconstructive reading of neuroscientific brain-body relation. In relation to this, a number of binaries kept coming up in my readings of different theories. Colebrook and Bray on the example of anorexia challenged the mind-body and representation-materiality binaries and wanted in a way to expose how authors such as Bordo, Grosz and Butler keep them. Wilson, as I said, proposes we see nature-culture as not able to be separated, similar as Deleuze and Guattari see biology-politics of the body, or Barad the social-scientific practices. A question was raised for me – what are the implications of merging binaries such as these? Or, are we really merging them,

and in this move also saying they were clearly separated, or rather we are saying they have never been separated?³⁰

Wilson reflects on the notion of binaries in deconstruction, arguing they are not simply reversed, nor reinstalled, nor destroyed. Rather, a binary is inflamed and its self-evident character undone by manifesting the point at which the binary becomes unworkable or incoherent (Wilson 1998, 26). Furthermore, this is always done from the critic's position within the structure, which entails self-scrutiny toward complicitness with the binary structure and toward its self-evidence. I read her engagement with neuroscience through this perspective. She is working with the knowledge from the neuroscience, at the same time deconstructing it, as when she considers the brain-body relation in terms of "brain in the gut". So, while we could see her project within the umbrella of what Vidal (2009) calls the emerging neuro fields that want to change social sciences on the basis of the knowledge about the brain, she at the same time deconstructs this knowledge.

Wilson in this way combines deconstruction with empiricism, explaining that "when carefully deployed, the conjunction deconstruction-empiricism will arrest both the progressivist presumptions of much empirical work and the antiempiricist presumptions of our own critical habits." (Wilson 1998, 23).³¹ Would this be a way to approach knowledge about the biological-political body?

The idea of deconstruction-empiricism conjunction goes a way beyond the scope of this thesis, which is purely theoretical. I want to emphasize that in theorizing, my analysis of biological-

³⁰ This question was also inspired by reading Bruno Latour's essay "Constitution" in *We Have Never Been Modern*. (Latour 1993). I do not want to bring yet new arguments to this concluding part, but want to note that my reading of Wilson's deconstruction will reflect some of Latour's ideas. I briefly try to capture his argument: a modern critique of the binaries such as nature-culture, social-scientific, operates in two ways – by mediating between them moderns are also purifying them – implying they actually were clearly separated, while according to him, they never were, and we have never been modern in that sense. What moderns do not do, is to acknowledge these two operations work together. I read from this that we have to be self-reflexive towards a binary in the first place.

³¹ Latour notes that the latest "post"modern critique does not believe in its modern foundations anymore, but that it also does not move on to empirical studies of networks that give meaning to the work of purification. Instead, empirical work is rejected in postmodern critique (Latour 1993, 46). Is Wilson then proposing this move on to empirical studies?

political anorexic body, or body more generally, through a deconstructive approach entails self-reflexivity towards this binary. In this way, I also do not offer any solution or aim to thinking the (anorexic) body, but just possibly a local knowledge strategy.

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