

REVIEW ARTICLE

Neonecromicon

Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić, *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism. Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art, and Life*, Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

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In this review article I detail the main underpinnings for the radical analysis of necropolitics as proposed by Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić in a new theoretico-territorial-temporal framework. The aim is to situate the dyad bio/necro in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) after the fall of the Iron Curtain, post-9/11 and post-2008. The text is meant to supplement the book's zeal to both introduce and revisit the notion of necropolitics in political theoretization of the 'Second World' by criticizing and expanding some of the arguments and thesis espoused. In order to reveal the importance of their work I shrink its workings to four interrelated pillars: a notion of historicization, racialization, necropolitics, necropolitics and/as racialization. Through these we can see how a revisited and re-territorialized notion of necropolitics can retroactively serve analytical purposes in thinking about CEE since the rise of neoliberalism and shock-doctrine models, where CEE is itself revealed as a prototype of necropolitics.

1. Death, the Neonecromicon

This is a story about the geopolitical perversions of death. Or its obverse: the perverse geopolitics of death. A story concerning not so much a life worth living, but a life unworthy of examining.

A rich examination of the conditions that hurl all life precarious in the vortex of sacrifice, nonetheless. It is hardly a 'timely' book, nor is it simply a 'critique'. Part of what causes the sense of degradation in reading *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism* is the anticipation that this is a work that will not find its *modus operandi* swiftly. It fits oddly in categories like East and West, postcolonial and

decolonial. Few from the trenches of these polarities will revere the rhetoric, let alone the content.

What is this book about? This is a book against something we can safely call the 'just death' tradition being instituted as we speak. It is an ambitious and rich study of the present of Central and Eastern Europe's (CEE) vicissitudes with both liberalism and neoliberalism.¹ It is also an original contribution to the newest political history and theory of the region, one that has rarely been offered to the reader, regardless of her geospatiality. Such work is more specifically a contribution to both decolonial theory in general and its application in its Eastern European death-bed in particular. Finally, this study adds up to intersectional analyses of neoliberalism, gender, queer, migration studies, and contemporary arts and curating. But what ties all of these engagements? It is the neoliberal extinction of life as the axiomatically presumed content behind any politics. This is not a book about freedom.

We can safely proceed to call Gržinić and Tatlić's book the *Neoneconomicon*. The significant difference between Lovecraft's *Necronomicon* and Gržinić and Tatlić's *Neoneconomicon* is that while the first was a fictional grimoire, the second is a grim reality: a reality so obvious that it collapses into fiction. Now, the authors' endeavor is to expose the grimoire of this fiction as reality. The dark force that naturalizes death in their *Neoneconomicon* is death's repetition, coupled with unrepentant political will which today we call the 'market'. A neoliberal *Neoneconomicon*. Repetition, obviousness, and tautology appear to be the image behind the law of the dead. And here is the other difference of this *Neoneconomicon*: the dead come before both the law of their sacrificing and the image—of death—that is to substitute them. In short: with an absent image of itself, Death alone becomes what writes the *Neoneconomicon*. Death has become the automatic writing of politics.

This means that neoliberalism has entered its necrophilic stage, or what Panayota Gounari has called 'neoliberal necrophilia'.

While the book is not a systematic study of the consequences of neoliberalism in the region, it offers systemic critiques aimed at the heart of the unanimously reigning primitivist form of neoliberalism rampant in CEE. But it is hard to read the book as a 'critique' of necropolitics. Post-Kantian normative thought seeks to *correct* coercive forms of epistemology; the authors' somewhat hysterical language is suggestive of *destroying* such forms (namely, Eurocentric racist epistemology). This is why there is an ontological horizon: to prove the existence of globalized political necrophilia. In its zeal to that end, the book terraforms in a whirlwind of ferocious theses. Tunneling into the normalization of death regimes, the study becomes a necropolitical safari on the tracks of death and its political instituting.

Writing in the EU's post-2008 depression, the authors try to describe a double regime of necropolitics that remains invisible to so much of systemic analysis from the outside: both from the geopolitical outside and from outside the trenches of the paradigm of post-cold war area studies, a paradigm that remains so sturdy today. What Gržinić and Tatlić manifest is that work on necropolitics *is* work on neoliberalism (whence the neoliberal Neonecromicon as a by-product). And work on necropolitics in CEE can easily substitute 'political freedom' for 'democratization', because democratization was equated with neoliberal democracy in the so-called 'transition'. In working out the larger framework of the neoliberal defense of death, Gržinić and Tatlić expose this double bind of freedom: on the one hand, after the fall of socialism democratization offered political rights to dissidence, on the other hand, democratization was sold to the people in its neoliberal shock-doctrine mode. This is merely an intellectualized way of naming *privatization*. And while this book is about the privatization and destruction of a once opulent industrialized society of domestic security (preferably Yugoslavia), the book also reveals the empty shell left by neoliberal privatization and primitive accumulation worldwide—a shell filled only with the arbitrary law of survival in the Balkan jungle of democracy. The translation of democracy into neoliberalism from the early 1990s meant one thing: it is the 'right' to survive rather than the survival of rights that reigned in the region. Under the paradigm of the 'unending transition' (Tatlić), one is free to die for her rights; if one does not acquire properly these rights, one is free to die, unattended by liberal democracy. It is this double mode of the political instituting of death, coupled with CEE's double bind of freedom that the book is struggling with. The authors seem to ask: how can we escape the neoliberal framework of our present-day democratic survivalism? In a necropolitical mode, we certainly cannot, because death here is not the end—it is merely *the beginning of itself* before life is even an option. It is the normalization of this logic that is buttressed by Gržinić and Tatlić in their bleak new *Neonecromicon*.

2. The Life and Death of Necropolitics

Ever since Mbembe's seminal text 'Necropolitics', we have witnessed a proliferation in the study of death as the concave side of Foucault's biopolitics. This mostly Western preoccupation with regimes of justifying death—from queer studies to war studies—appears as abnormal as its chosen subject. Such fixation conceals a depressing intellectual question: are academics and activists responsible for the discovery of necropolitics? Has the history of alter-globalization anything to do with necropolitics? Are not we discovering something we occasioned behind red bricks? We cannot offer a precise answer yet, but what is certainly true is that academia seems captivated by necropolitics as its by-product. But there is more behind such an intellectual trap: Gržinić and Tatlić's book is itself an insight into the short-sighted Western academic gaze which remained myopic about Eastern Europe's unconceptualized experience with neoliberalism's arbitrariness of death from the early 90s and its misconceived democracies, for these were privatized democracies as much as they

were *not* democratized privatizations. If there is any scandal here, it is that Western arrogance was not even captured by itself for 20 years. What amounts to a moral indignation against Islamism today should have been a moral outcry about post-communism.ⁱⁱ

Despite the recriminatory tone of the book, it does more than pointing fingers in the usual East-West divide: it situates an entire region in what is one of the most important debates today. How it does so will be described below. *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism* should be situated in ongoing debates and analyses of the (neo)liberal defense of austerity and thus death. On the one hand, necropolitics has been taken up in queer studies (see Haritaworn, Kuntsman and Posocco's volume *Queer Necropolitics*, and we include even the essay 'Gay Imperialism: Gender and Sexuality Discourse in the 'War on Terror'' by Jin Haritaworn, Tamsila Tauqir and Esra Erdem). On the other hand, the study of death has been under the analytic scrutiny of post-9/11 historiography and the Iraq war. In its aftermath, Talal Asad's *On Suicide Bombing* is an equally important text, as well as Banu Bargu's work *Starve and Immolate* on human shields and the politics of self-immolation. Given that war imperialism has been transformed in the context of so-called hybrid/proxy wars, the work of Grégoire Shamayou—*Manhunts* and *A Theory of Drone*—directly accommodates the study of politically justified death. Work on the prison-industrial complex by Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith, as well as Sarah Lamb, and the production of 'docile bodies' also presents us with theories of subjection and the production of precarious life. In political theory Richard Seymour's *The Liberal Defense of Murder* has illuminated the politics of justifying death in classical and present-day liberalism. And finally, writers such as Marko Stamenković and Stuart J Murray offered their notion of thanatopolitics claiming that it represents a 'resistance to biopolitical power and to the Western conception of rational sovereignty'.

Positioned in-between such archives of death, this book claims it will be 'opening up a space', in the spirit of critical theory and immanent criticism. The authors' past shared space, where much of their analyses were rehearsed, was the journal *Reartikulacija* (now *Deartikulacija*). Because there is a strangely split 'we' behind their writing, it should be addressed, for the reader might find herself confused by its form and use. It is what is called the 'author's form' in Slavic languages, a 'we' that engages simultaneously the writer and the reader. Because the 'we' could unsettle the reader's sense of textual integrity—it is not the Hardt and Negri kind of blend—the authors have decided to enter in a

... work process [that] consisted of an interaction that goes on in longer time periods. We detect and mutually interpret/discuss a number of principles, discursive strategies and ideological logic, as well as we discuss the principle and logics that could be employed in a form of resistance, but, this process happens in a time frame of months, even years. In the meantime, and on the basis of our mutual conclusion combined with specific insights each of us

developed, we resort to writing, i.e., applying of number of conclusions we have drawn out of these discussions/reflections. (Personal communication with the authors, 19 January 2015)

Nowhere is this approach clearer than in the mutually laid out conclusions of the book. We read that the aim is 'to contest regimes of esthetics, knowledge and histories' (p. 299). At the heart of this contestation lies an engagement with the process of subjectivation and thus resistance. Subjectivation is what needs to be restored after de-subjectivation. Since the latter is at the heart of necropolitics, since it has bugged the transformation into democratic subjects (if we want to keep up with the cliché), then it should be exposed as the 'contemporary form of the historical process of subjectivation'. It is because this gesture constitutes an apophatic political commitment that one has to problematically read the book as a 'critique'.

We need to understand the book's grim logic and the demoralizing effect it has on the reader. What justifies the dramatic rhetoric? Is there a scandal we have missed? The answer is hidden in what I find to be a rather crucial note. It is not just the rhetoric, it is the analysis itself that is molded on an understanding of 'absolute comparisons': global capitalism is seen not as radicalism, but as absolutism. In short, *it is not the darker, it is the darkest side of life* (n. 2, p. 19). The entire first part of the book is an answer and testimony to this approach by way of *historicization*. And historicization is needed in order to produce a decolonial matrix of epistemology organized after the colonality of power in the EU.

Read as a whole, this Janus-faced book does two things: disentangling depoliticized politics and the 'anti-social society'. While Gržinić historicizes the genealogies of necropolitical phenomena, Tatlić contextualizes them in the formal logic of liberal humanism and 'post-liberalism'. Both accounts account for the unaccountable: the normalization of death and even its purchase as a sign of global progress toward the 'developed' life of the First World.ⁱⁱⁱ

Because the process of re-subjectivation is bugged, it should be illuminated. This is done via a negative form of theoretization, whose pressing task is the analysis of 'the principles on which global, contemporary capitalism organizes its own reproduction' (p. ix)—that is, globalization's own survivalism. There are four points of convergence. 1) *A notion of historicization*. Gržinić has been working on this for the past several years and it is this notion that informs the ensuing analysis of necropolitics as historicization in the book's two parts. Historicization is the process of rethinking 'a present mode of capitalist production in relationship to contemporary art. I call this a historicization of capitalism'.^{iv} It is a powerful heuristic that offers a way to de-universalize the Three-Worlds system theory. 2) *Racialization*: this is the process which 'has led to the erasure of historical responsibilities and even to performative self-victimization' (p. 299). It is the 'principle[d] ideology of capitalism' of the EU—'a contemporary form of Eurocentric epistemological logic' which

substitutes the aggressor for the victim. 3) *Necropolitics*: this is the kind of power that does not determine the very binary life-death on the basis of political consideration, but on the basis of the logics of capital, profit and race, instituting this logic as the political imaginary of the EU. 4) *Necropolitics and/as racialization*: this is the politics of the EU after the nation-state. The doublet is subject to historicization as per Gržinić's definition above. The two terms constitute the power discourse of the EU as a contemporary apartheid within an ahistorical narrative of capitalism about itself, a narrative aiming at capitalism's self-reproduction and repetition.

What are the politically viable answers the authors provide? They come in the form of prescriptions and in this they are as orthodox as it gets. For Gržinić, since '[i]t is almost impossible to say that something is impossible today' (p. 157), we have to draw a border, to literally point to a border that separates life- and death-affirming politics. The securing of such a border 'within the inconsistency of the big Other means to act: to act politically. ... The political act changes the very coordinates of this impossibility. It is only through a decolonial act that we set the border within the cynical situation where the only thing which is impossible is impossibility as such'. (p. 158). *The new border is the new act*. It is what secures differentiation for 'building local and international (strategic) alliances' (p. 31). For Tatlić, the task is the following: since the very method of ideologization and depoliticization of politics are ideological, while ideology itself is rendered irrelevant, 'politically ideological, left-wing agenda should extract its ideological coherence out of the constant, yet only apparently paradoxical, politicization of politics' (pp. 296-7). In order to learn a lesson, the left should recognize and beat the conflation of capitalism and humanism (freedoms and rights), an ideological mongrel that formalizes the necropolitical effects of capital (p. 245) and transform citizenship into racialization. The re-drawing of ideological border should dialectically learn from the ideological perversions of necropolitical globalization in order to reverse the process of economic necrophilia. This is the precondition for the new act.

3. From Repetition ...

In Part I, written by Gržinić, she claims that 9/11 marks the re-birth of the world as necropolitical. More precisely, this is a necropolitical global capitalist mode of reproduction of life and subjectivities (p. 4). Parallel to opening up the stage of death as politics, the West has repositioned itself. It did so by playing with a speculative form of itself: it wants to forget its colonial past by fictionalizing itself. To this end, the East is being (covertly) excluded from historicization and/or knowledge production. Following the post-Berlin Wall imaginary of democratization, both East and West are nominated with a 'former' status. However, the work of historicization is to expose the concealed and uneven epistemological footing of the East. For the East, lack of historicization means 'its conditions of im/possibility' (p. 5).^v In playing with its 'former' status, the West enacts a fictionality so liberalized and

internalized in 'transition societies' that the normalization of determinist liberation narratives transforms all de-colonial narratives of both Western oppression and its attendant speculations into a quaint deviation from the unilateral core of an all-European pre-meditated consensus of itself. This zeal of democratizing history-as-equality, when coupled with CEE's economic realities, explains why, 'while the East is excluded more and more from the materiality of its history, knowledge, memory, etc., the West is just performing it. ... The speculative character of the "former" Western Europe resembles with perfect accuracy the speculative character of financial capitalism at the present, and its crisis' (p. 141). Gržinić illustrates this with the project 'Former West'; she does so to claim there is no way in which the West will persuade us once again it is capable of decolonization. The European decolonization is fictive, because it does not oppose, it endorses *racialization* and the interiorization of historic guilt in the figure of the migrant. The racialization of both the migrant and the domestic Other is preceded by racism which goes through institutional and then structural affirmation, culminating in 'social racism' (p. 11). Back home in the EU, the doublet racism-racialization evolves to the following formula of existential homelessness: *having a good life vs. having a life at all*. Gržinić and Tatlić seem to claim that CEE was/is the necropolitical laboratory of the EU ever since the transition started, because it allows for modes of bio- and necropolitics, a site of experiment for the bygone failures of the former West (p. 16). What the former West performatively enacts is 'the abolition of the effects of extraction of the colonial dimension from geopolitical analysis' (p. 141), debilitating both political theory and the political act of resistance. Because what is former about the West is present for the East—not performatively so.

To offer a line of differentiation, a border, one has to understand that today there is a differentiation within the category of life itself, because biopolitics has morphed into necropolitics (p. 22). For Gržinić this is a double form of death, always extracting surplus value from populations: 'death from *real* massive impoverishment, and a *symbolical* death from capital interventions'. The points of comparison with Foucault's biopolitics shrink. While biopolitics can be formalized as 'make live and let die', Gržinić's necropolitics takes the formulaic expression of 'let live and make die'. It is the *laissez-faire* of dying. This formula is Gržinić's central contribution to the current research on necropolitics and it's analytic. Understanding this double formula entails her continued exposure of biopolitics as a Western epistemological arsenal. On one level, the lines drawn between the postcolonial world and Eastern Europe are obvious when we juxtapose the first's form of 'private indirect government' (Mbembe) and its co-terminous expansion in the latter as a mere economic determinism whose sole logic is driven by privatization: the first's exploited resource become exemplary for the latter's policy. In both cases there is the phenomenon of the privatization of violence economically.^{vi} These are the Others of Western biopolitics, but they are not its principled addressees. Gržinić's suggestion is that biopolitics always contains the war home: it 'capitalizes and governs

the conscience in the First Capitalist World' (p. 37). What is more, since its intense circulation from the 1970s onwards, biopolitics was part of the epistemological toolkit of and *for* the Capitalist First World 'where the 'Other' did not exist' (p. 86). However, there was a parallel colonial regime in Eastern Europe as that in the Third World, one that remained obfuscated by the Iron Curtain; but so too remained obfuscated democratic privatization and the privation of life, because everything that has its source on the 'outside' (misery, death, illegality, etc.) has to disappear. This is why today we begin the study of Eastern Europe with necropolitics. As pieces of the former East are now territorially part and parcel of the former West, the EU's expansion defends biopolitics and conceals necropolitics (p. 27). And it is in this context that arts are framed in the dyad bio-necro: to the extent to which today only culture is taken care of by the state, and not the economy (and even this is not universally true), '[a]rt and its institutions are only biopolitical machines, while the social is necropolitical' (p. 28).

The remainder of Part 1 can be reduced to several consequences arising from the bio-necro dyad and its geopolitical inscription (or hidden lack thereof). One of the underpinnings crucial for both authors is Santiago López Petit's theory of the unrestraintment of capital. Gržinić takes at face value his notion that neoliberal globalization is the *repetition* of that event (p. 33), unfolding in production fetishism. It is this repetition that makes visible the abstraction of social life from capital. The repetition is two-staged: there is 1) a founding repetition constructing the center-periphery; and there is 2) a de-foundational repetition presenting itself as deprived of hierarchies, proffering the notion of a flat, though multidimensional, world.^{vii} This is the postmodern capitalism of self-perpetuating multiplicities. Gržinić claims it is its 'empty formalism' that gets translated into the 'total coincidence of capitalism and reality' (p. 34), a move that she describes as 'reality is reality'. The meaning of this 'terminal obviousness' (p. 37) is that contemporary democracies are caught between a static dialectic of 'zero and infinity'. Later in the book Tatlíć takes on the same dyad and claims that while 'zero' stands for the non-limitations of the founding repetition and thus capital, 'infinity' stands for the de-foundational aspect (p. 293). Thus, if the 'zero' stands for the politics of TINA, 'infinity' stands for its opposite all-permissiveness, but provided that depoliticization is the enthroned and concealed (meta-)ideology. It is this static dialectic that brings about the sense of the absence of the world—postmodernism's political neutrality.

The modest proposal is to repoliticize reality. In order to do that, capitalism and reality should be divorced. But to the extent to which the nation-state accords biopolitics, and since Gržinić claims we are in the regime of war-state, which corresponds to necropolitics and its 'postmodern fascism', it is the individual—not the generalized dividual of control societies—that has to be restored and addressed by theories of justifying death. So there is the concomitant parallel burden and engagement with embodied political subjectivity added to

the war against what is called the 'war-state'. If we truly live in a war-state, while at the same time European political rationality promulgates the self-governmentality of the individual, the government of the self and its ideology of incentive should be displaced from the agenda of any rationality. As Tatlić claims later, '*self-governmentality* should be seen as a reflection of the order's depoliticization of the concept of the social' (p. 193). In the case of CEE, the move from transition space to neoliberal space submits society to a 'turbo realism'. What this means is that the individualist agenda of postmodern fascism—the fertilizer of de-ideologized austerity—'transforms de-politicized units into totalitarian, psychotic and completely self-narcissistic entities that are only hyper-repetitions of themselves' (p. 72). It is in this way that the in/dividual is a reflection of her order.

If anything is possible, then post-transitional turbo realism marks the normalization of the repetition of the unrestraint of capital. Its agenda can be easily embraced, because it sees itself as a continuation of (the form of) liberal humanism, and not its content—privatization. As Gržinić notes, we do not need to go to CEE to see this: East Germany is the obvious but easily dismissed case of unrestrained capital. If unrestraint of capital is secured by the absence of the limit of capital, then the crash of neoliberalism 'is not the end, but the continuation of it' (p. 46). This leads Grznic to another central thesis: the balance between Eastern and Western Europe today is 'no longer a question of opposition, but rather of repetition' (p. 58)—it is engineered by the repeating of its economic crash, as its logical entailment of liberal humanism. The logic of repetition is constitutive of the necropolitical war-state: instead of the unity of capital and power characteristic of the nation-state, the war-state functions via the co-propriety of capital and power (p. 66). This co-propriety seems to have the power to repeat the form of the war-state, whose apparatuses exist only to maintain the illusion of social harmony and not to take care of the life of a proper population. In short, the war-state is the new and generalized Malthus.

What alleviates the war-state's agenda is the legacy of postmodern fascism. To claim this, one has to admit identity politics was not only postmodern fascism, but also a process of racialization, which Gržinić does. Racism was identity politics and vice versa. 'Racialization functions as classificatory matrix that sustains a monopoly on classification' (p. 97), but it is rationalized through capitalist expansion. Because racism is inherent to the transition from nation-state to war-state, today we have to deal with its counterpart—racialization, constitutive of capital itself (pp. 107-8). This transition marks the differential treatment of the 'universal' figure of the citizen, divorcing biopolitical/CEE citizenship from necropolitical/refugee citizenship.

A wholesale theory of the hitherto presented claims is outlined in Chapter 7 'Content, Form and Repetition'. This is where life, death

and art are entangled in 'forensics'. Gržinić's thesis is that racialization develops a racist basis for both the arts and labor generally in 'new forms of exploitation and expropriation'. These are integrated in our research culture and in contemporary art in three ways: first, via the management of life from bio- to necropolitics; second, on the level of ideological transformation (see below); third, by capitalism reshaping the State as racial entity. Since racialization is infiltrated in both basis and superstructure (the general division of labor and art, culture and curating) 'it becomes possible for the regime to spatially or temporally reintegrate its own transgressions as tokens of its functionality' Necropolitics has finally outdone fashion: the defects are the effects.

The necrophiliac perversion of racialization is formalized in the dyad 'empty form' (plus its normalization) and its 'abnormal content'. This Gržinić calls performative repetitive mechanism (p. 136). If (the terminally obvious) reality's content is formalized as is—with the entire spectrum of its abnormality and monstrosity, on the level of the 'form' this abnormality is normalized, which renders the content—any content—obsolete. '*Content is abnormal and the form is normal*'. Ideology has moved from socialized content to individualized knowledge, it is directly sublated there. This is why ideology seems completely transparent and the monstrous content of reality and everyday life becomes obsolete in the first place. The way the form is presented via ideological transparency—a transparency which is as blinding as it is self-effacing—through its normalization makes the content obsolete (p. 139), so ideology is attached directly to the form (p. 145). Thus the form/ing appears social, while the content appears empty and at best anti-social.^{viii} And if we want to conceptualize the social as ideological, the problem is we have no content before us—the form appears to be extra-ideological but fully social.

4. ... to Differentiation

Part II, written by Tatlić, deals almost entirely with the consequences of this ideological supposition. How does neoliberal hegemony reign in its necropolitical stage? To answer this, Tatlić engages with the search for a 'post-liberal prefix of global hegemonies' (p. 164).^{ix} There are several signposts for what this part of the book will do: 1) that the text finds neoliberal modes of capitalism to be in a terminal, yet most prolific phase; 2) that the text finds the possibility for formation of 'political subjectivity in tendencies that acknowledge political power as the function for production of differentiations, distances and antagonisms ... on the basis of construction of other contradictions and asymmetries' (p. 169); 3) that the text tackles the issue of racism as an ideology of capitalism (p. 175). It is of great importance to see how in setting out these tasks, Part II is a logical continuation of Gržinić's formalization of biopolitics as a Western epistemology. Because '*capitalism and/or global capitalism ... functions primarily as a power (or imperial) discourse of the First World*' (p. 166), the West has epistemological monopoly on defining universal principles of globalism. And by embracing racism and subsequently racialization as

its terminal concept of self-sustainment, global capitalism pre-classifies every population in the incumbent bio-necro grid.

If politically the post-9/11 world was transformed into a neoliberal Neoneconomicon, ideologically the post-2008 world of austerity marks the swapping of the positions oppressor/oppressed. But this is true largely for the West, since the reversal has been unanimously normalized in Eastern Europe ever since 1989. In order to be able to analyze the reversal, one has to provide a differentiation 'between dominant power discourse and society'—between form and content, in a way—where those who govern the level of the form refuse to make that differentiation (p. 167). What is more, they refuse to be part of *any* content.

This opposition already marks a theoretical resistance. In its determination to overturn geopolitical necro-unilateralism that formalizes and normalizes death regimes, the paradoxical result is the reinstating of the very Three-Worlds system that the analysis seeks to tarnish. This seems to be the result of using decolonial theorists such as Anibal Quijano and Santiago Castro-Gómez, as with López Petit in Gržinić. Hence the formula of the new racialized world: it is the First World minus other worlds (p. 172). The battle, as defined by the newly established Eurocentric racism, is for political subjectivities to demonopolize 'the rights to define the meaning of differentiation' (p. 178).

To get there, Tatlić explains what he calls the gap between politics and ideology.^x The equation democracy-capitalism has been made co-constitutive to capitalist transgressions and their normalization (p. 182). And it is this normalization that sustains capitalist democracy. This is the point of convergence between liberty and capital. In an illuminating passage, Tatlić explains this equation as a kind of reversal of the very logic of political rationality: 'It is not the rationalistic traits that are being assigned to the effect of the political process, but it is the destruction of the political process that is being, as a process, made into an incubator of rationalistic traits' (p. 186). Consequently, on the terrain of the 'post-ideological' market, the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed becomes apolitical. This is why I have earlier claimed that instead of a 'critique', the book is a project for the destruction of necropolitics.

This analysis has one singular aim: to articulate the powers of the subjugated *to perform differentiation* in order to enact resistance. In this, the book is not so much a critique of oppression but a negative theory of liberation. The left needs an approach of differentiation and with that, ideology. This really is no news even for the lefty neophyte. What is new is the central role of understanding death in the process of regaining ideology, to the extent to which ideology is the precondition for both a decolonial differentiation and countering Eurocentric racism (or the war-state's racialization). The needed ideology is one which will function through a struggle for politics in the

domain of power (p. 191), not in the domain of market democracies. If any strategy of anti-capitalism and liberation is already inscribed in market democracy, this amounts to 'pure nothingness'. Echoing Gržinić's dyad form-content, Tatlić claims that 'the amount of the form was made to equal the amount of the substance' (p. 190). Only the power of differentiation can liberate the needed ideology. In this context differentiation becomes political power itself.

These twisted assumptions seek to prove how the post-liberal consensus of market democracy, when entwined with justificatory approaches to death and Eurocentric racism/racialization, end up in the ideologization of depoliticization. We know well what is commodification and how it is 'interpreted as a particular token of individual liberation' (p. 193); what we miss is a theory of how what neoliberal globalization enforces is the politicization of 'specific variations of life in a biological, cultural and economic sense' (p. 194). Not a social agenda, but differentiation and rupturing within life itself—not even the concept of life. In this sense necropolitics is not just the cause behind the instituting of death aiming to protect the war-state; it is 'a proto-political construct that inflicts death in the imperial global imposition of the one particular, First World's, agenda' (p. 195). Thus, Tatlić proposes his proxy definition of necropolitics, based on Gržinić's upgrading of Mbembe: 'it is not the epistemological hegemony and capitalism's ideology that politicizes necropolitics, it is *vice versa*' (p. 195). Necropolitics has been turned into an *automaton* that moves capitalism. This is the war of differentiation (of life) versus differentiation (of ideology).

Where Gržinić leaves us with the theory of 'unrestraintment', Tatlić takes up 'non-limitation'. Neoliberalism seems to have become the new *apeiron*: it is the new limitless. As with Empedocles, it appears as so formless a power that it resists any theory. Aided by its necropolitical phase, neoliberalism transforms non-limitation into a limitless oppression (p.196). Consequently, it equates the non-limitation of social struggles only to non-limitations of capitalist exploitation (p. 203). Finally, 'the people's potential for "freedom" was equated with its potential for the legitimization of the non-limitation(s) of capital' (p. 206). What this means is that while power is empty formalism, the very political power of rule is transcended (p. 197). Thus the old general will *becomes one* with capital: a force that can both define the limits of political legitimacy and the legitimacy of one's life. As López Petit says, '[t]he social contract becomes a personal contract' (quoted on p. 290). But there is also the degeneralization of will: it becomes the weapon of self-governmentality, obscenely forgetting how the state became one with the market. The more the citizen descends into private self-government, the more her in/dividualism turns into political potential itself (p. 205). If the consequence of degeneralized will is a generalized depoliticization, then this is a new form of recolonization (p. 213), or rather, self-recolonization. Because decolonial struggles, so long as they cannot be equated with market democracies, do not protect any freedoms, and hence the human, decoloniality takes the role of the anti-

humanist. This is the meaning of what it means for capitalism to hijack humanism. To the extent to which decolonial resistance to Eurocentric racism is abjected, the war-state and its identity politics of postmodern fascism converge into the 'racial-State' to monopolize the very definition of humanity (p. 218) and denounce decoloniality. This is no challenge in a world still caught in post-colonial criticism.

What remains to be narrated is the sad, macabre history of humanity embracing its own necrophiliac drive and legislating on its Neoneconomicon. Necropolitics is the historicization of biopolitics gone obsolete. According to Gržinić, racialization is the ultimate form of racism, today institutionalized and normalized as supra-ideological content. According to Tatlić, this represents 'hypocrisy in the institutionalization of secularity' (p. 236), whence the double standard of the EU in treating migrants. In the political rationality of the EU, this hypocrisy is defended by the 'hubris of the zero-point' of the colonial human (her animality): those who impose the definition cannot be defined by it. This leads to the perpetuation and the further ideologization of capital's limitlessness and its detachment from historicization. Having interiorized the definitions of the necro-colonizer, the decolonial infantile can hardly restore a notion of political antagonism. Instead of individual liberty, if there is some liberalization, it is one of the colonial mode of power brought by arbitrariness, unrestraintment, non-limitation, and finally, repetition: their combination guarantees the spread of 'racial ideologies of modernity' (p. 243) and the normalization of necropolitics. How? By turning capitalist exploitation into gaining freedoms (p. 244).

Once an ahistorical craving for freedom-as-capital is produced, it becomes central for the automation of self-colonization. Regardless of who takes responsibility for the interiorization of this craving, it is clear self-colonized subjectivity is no longer political from the perspective of liberal modernity: this 'subjectivity' alone erases the lines and limits of differentiation in and out of the political. The incumbent automated form of coloniality accepts the limitations of the 'Western historical register' (p. 262) and perpetuates its role in 'historical colonization'. This is what we can call 'the unending transition' (see pp. 249, 253, 255). Submitted to a limitless transformation into new capitalist subjectivities (and these are 'subjectivities' only in the sense in which they have accepted their de-subjectivation as political prerogative), the exploited, Tatlić suggests, are deprived not only of resisting subjectivity and its powers of historicization—opposing the one of necropolitics—but also of their specific form of historicizing resentment (p. 267). The very dichotomy between ruler and ruled 'actually reorganized and normalized the notion of oppression'—and oppression turned into a precondition for acquiring privilege (p. 270). This gives the ruler the privilege to define him/herself as the backbone of the post-ideological: the identity-fascism (Berardi) is automatically absolved. The perversion is so vertiginous that it appears as immaculate: just as Gržinić took the exemplary case of 'Former West' to prove its reinvention as naïve victim of its own modernity, so Tatlić claims the dominant parts of the world most responsible for global

inequality are 'reinventing themselves as victims' (p. 289). And thus the 'new' victims have normalized the necropolitical paradigm on all fronts: history, theory, politics, and life. The moment necropolitics succeeds to politically efface death, it inflicts upon death non-politically. From the obscene perspective of identitarian fascism, whether death is necropolitics is a matter of theoretical taste and personal choice.

I would like to conclude with a few daring thoughts on this brave book. One, as already emphasized earlier, the book paradoxically enacts what it seeks to destroy: the bi-polarity of the Eurocentric project. Although it does not seem to deject the use of world-systems theory, it ends up discarding some of the binaries that support it. But the book is less an attempt to repeat the old binaries than to finally expose them for what they are, where conceptual analysis has not reached. Two, and more importantly, given that necropolitics is a phenomenon studied largely from the optics of the critique of neoliberalism, one is stricken by the very few analogies (if ever) drawn to Marx. Simply put, where Marx recognized the production of the reserve labour army, Mbembe, and subsequently Gržinić, though mentioning Marx in passing, recognized something that can easily be called reserve death population. This analogy is not even seen as legitimate, let alone conceptualized. Third, given that the book is so politically engaged with offering routes of escapes and prognostic formulae, it is rather strange that Malthusianism is never mentioned. Is not necropolitics population control and demographic manipulation? True, the authors never manifestly state they will write a genealogical history of necropolitics *and* liberalism—they start off directly from austerity and privatization and, again, this is not only the austerity of the post-2008 EU. As they claim, '[w]e see liberalism today as an integral part of capitalism and its structure of power that does not care much for constructing serious apologetic narratives' (personal communication with the authors, 19 January 2015). But a more specific study of CEE's liberalisms might reveal such apologetic narratives, given that in the aftermath of 1989 communism transformed into social democracy, and then social democracy was concealed under the label 'liberalism' (and democracy thereof). A theoretization of the liberal justification of necropolitics—a 'just death tradition'—would add a great insight into its glorification as the one and only terminal 'exit' from communism, and would contribute to suspending the ongoing nostalgia for ethno-centric communism specifically.

I make these suggestions to the readership of *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism* only to shed light on how much work there is to be done on what I called in the beginning the Neonecromicon, the new imagery of the law of the dead: or in the book's parlance, the empty formalism of today's capitalism. Simply put, Gržinić and Tatlić's study tells us that those who want to defend the content of life should resist the form of death we are being framed in here and now. If only this was death! Then this Neonecromicon would not be needed. If it is politically rational and existentially

meaningful to defend a life anterior to death, and not vice versa, that is to say also: a death *before* necropolitics itself, then clearly we need more analyses of dying and fewer critiques of living. They will provide the political ground of differentiation not of life, but of politics of life, and counter the repetition of a monstrous rationality that demands from its subjects the automatic subjection to neoliberalism's Neonecromicon.

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Notes

ⁱ Where I use the abbreviation CEE, read decolonial too—it is one of the merits of this book that it synchronizes the CEE region with the former Third World, at least implicitly.

ⁱⁱ It never happened. There are very few narratives to prove this, among them Gareth Dale's *First the Transition, then the Crash*. The only 'alternative' contemporaneous to neoliberalism in CEE is locally produced conspiracy theories.

ⁱⁱⁱ Often, the authors use 'First Globalized/Capitalist World', which reminds us of Guattari's early analysis of globalization as 'Integrated World Capitalism'.

^{iv} See 'From Biopolitics to Necropolitics: Marina Gržinić in conversation with Maja and Reuben Fowkes', in: *Art Margins*, 9 October, 2012, www.artmargins.com/index.php/5-interviews/692-from-biopolitics-to-necropolitics-marina-grini-in-conversation-with-maja-and-reuben-fowkes

^v This is the meaning of Mladen Stilinović's work *An Artist Who Can Not Speak English Is No Artist* (1994). Gržinić claims that CEE's troubles with historicization and its deficits has radicalized the situation to 'An artist who cannot speak English properly is no artist'. In a recent text Boryana Rossa claimed that in CEE the burden of historicization is now one of self-historicization. Without self-historicization, one endorses one's impossibility. See Boryana Rossa, 'Gender Equality in Bulgaria: An Activism Which Can Not Speak English Is No Activism', in: Stefka Tsaneva (ed.), *Sofia Queer Forum 2014: Manifestations of the Personal*, KOI Books, Sofia, pp. 11-14.

^{vi} But also politically in the West—this is the significance of Vacquant’s work on the prison-industrial complex; in this sense more continuity is needed in the scholarship engaged by the authors here than the mere drawing of a border.

^{vii} This is where Gržinić seems to have a problem with the so-called speculative turn and especially the ‘flat ontology’ of object-oriented ontology. However, her passing remarks on contemporary speculative philosophy are too sparse to constitute a homology between the self-speculative (former) West and the speculative turn’s reformism of hierarchical (Western) metaphysics. The political underpinnings of this correlation are never studied in the book, which is unfortunate as Gržinić welcomes what she calls ‘a new indecent materialism’.

^{viii} If one is to read ‘content’ as ‘human’ the grim consequences of this theory are no theoretical abstraction.

^{ix} It would have been of great assistance to have the term ‘prefix’ conceptualized and separately explained, something Tatlić never does.

^x Again, it is crucial to differentiate meta-theoretically between what this gap means for CEE, still caught in the consequences of primitive accumulation, and the Eurocentric liberal modernity.