

FIRE approaches the body's interaction with its environment. The notion of "body" is expanded beyond the flesh. A body is understood as a commons whose specific characteristics become apparent through metabolic processes. The body is an interface upon which substances pass, are incorporated, catalyze effects, and leave traces. Seen in this way, the Earth can be approached as a full body – it is driven by heat, incorporates substances, and generates reactions. We are the Earth's mitochondria, an active participant in the planet's greater metabolic superstructure. This way of thinking brings up questions around symbiosis – the being-together of different beings – as a matter of politics. How do we ingest and incorporate difference and make it a part of us? How do we come to embody multiplicity? Times of crisis require not only endurance, but creativity and a questioning of what a body, consciousness, or even "the human" may mean.

Fire is, in many ways, the story of civilization. It is Prometheus' gift to humanity, the creature who lacks any quality specific to itself, whose quality lies in its ability to appropriate the qualities of the world around it and use these as its own – to make tools, to create objects, to build environments, to extend its body. Fire is a transmitter, a plasma-language that speaks of the creation and destruction of worlds. **Achille Mbembe** reflects on this in his text *The Zero World: Materials and Machines*, where first and foremost the terms and conditions of our economy is laid out. No, not "capitalism" per se, but a greater, meta-historical concern towards relations of exchange, consumption, and production. Hunting and gathering, an ancient division between two modalities of action, two ways of relating oneself to another, remains the underlying dualism beneath all economies. Within this system, from Neolithic

tribes to today's globalized entrepreneurs, from primitive, lavish expenditure to contemporary, speculative finance, destruction is crucial to the economic process. The piece draws on the photography of Sammy Baloji, whose grand depictions of extraction wastelands, portraits of the "wretched of the Earth," and studies on infrastructures of nowhere and everywhere masterfully visualize the rusty exoskeleton of the world-machine that operates capital's ceaseless process of primitive accumulation. Mbembe views these images not as depictions of "the end of the world," but as demonstrative of a concept he refers to as "the Zero World" – a world of becoming-machine, a world where fire has transformed substances and created new chemical and molecular bonds between flesh, oil, and metal, an uncanny world emerging through creative destruction. Picking up on the role of art in mediating human mortality, **Lara Khaldi** has composed a series of three letters addressed to individual artists in her piece *Evil Eye*. Mixing personal experience with anecdotes, hearsay, questions, and doubts, the honesty and fragility of her correspondences expose the ways in which creativity exists in an "infinite conversation" with the Other. What is the evil eye, if not the gaze of the Other, whose apperception extends the limits of the body, invading yours, reminding you of the possibility of death? If Western civilization has attempted, since the Enlightenment, to eliminate the volatile gaze of the Other, would the "evil eye" then be a practice of indigenous resistance, an acknowledgement of an outside space, or an imperative force that magically invokes another possibility of inhabiting the world? These thoughts are related to the greater context of the region, where tradition has ruptured, mutated, collapsed, become unrecognizable, and specifically Palestine, where the body-politic seeks to find itself urgently. Khaldi ponders the

confusing ambivalence, as well as the radical freedom, that indigeneity proposes when understood as a condition of statelessness – that is, as a body that has stepped beyond its artificial boundaries, occupying an unspeakable externality. Any examination of the body, **Françoise Vergès** insists in her essay *Deep in the Fire of Capitalism: Slavery, Colonialism, and Cheap Nature*, must return to this racialized, enslaved, colonized body upon which capitalism has inscribed servitude. Interlocuting with Jason W. Moore’s critical ecology, which posits capital as a force simultaneously emerging from and acting upon “the web of life,” wherein nature is a reciprocal matrix that has long been exhausted through colonial expropriation, Vergès weaves in political and theoretical lessons from her own long-term engagement with decolonial struggles on the island of Réunion. Her essay posits current debates and negotiations around climate change within a larger historical process one could call the “Capitalocene”. At stake are the eroding of rights, the sinister re-surfacing of the racial everyday, new forms of colonization, and the somatic perspective that sees bodies as “cheap nature,” a resource for exploitation. To fight with fury, to be on fire, to be intoxicated with heat, to burn, to turn over oneself to sacrifice, to desire an end – these moments of apocalyptic daydreaming compose the rhetorical foundations for **Elizabeth Povinelli**’s essay *Fires, Fogs, Winds*. The core narrative structure is a self-reflective personal history that meanders from carcinogenic pesticide dumping in Shreveport, Louisiana, to childhood chemistry play-kits, to the environmental racism that has laid Buffalo, New York and Detroit, Michigan to waste, and finally to the Dreaming territories of Northwest Australia, where the carbon imaginary is enacting toxic sovereignty on the full body of the Earth and the Karrabing, palpable as carnal eruptions on their flesh. Fire

is the catalyst for chemical-capital; it scorches the earth, setting a post-humanizing process into motion. The toxic seeds of an after-life are being sown inside the indigenous body, the queer body, the female body, the poor body, the colored body – all those corporealities that are not white, male, and heterosexual. And yet, those who are verging on disappearance will unravel the coming into presence of Beings that, from the perspective of the future, bear an ancestral relationship to what was once called “human,” a mere artifact of a forthcoming intelligence. The energetic mystery of the Earth, whose elemental particularities give rise to the unfolding of technics, is the focus of **Elisabeth von Samsonow**’s piece *Fire – Element, Quality, Energy, Subject*. An attempt to shift the narrative of “culture” and its emergence as driven by pyrotechnics, the history of human civilization is envisioned as an unfolding of ever-more complex methods to tap into the power of fire. Indeed, to think with the Earth means to un-think the Earth, to approach the planet as a vastly unknown surface-depth relation, where our warlike existence upon its brittle skin is fully ignorant as to what lies deep inside its volcanic core. Humans, as earthbound manifestations of a cosmic technicity, record the inner qualities of the planet. Our thermal drift bespeaks a technological capture of free-floating solar energy that makes up for the cooling of the Earth’s crust. Our heat-rage, what many denounce as that which will eventually annihilate us and our world, is an active expression of the Earth itself, its desire for warmth, for union with the Sun, for its sublimation into the heat-death of the Universe. Is “global warming,” then, a technical expression of the planet’s agent subjectivity, where life is mobilized as a tool to ensure the continued existence of an Earth whose true desires will never be articulated in a language comprehensible to humans?

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