

# *Linea Negra*<sup>1</sup>

An essay without any academic reference and without the use of I<sup>2</sup>

by Branka Zgonjanin

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## **On Woman**

Woman is the body, the space for the new to come. Woman is strategy and methodology. Woman is openness and readiness for receiving, conceiving and delivering. To receive is to accumulate the inspiration. To conceive is to shape the inspiration in the new body. To deliver is to give birth, to breathe the soul into the new entity, the new being.

Everything that exists is a being. That is a tautology – to exist is to be.

Woman is the body. The new comes in Woman, through Woman, out of Woman, and feeds by Woman, until it becomes independent. Different body-parts of Woman are the developmental stations of the creation process: vagina to receive, womb to nurture and carry, belly to spread and grow, skin to be flexible, legs to endure, breast to feed, arms to embrace and to carry, lips to kiss and to console. These body-parts are being practiced gradually, and the stations are shifting. Shifting is developing the station-awareness and the history of the specific body-parts complexes. Station-awareness is a local awareness, the awareness of one or more related body-parts. It is developing through variety of sensing types, alike proprioception, synesthesia or even kinesthesia. Proprioception is the most common tool for creating a local awareness. By using proprioception Woman is positioning and organizing sensations within one or more related body-parts. With synesthesia, Woman can understand the history of the body-part(s). For example, by following the impact of certain activity through tracing the pain caused by that activity Woman can understand and even prevent the possible de-formation of that body-part. De-formation can be, for example, hip dislocation, clinching the nerve along the spine, overstretch of a muscle, etc. Kinesthesia is on the other side related to the product of the process. Woman is looking at her child/product/work and she is becoming influenced by the existence of this being. This is changing her. She is becoming smoother or more flexible or more empty, etc. Kinesthesia usually works locally. So, if the product continuously makes certain movements, these movements are analogically sensed and produced in the particular body-part(s) of Woman.

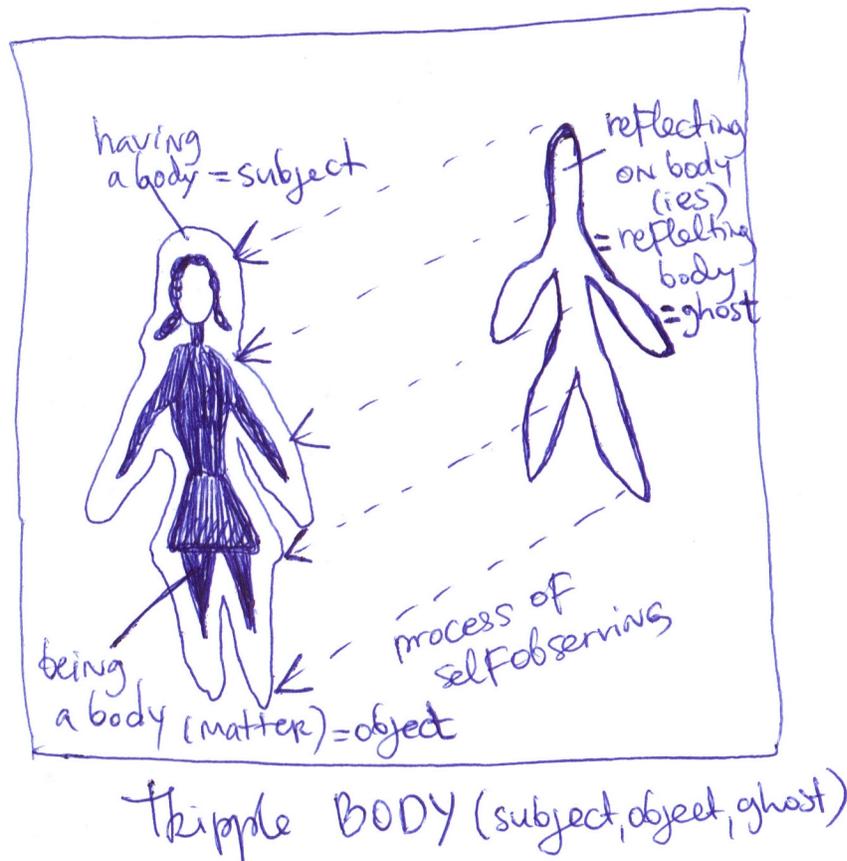
The history of the complex of specific body-parts is a creation of the cause-effect set-up embodied in Woman. Means, if for example Woman is breastfeeding her creation<sup>3</sup>, she is developing a particular relationship between different body-parts – her whole breast, her nipples, related glands, parts of her

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- <sup>1</sup> *Linea Negra* is a dark vertical line that appears on the belly of a pregnant woman. All pregnant women get it at some point of their pregnancies and it disappears some months after delivery. Nobody knows why it appears, what its function is, nor why it disappears. Some people relate it to the work of certain pregnancy hormones, others to a mystical connection between mother and her baby.
  - <sup>2</sup> This essay has a task to be written without any academic reference and without the use of I. As the writer of this essay is a student of art in the master program, this person finds herself sitting in-between two worlds – art and academia. This position is very interesting and could bear many different fruits when it comes to writing. Anyway, the choice made in this essay comes out of the need to create free from both an academic and an artistic conditionality. In academia essays are usually written with the support of many academic references, while in artistic text the use of I is the same way automatic. The author of this essay asks herself how can one think without any references and without centering the experience and knowledge in the I? Is it still possible to think and to language one's thinking without relying on already existing? If so, what is the nature of this (new) thinking? It needs to be created, but if the creation comes from the artist, can it be created outside of the artistic relation to her I? What quality will the text gain if it is written without the use of I? Will this new quality also bring new insights and the qualitative jump in the thinkable?
  - <sup>3</sup> Metaphor is related to everyday nurturing of one's work.

brain, her shoulders, her arms, her hands, her shoulder-blades, her back, her lower back, her spine, her neck, her atlas-vertebra, her tendons around her neck and around her clavicle bones, her sternum, etc. The developed particular relationship between particular body-parts is learned, memorized and reproduced for a certain period of time. After the time of use had expired, this relationship physically stays stored in the brain but also in each of the related body-parts. It also becomes a skill, a craft, that can easily be recalled if needed or if triggered by a memory or different stimuli.

Woman is a double body. Woman can be herself while also being her growing project.

Woman is a triple body. Woman can at the same time be the body, have the body and reflect on the body.



Woman is (perceived as) a subject when *she is having the body*. Woman is (perceived as) an object when *she is the body*. She is the matter itself, then. When reflecting on her body(ies) Woman is (perceived as) a *ghost*. Ghost is invisible. Woman's process of self-reflection is invisible.

Woman can't escape her performative role. She is condemned to be.

This is a gift. The paradox is that Woman is limited with her destiny when also having a possibility to do something with it. Looks like this possibility lies in the ability of self-reflection.

Also in the fact that Woman is sensing/perceiving without stop.

United activities, sensing and self-reflection, make presence of Woman in the space full thick aware.

## **On Object(ification)**

Object is the Other.

Unavoidably, Object is an exotic being. It can not explain itself, it can only be explained. By the subject. That is not true. Every object posses its own way of explanation, actually existence which doesn't need an explanation. Objects are concrete and they are present, therefore they don't need an explanation. Objects are a condensed matter. Matter without doubt. Matter without fear.

To become an object Woman needs to condense. In modelling (posing for painters and sculptors), Woman becomes Object easily. Of course, if Woman doesn't cheat. Woman must be still and not wonder around with her thoughts but to endure the stuck-ness and the pain. Only through time and as a consequence of enduring, Woman becomes an object. That process can be called object-ing on the opposite to the process of objectification. The term objectification indicates that there is someone else who is making something to be or to feel as an object. For example, in modelling job an objectification is happening when painters and sculptors forget that they are painting a person, not an object. Then they behave to that person as s/he doesn't feel pain. They ignore person's need to be accurate with the time set per one pose. If person is enduring still, there is a good chance that s/he will became even more condense. But this is possible only if a person is not angry on painters that they have forgot. Anger prevents a person to keep on object-ing. As soon as a person feels injustice, person starts dissolving and loosing the concentration.

Following the modelling experience, one could say that it is wrongly believed that to become an object Woman must be passive. To be an object Woman must be concentrated non-stop.

In order to look passive, Woman puts in everything. Woman holds everything.

There is a moment of letting go, but it happens in trance of non-stop holding.

Maybe real objects are always in trance?

## **On Work/Labour**

Working class is performing the physical labour. By using their bodies workers are earning their bread. Their only tool is their body. If their bodies get hurt they have to stop working. Most of the time their jobs are not fixed, official or permanent. Usually, they don't have the social and health insurance and they have to pay for their medicine and doctors by themselves. These services are expensive and for workers fatal, because they are double loss. They will not be able to work and earn money, and they will have to spend money they don't have on their recovery. Usually, the workers' salary is just enough for them to eat, to have basic cloths and a roof on top of their heads – to cover *the costs of their bodies* (in some countries even not that). And, of course, some cheap buzz. No cinema, no vacation, no fancy ice-cream, no fashion, no new shoes, no zoo, no theater, no art, no healthy food, etc. Workers can't save money. They are always on the edge of surviving. They get used to this conditions, become strong and learn how to get less sick, but these conditions are far from a citizen comfort that is suggested to us by the advertisement. Workers exist without any surplus.

The hard work of Woman, that is, coincidently or not, called by the same name, labour, shares the same treatment in many societies. In traditional agricultural societies woman is supposed to physically work hard in the field until the moment she will give birth. She is then giving birth in the same field, just few meters away from the place where she was just working. After giving birth very soon she will continue

working. No maternity leave, no benefits for mothers. Woman is supposed to perform a double labour. In many places, deprived from the possibility of complaint, Woman actually can do the double labour because her main (working) tool, the same like with workers, is the body. Woman has trained herself and her body to endure.

The products of Woman's or of Worker 's labour will, after they are done and delivered, become independent. The fact that these products are made by Woman or by Worker turns to be invisible. The actual work, that was performed here-now, can not be grasped the other way except through memory reconstruction. What was once owned by Woman or Worker, because it was part of their bodies, loses its connection with their origin. Not only the product, but the actual work breaks the connection with its source. The work becomes invisible. And that is how Woman or Worker are losing their economical or symbolic potential. Contemporary human society, that relies on visible and permanent achievements, actually based in socially affirmed and constantly re-affirmed roles, does not give proper credits, a proper economical or symbolic recognition, to those who create invisible – Woman or Worker.

Therefore, the ultimate potential for the political effectiveness<sup>4</sup> of art is to frame the invisible. The invisible can become noticeable through an art work. Once it becomes noticeable, it will generate new perceptions. For sure, it will shake the already existing structures. The structures that seem to be calcified. What asks to be framed, actually to be put on stage/stake, is not only the work that is being done by the oppressed, but all those not yet recognizable forces that are amazingly participating in our reality, the forces which, in our ignorance and economical blindness, we are never aware of.

On the level of pure practice, another thing can be done. While the social understanding of Woman or Worker positions them low on the scale of knowledge, craft and income, both of them can be very far in the process of developing themselves. By permanent use of the body the body is becoming. The body is created. The bodies of Woman or Worker share the same potential to become aware. This potential can be realized through self-observation. While performing the labour without self-observation keeps Woman or Worker in an exploited position, self-observation enables them to exploit their own situation for the sake of their own developmental profit.

### **On Process – Actually On Research, Pregnancy, Production And Product**

Process is related to all of them: Research, Pregnancy, Production and Product. It is part of their nature, although in different degrees. Research is less procedural than Pregnancy and Production. Research can be very chaotic if one prefers that. Or it can be settled like Pregnancy. It depends on many factors – what are the questions of Research, how long it takes, how many people are involved in it, to which structure/institution it belongs, etc. Although, eventually, every type of Research will end up in the procedural mode. Research simply can not develop and advance itself if it stays on the level of chaotic input and output.

Process is related to the procedure. The procedure is based on the causality, on the cause-and-effect order. Means, one thing that one has tried within the set of conditions, will influence her next step. The next step will influence the further step(s), etc. After one has made one step, one can also take back that step and make another one in the previous or similar conditions. Or one can create many times the same conditions and do different procedures in these different times. Anyhow, one can not avoid the cause-

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<sup>4</sup> Art is always political, but almost never politically effective, if we don't take in consideration the one that is produced or adjusted to support certain political regimes.

and-effect nature of the process. Something will continue on developing further from each of the steps. Research can stay in the *blurred* space, space without clear and sharp borders, for a while. Until it gets the desire to deliver. Desire for the delivery comes out of the maturity, ripeness. Once, when all the elements are there, when their relationships are created and worked out, when an entity (of Research, Pregnancy or Production) starts getting its shape, delivery is on the way. The nature of Process is to come to an end(s). To die as it is, to transform to what comes next in the development, and to give birth to something else. That is the nature of the Nature. The entities without an end can be created only artificially. If we look at fractals as an example of a never-ending structures, we can see that this idea functions only in an artificial conditions. The naturally occurring fractals (fractal structures) are ending in their product, like, for example, the vegetable *Romanesco*, a cross between broccoli and cauliflower, its fractality ends up in its fruit.

Sinking deeper in Process, Woman can find herself in a passive-active role, that whatever she does, while she is in Process, Product will be fed. While Pregnancy, Woman doesn't need to eat (a lot), but her baby will eat (her) and grow. Process is continuing because that is the nature of the process. Once triggered artificially by a human hand, it takes over, it becomes independent and continues to grow. This doesn't mean it will grow no matter what. Of course, Process can be terminated. Usually, this must be done with a violent act or by forgetting.

Process is related to love. When deciding to step in Process, Woman is aware that it means a will to risk her life or her definitions.

Often it means to endure the reality. In the reality many different processes are interfering. Process ask for continuation and not being afraid of duration. Process ask for dedication and observation. For being and staying there as long as it is needed or desired.

To love also means to sacrifice herself. Woman gives her own body to the new and submits her own existence to the creation. The body that is sacrificed is the old body, body that have become ripe. It will hit the end of its path and blow itself in the new body(ies) to come. The sacrifice is not destructive, it is not violent. The sacrifice is joyful. Woman is changing.

Product is never finished. After being produced, delivered, it continues its own life. Woman who has created it, doesn't own it. But for a while, it is still a part of Woman's body. Although outside of Woman, Product is still in her. In her arms. Woman is a shelter for Product but also a source of food. Soon product will be able to eat everything and Woman will have to let go of holding Product. Product is turning to the outside and starting to absorb and to contribute the reality. Woman will have to trust that Product will find its own way. Others will support Product, not only Woman. Everyone will influence it a bit. Just a passenger, but also audience, critics, producers, etc. Woman will always have to do many things for Product, but Product now owns itself. It owns its own destiny.

Every day, Product will change by itself and its complex surrounding. But also Product will grow in parallel with Woman and Woman will look at Product. At any point in time Product is speaking about Woman, Woman is speaking about Product.

## **On System, On The Grid**

System is an account of relations. Made systems must be flexible. Systems should not contain repression. They must reflect the living.

Systems should be able to include everything that is not resisting the inclusion.

Things that are resisting will stay independent and create their own surroundings.

Systems are there to help us develop. They are scaffolds and libraries. They are supported with analogies. The Grid is one of the made systems. The Grid completely relies on the principles of analogy and comparison. Different phenomena are positioned in the Grid and shown through different scales of the grid-ing. The grid-ing is the process of positioning something or oneself in the Grid. The grid-ing aims to enable us to see different relations on work. These relations are building the narrative, the history, the tale. The tale is nothing but the enjoyment in one of the possible understandings. There are multiple understandings of what is, what was or of what can be. Those are combined, produced and reproduced by the spectators. Artist is offering only a multiple possibility, with non-desired-possibilities excluded. Artist is cutting out fruitless understandings. The audience has a task to make connections. Artist has a task to avoid the mechanical reproduction of the known. The Grid is an open system. It enables what is now to come through the Grid. Artist has to do the routine of the Grid while accepting what is now and letting it to leak through the system. Leaking is related to Real.

## **On Real**

Today in the theater Real is a must. Otherwise, the work will end up in the representation. From the political aspect any representation indicates the power structures. Art is the first to abolish the power structures. This process is ongoing since forever. Apart from the intention not to be representative there is not much done. Because of the means of production which haven't change. Although many of us have attempt to question authorship and the roles within productions, they remain the same. The reason is the market. While staying on the market, an artist doesn't have a choice, she must reserve her authority/authorship. Otherwise, her position on the market would be shaken. By stepping out of the market, an artist can start making a possibility for structures without hierarchy. But still, this is not enough.

The real in theater must be Real. It is not enough to make it real, it must be let to be Real.

That means to let ourselves to see what is there. Once seen and understood, Real can appear under artificial conditions again. This takes a craft to be done, but nevertheless, craft is what we need. Craft is the way of being in Process, by which Woman is creating the conditions while, at the same time, using already existing conditions. When crafting, Woman must be in-between possible and impossible. The craftswoman is mastering the paradox.

If the tool for the discipline of dance used to be understood purely as a physical body, Woman sees that there is more than the body in the wider sense of the used tool. There is a mind, but there is also a soul, spirit, emotions, intelligence, will, history, memories, scars, etc. Working with the body, Woman is using everything. This is not coming from a particular (dance) style or a political approach. It simply considers what we have learned so far (as humanity). We can't pretend anymore that we are innocent. We know (more).

## **On Fissure, On Gaping**

Every show needs a fissure. In comparison with the experience of having a child, the fissure would be the work on a permanent feeling of unaccomplished potentiality. Every show must be a window for its *new* to come. The child is here-now, but in our experience of child's presence in our lives it never keeps the position of here-now. We always see it in the perspective of the future (*who will she be, what will*

*she become*). There is an ongoing process of becoming that never gives us a rest in our perception. The children were not already in our lives, but they came to us, and they keep on coming. Our first meeting with our children is permanent.

Every show tends to become a whole. That is in the tradition of making art. Work must be finished and only then showed. The experience of the research, which is becoming another norm in the contemporary art, is teaching us that Process never ends. Although, we still can be.

Woman can be on stage even when the job is not finished. Woman must perform/live. Therefore, Woman can't wait for the work to be finished. Work must feel like whole, while still shaping, developing, changing. The fissure is a tool to achieve this. The fissure used as a cut in time/space/image/movement. This cut is actually revealing the Real. The Real which can never be presented as something whole, as one can never frame everything that exists.

The coming (through) of Real, the gaping of Real into now-here comes like a catharsis. Audience feels: we are finally not tricked. Finally, something has happened in the theater. Something real.

The problem with Real is that Real is not a product. No one would like to buy Real, because Real is everywhere around us and looks like something easy to get, something without a purchase value. The paradox is that everyone enjoy to see it in the theater. In the theater everyone expects exactly the Real. Therefore, Real can't be announced previously, can't be shown immediately, it has to happen suddenly, it must be smuggled in the show.

It is not true that Real is valueless. Even though Real seems to be everywhere around us, Real is not so easy accessible. For us exist only those parts of Real which we can perceive. The role of an artist is to make Real, certain aspects of Real, perceivable.

### **On Art Monastery, On Duration And Continuation**

At some point of development an artist must retreat from the art market. The art market is always a question. It is a square, where ideas and products are exchanged and sold for prices that follow different criteria. These criteria are usually dependent on the actual society, on the *zeitgeist*. On contrary, the work of art can not be dependent on the *zeitgeist*. Nor on the actual society. The work of art comes out of the intimate labour, out of the intense bleeding of an artist, and it attempts to overcome the reality. Artwork can be perfectly packed and then sold, but the nature of an artwork is a fragility. Fragility in a way implies that any way of packing will either damage artwork or make it less efficient. An artwork, in itself, is an already packed/framed raw material. The rawness of an artwork is in the idea, in the perception, in the sensation, that initiates it. An artist is working out these and delivering something else, something new, independent, its own entity. Fragility is the main property of this process. Every single moment can be a turning point. And every single moment is important for what will become. In producing there is an extra layer added when packing of an art work. This layer is related to the marketing needs and psychology, and usually it is much less related to the work itself. Marketing packaging is many times just an excuse, a paravane for whatever an artist think it is really necessary to be communicated. This is never shown transparently. But we all know, the advertisement doesn't equals the content. Why do artists need to trick the audience and the patrons, to promise them something else in order to drag them to the theater or to get subsidies? Does art seam so powerful and not easy to be communicated directly? Looks like an artwork today can't be understood differently than a product, alike everything else. In order to be noticed it must first be sold and then consumed. It must be framed

again and again, until it reaches the accessibility of an average product. Nowadays, art also has to have some excuse for its own existence - a social, ecological, psychological, etc – an excuse in order to be socially approved. For the sake of the *zeitgeist*, art can't just be, because it is not reasonable<sup>5</sup>. It must prove that it is cognitive and rational and that it has a cause. It must be instrumental. Sometimes this is truly hurting the art *per se*.

One solution for art, to stay independent, is Art Monastery. Usually, that means to retreat from the art market. For retreating Woman needs to have a good plan. In Art Monastery Woman has to build the alternative to all the structures on which she depends when she is using the art market. Or to find a way to transform, to convert these needs into something else. In many cases Art Monastery is based on modesty. Modesty enables Woman to keep on moving forward without compromising a lot her own practice. Modesty is also a minimal consumption and usage of goods. That is a reason that modesty is not in the fashion, because the *zeitgeist* pressures us to be consumerists. Consumerism establishes us in the society. Consumerism provide us with identity. So, in Art Monastery Woman must be ready to loose her identity at any point of travel. There is nothing secure and there is no promise for the future. In Art Monastery Woman gets only what she creates. Art Monastery possess ultimate prolific powers. But at the same time, it possess ultimate dangers. Woman can easily get lost in this jungle of possibilities and limitations at the same time. But if she is concentrated, Woman can succeed. She will need to do three most important things related to Art Monastery. These are: to retreat, to endure and to repeat. In order to live (in) Art Monastery Woman must always work. Art Monastery is a mountain to climb. If Woman stops climbing for a moment, she can fall back where she was already. There is no time to waste. Woman must retreat many times, not once. She must endure the retreating, and then when she is almost losing the ability of enduring, she must repeat the retreating. That means that she should always look for the aspects of her life/work which are not yet in the retreat and instead of letting it go she must push herself even deeper into the retreat. Art Monastery doesn't last forever. Woman can get out of Art Monastery when she is sure that she has gathered enough powers to be able to resist to the forces of market-world. Then she will be free to create work of her own. But before being able to do this she must undergo the hardening process. Coming out of Art Monastery, Woman is living some other forces. Radically changed, she must find a grounding in the general human reality. Hardening process means starting from zero. Learning again to walk, to use hands, to talk, to work, to make, etc. But now, she is learning with much more understanding, with much more concentration, with much more considerations, with much more independence. Now she is able to really use what she learns.

**Manual for use:** When once you have read this text, please, read it again. In the second reading, please, replace each word *Woman* with the word *Performer*.

During both of the readings each *she* pronoun in the text is exchangeable for all other pronouns.

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<sup>5</sup> Means payable.