

In/Equalities: From the Reflecting Mirror to the Diffraction Apparatus”

Diffraction patterns record the history of interaction, interference, reinforcement, difference. Diffraction is about heterogeneous history, not about originals. Unlike reflections, diffractions do not displace the same elsewhere, in more or less distorted form, thereby giving rise to industries of [story-making about origins and truths]. Rather, diffraction can be a metaphor for another kind of critical consciousness at the end of this rather painful Christian millennium, one committed to making a difference and not to repeating the Sacred Image of Same.

1

The question of equality is problematic. Equal in which way? Equal in rights, fine up to there. But then another thing is how equality is usually interpreted. In the end it is taken as uniformity, as treating equally, if you want equality I will treat you the same, right? It is precisely because we are different that you have to treat us differently so that we are equal in rights. For me it is more interesting to speak in terms of diversity. You're talking about the same thing in the end, but I like more to focus from the angle that words like diversity, difference, give you. (Antonio Centeno, director of *Yes, We Fuck!* 2016)

2

I want to have the same economic and social conditions as men, but I do not want to be like them (...) What I want is to have *the same advantages and conditions* as them, that of course. And that for me is social equality (...) I have my female friends who are directors and many of them are not in an approach, they are in an approach of wanting to achieve the same goals. What, are we going to fight to have an equality like that, when the macho model is horrible? (Ana Solano, director of *No existimos*. 2016)

With quotes from Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, Judith Butler, Michelle Lazar, Evelien Geerts, Iris Van der Tuin, Clare Hemmings, Antonio Centeno, Carolina Suárez Rasmussen and Ana Solano

One circular mirror, one corkboard of 40x60cm, and twelve DVD's with messages pasted on it

Created and contributed by Orianna Calderón, 2018



3

When we talk about diversity, we stress the fact that we are all different, we all do things differently. If it is not a political question, what is it? It is charity, it is solidarity, I mean, it has to be political. What is at stake is not what we do with these strange people. What is at stake is what we do with human fragility, what we do with that need of others. That, if that is not political... I mean, it is politics of the first order, it must be. (Antonio Centeno, director of *Yes, We Fuck!* 2016)

4.

The variables woman, domestic worker, immigration, come as three axes with their vulnerabilities and potentials, right? If we talk about vulnerabilities or unequal treatment, I think that here all three things come together, due to being a woman, a migrant, and a domestic worker (Carolina Suarez Rasmussen, director of *Cuidado, resbala*. 2017)

5.

What has subsequently been the central and powerful axis of the documentary is that the gender axis and the axis of functional diversity are the same axis practically; I mean, in the end the structure of oppression is the same, right? That attempt to justify social inequalities based on biological differences is a very old story and that is why the discourses are so parallel and so related. (Antonio Centeno, director of *Yes, We Fuck!* 2016)

6.

Since the 1990s, globalisation, inequalities and the need for caretakers have led to large migrations from the southern countries to the northern countries to work as domestic workers. These are called global chains of care and intersect two crises. On the one hand, the women who migrate leave their sons and daughters in the care of another woman in the family and, on the other hand, those same women who leave their countries and care for their own, come to care for the children of women from the northern countries, so that they can join the labour market (*Cuidado, resbala*. 2013).

7.

In feminist theory, the metaphor of diffraction is employed “to denote a more critical and difference-attentive mode of consciousness and thought” with the potential to move away from “the traditional modern Western philosophical approach in which difference is seen as to-be-captured, to-be-assimilated, and, eventually, to-be-wholly-eradicated”. According with Donna Haraway, thinking diffractively steps out of the phallogocentric, reflective logics of producing the Same all over again by acknowledging the differences that exist, while at the same time pointing at where the problematic reductions and assimilations of difference have taken place (...) it gives us the opportunity to become more attuned to how differences are being created in the world, and what particular effects they have on subjects and their bodies. (Evelien Geerts and Iris Van der Tuin, 2016).

8.

Equality and gender equality are problematic concepts. Within a liberal perspective, “equality implies ‘same as men’, where the yardstick is that already set by men. Instead of a radical shift in the gender order, women therefore are required to fit into the prevailing androcentric structures”. However, the ideal of achieving equality remains “historically important for politically disadvantaged groups of women who have been systematically denied equality under the law” (Michelle Lazar 2007).

9.

The emphasis on Western gender equality as something already achieved and visible in the figure of the sexually liberated young Western woman, nurtures a postfeminist discourse that conceives feminism as an out-dated project in the so-called first world countries. “The use of gender equality as a marker of an economic and regulatory modernity marks the subject of gender equality as Western, capitalist, and democratic, and the West, capitalism, and democracy themselves as sites that create the possibility of, and reproduce, rather than hinder, gender equality. Critically, they position the objects of gender equality as non-Western or post-socialist, and such contexts, and particularly cultures or economies, as creating and perpetuating traditional gender inequalities not part of

the modern world. The subject of modern gender equality is not only Western, capitalist, and democratic, but also heterosexual and feminine. (Clare Hemmings 2011).

10.

Instead of conceiving different visions as completely separate and/or opposed to each other, a diffractive methodology attends to “entanglements in reading important insights and approaches through one another” (Karen Barad 2007). Diffraction stands for a kind of thinking that disrupts “linear and fixed causalities” (Iris Van Der Tuin 2011).

11.

We can also think about inequality in terms of precarity, i.e. “the differential distribution of precariousness”. What we currently face on a global scale is that “precarity is unequally distributed and lives are not considered equally grievance or equally valuable”. Social movements that struggle from and against precarity, are not trying to overcome interdependency or even vulnerability, but “to produce the conditions under which vulnerability and interdependency become livable”. The fact that we have to cohabitate with other humans and non-humans on which our lives depend, should lead us “to understand a global obligation imposed upon us to find political and economic forms that minimize precarity and establish economic political equality (...) Our shared exposure to precarity is but one ground of our potential equality and our reciprocal obligations to produce together conditions of livable life”. (Judith Butler 2015).

12.

We are all precarious and “our precarity is to a large extent dependent upon the organization of economic and social relationships, the presence or absence of sustaining infrastructures and political institutions”. In this regard, vulnerability is not inherent to a particular group, but unequally distributed as an effect of power relations under specific conditions. When this is not acknowledged, vulnerability can be used by political discourses as a way to produce and naturalise forms of social inequality. Conditions such as the poverty and illiteracy faced mainly by women, are due to an unequal distribution of precariousness fostered by gender power relations and lack of adequate socio-political infrastructures. Women are “at once vulnerable and capable of resistance, and that vulnerability and resistance can, and do, and even must happen at the same time”. The struggle is to find a balance between the necessary demand for institutions to provide the conditions for livable lives, without resorting to modes of paternalism that “reinstate and naturalize relations of inequality” (Judith Butler 2015).