

# Editors Editorial

01/02

e-flux journal #80 — march 2017 Editors  
Editorial

Division is the characteristic habit of humanity: *ēthos anthropōi daimōn*, as Heraclitus had it. Demons for division, we divide and are divided. Taken over by divisions within ourselves, the demonic appears as the divided self. Wherever the self realizes an apparent struggle, whenever one is possessed by another, the demon is present. Possession dramatizes self-production as a fight for local control. Demonology is the science of these heteronomous selves, these others inside us. “From the beginning” Boris Groys writes in this issue, “the contemporary artist is demonic: he is possessed by himself and cannot be relieved of his demons.”

To be an artist is to produce a self in excess of the self, a surplus self, straddling the borders of the human individual. “Ah!” we say, looking at a can of excrement, “It is a Manzoni!” The artist lends their name to a career composed of inhuman children. But artists are not the only multiple ones, there are others equally excessive, equivocally unaccountable. “Machines, women – demons, if you will – align on the dark side of the screen: the inhuman surplus of a black circuit,” Amy Ireland writes in “Dark Circuit: Code for the Numbers to Come.” Should those left unrecognized seek numbers for themselves? Or prefer to remain outside the circle of our collective ‘countability?’

Animals, too, exemplify a self that is not yet a citizen, even as they are deployed as sensors. In horror movies the dogs always bark at the demon’s invisible presence. The horses startle, a flock of birds shudders, astonished, into the air. They perceive in advance the arrival of our divided nature. Charles Tonderai Mudede in “Black Mirror Body,” considers the animal consistency beneath our various projects and projections of some timeless immaterial humanism.

Achille Mbembe details the deep intellectual and material history of such apprehensions in “Difference and Self-Determination” from his forthcoming *Critique of Black Reason*. How does blackness apprehend itself when it has been interpolated – the word is too gentle in this case – for centuries as the opposite, or absence, of reason? In “On Being Present Where You Wish to Disappear” Nana Adusei-Poku considers a contemporary manifestation of the same association, common in the artworld, of nothingness, universality and whiteness.

Language is a potential answer to the universal question, perhaps, but not a singular one. There are many particular languages and Barbara Cassin takes up the question of what it means to speak more than one by starting with the significance of the first, what she calls ‘maternal language.’ Carol Yinghua Lu considers

the mother tongue of Chinese contemporary art by sketching its prehistory in the decades since the end of the Cultural Revolution. While in “Assemblism” Jonas Staal draws on the work of Judith Butler to develop the vision for a new, decidedly less demonic politics. Is it possible to imagine an assembly of everyone, demons and divisions included?

x

02/02

e-flux journal #80 — march 2017 Editors  
**Editorial**