



## ‘Nothing comes without its world’: thinking with care

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### Abstract

What is the significance of caring for thinking and knowing? Thinking and knowing are essentially relational processes. Grounded on a relational conception of ontology the essay argues that ‘thinking with care’ is a vital requisite of collective thinking in interdependent worlds, but also one that necessitates a thick vision of caring. A speculative exploration of forms of thinking with care unfolds through a rereading of Donna Haraway’s work, specifically of its take on feminist discussions on the situated character of knowledge. The notion of thinking with care is articulated through a series of concrete moves: *thinking-with*, *dissenting-within* and *thinking-for*. While weaving Haraway’s thinking and writing practices with the trope of care offers a particular understanding of this author’s knowledge politics, the task of caring also appears in a different light.

**Keywords:** Care, collective, thinking, Donna Haraway, relationality

### Caring as relating

Thinking care as inseparably a vital affective state, an ethical obligation and a practical labour has been from very early on at the heart of feminist social sciences and political theory; an endeavour that has become more visible with increased interest in the ‘ethics of care’. While it is fair to say that care has been and remains an essential feature of transformative feminist politics and alternative forms of organizing, ‘caring’ is also commonplace in everyday moralizations: for example, companies compete to show how much *they* care, buying recycled toilet paper shows that *we* care, and caring for *the self* is a pervasive order of biopolitical morality.

Yet care is too important a notion to reduce it to hegemonic ethics (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2010; Latimer and Puig de la Bellacasa, forthcoming). **Thinking in the world involves acknowledging our own involvements in perpetuating dominant values**, rather than retreating into the secure position of an enlightened outsider who knows better. In this spirit, my intention here is not to stage a confrontation with mainstream notions of care, but rather, following feminist precursor work such as that of Hilary Rose (1983, 1994), to articulate a non-idealized vision of care that is meaningful for matters of thinking and knowing.

The quote borrowed as the title for this essay, ‘nothing comes without its world’ (Haraway, 1997: 137), reveals that the discussion unfolds as a re-reading of Donna Haraway’s work, more particularly its take on feminist discussions on the situatedness of knowledge (Haraway, 1991c, 1997). That knowledge is situated means that knowing and thinking are inconceivable without a multitude of relations that also make possible the worlds we think with. The premise to my argument can therefore be formulated as follows: relations of thinking and knowing require care.

It is worth emphasizing that this premise is grounded in ontological rather than in moral grounds. For not only do relations involve care, care is itself relational. We can read this in Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher’s much quoted generic definition of care as including ‘everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair “our world” so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, *all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web*’ (Tronto, 1993: 103, my emphasis). This vision of caring, if somewhat too centred on self, speaks of care as those *doings* needed to create, hold together and sustain life’s essential heterogeneity. In the same direction, most feminist arguments on the ethics of care entail that to value care we have to recognize the inevitable interdependency essential to the reliant and vulnerable beings that we are (Kittay and Feder, 2002; Engster, 2005).

Caring and relating thus share conceptual and ontological resonance. In worlds made of heterogeneous interdependent forms and processes of life and matter, to care about something, or for somebody, is inevitably to create relation. In this way care holds the peculiar significance of being a ‘non normative obligation’ (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2010): it is concomitant to life – not something forced upon living beings by a moral order; yet it *obliges* in that for life to be liveable it needs being fostered. This means that care is somehow unavoidable: although not all relations can be defined as caring, none could subsist without care. For instance, even when caring is not assured by the people or things that are perceptibly involved in a specific form of relating, in order for them to merely subsist somebody/something has (had) to be taking care somewhere or at some time. Further, care obliges us to constant fostering, not only because it is in its very nature to be about mundane maintenance and repair, but because a world’s degree of liveability might well depend on the caring accomplished within it. In that sense, standing by the vital necessity of care means standing for sustainable and flourishing relations, not merely survivalist or instrumental ones.

From a feminist perspective there are further reasons why normative moralistic visions of care will not do. Caring is more than an affective-ethical state: it involves material engagement in labours to sustain interdependent worlds, labours that are often associated with exploitation and domination. In this sense, the meanings of caring are not straightforward. Interdependency is not a contract but a condition; even a pre-condition. For all this, we must be careful not to become nostalgic for an idealised caring world: caring or being cared for

is not necessarily rewarding and comforting. A feminist inspired vision of caring cannot be grounded in the longing for a smooth harmonious world, but in vital ethico-affective everyday practical *doings* that engage engage with the inescapable troubles of interdependent existences.

Grounded on a conception of care as an ontological requirement of relational worlds, this essay seeks to explore what the *doings* of thick and non-moralistic ways of caring could mean for practices of thinking and knowing. Even though the theme of care has not explicitly appeared in her writings until recently – in different yet related ways to the ones I explore here (Haraway, 2007b, 2007a) – I have found Donna Haraway’s work particularly inspiring for thinking caring knowledge as a relational force, while resisting to fall into moralistic visions (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2004, 2012). For Haraway, creating knowledge is a relational practice with important consequences in the shaping of possible worlds. Generically speaking, the claim that care matters in knowledge is supported by Haraway’s call to pay attention to the workings and consequences of our ‘semiotic technologies’ – that is, to practices and arts of fabricating meaning with signs, words, ideas, descriptions, theories (Haraway, 1991c). However my motivation is not so much to offer an ‘interpretation’ of Haraway’s vision of ‘situated knowledge’, but to offer a speculative reading of her work that reveals new challenges for the notion of care.

The first section follows the premise that caring is relationality into the doings of thinking and knowing. It articulates a notion of *thinking-with* that resists the individualization of thinking. The subsequent sections discuss episodes of Haraway’s implication in feminist debates. In them I identify two pragmatic forms of thinking with care that question the idealization of caring relations: *dissenting-within* and *thinking-for*.

## Thinking-with

*But it’s not enough to shout ‘Vive the multiple!’; the multiple has to be done.*

Henri Bergson<sup>1</sup>

Thinking with Haraway is thinking with many people, beings and things; it means thinking in a populated world. Actually, we could say that for Haraway thinking *is* thinking-with.

Look at the many meanings a word such as ‘biology’ can take in Haraway’s work: a knot of relationships between living matters and social modes of existence, crafts, practices and love stories; a range of situated ‘epistemological, semiotic, technical, political and material’ connections (Haraway, 2000: 403); an omnipresent discourse in the 20th century; an enterprise of civic education (Haraway, 1997); a metaphor too, but also much ‘more than a metaphor’ (Haraway and Goodeve, 2000: 82–3). In her work, objects/bodies of contemporary biology are accounted for as instances of relatedness in the making. This insight goes hand in hand with resistance to reductionism: a constant

questioning as to what makes 'one'. A curiosity about the connected heterogeneities composing an entity, a body, a world, that troubles boundaries: 'Why should our bodies end at the skin?' (Haraway, 1991a: 178). Haraway's thinking with thick populated worlds is an acknowledgement of multiplicity, but also an effort to actually foster multiplication – creating a *diffraction* rather than a reflection of the 'same' (Haraway and Goodeve, 2000: 193).<sup>2</sup>

The way in which Haraway writes is a semiotic technology of these agitations: connective writing, phrasing worlds together, contributes to this generative drive. In these incessant web-making moves, ontology is continuously in the making, in the process of becoming-with. For Haraway, 'reality is an active verb' (Haraway, 2003: 6). This does not mean that there are no boundaries or stabilities but that 'beings do not preexist their relatings' (Haraway, 2003: 6).<sup>3</sup> In that sense, with Susan Leigh Star, Haraway sees 'objects' as 'boundary projects' (Haraway, 1997: 6).

This concerns communities and collectives too. For instance, to the question of what makes a feminist 'we'? we can answer that *feminism does not pre-exist its relatings*. Ontologies and identities are also affected by collective politics and positionalities that put into question given boundaries of existing worlds (eg the taken-for-granted 'woman'). This is about creating other relations, other possibilities of existence, namely other beings. Haraway's work can contribute to contemporary rethinking of the social world and organization that is exploring ways of situating people and things in the world without recurring to fixed 'wholes' – society, culture – without necessarily ensuing in individualization of self or in permanent fluidity.

I am thinking here with Rolland Munro's view of the process by which identity is 'punctualized' rather than pre-given: identity forms are shaped by the 'demanding' aspects of relation and by positionalities situated in different times and spaces (see in particular: Munro, 2004, 2005). Common to these visions of ontology as relational – neither fixed nor fluid – is a concern for the consequences of relations. With *what* and, more importantly for this essay, *how* we relate affects the building of positions and relational ecologies. However, as we will see, for Haraway – like for Munro (2004) – this concern does not need to translate in longing for fixed realities that could police the outcomes by confirming correspondence to pre-existing 'orders'.

Haraway's thinking-with creates new patterns out of previous multiplicities, intervening by adding layers of meaning rather than questioning or conforming to ready-made categories. The way in which Haraway enacts this thinking-with-many has led her to hold multiple ends of supposedly clashing positions, messing up with pre-existing categories. For instance, at the height of hype surrounding her work, she constantly puzzled attempts to class her as 'post-modern': 'a lot of my heart lies in old-fashioned science for the people' (Penley *et al.*, 1990: 9).

This resistance to conceptual enclosure is not without purpose. A fair account of most feminist discussions involves cutting across fixed theoretical and academic divides:

... that Hartsock, Harding, Collins, Star, Bhavnani, Tsing, Haraway, Sandoval, hooks, and Butler are not supposed to agree about postmodernism, standpoints, science studies, or feminist theory is neither my problem nor theirs. The problem is the needless yet common cost of taxonomising everyone's positions without regard to the contexts of their development, or of refusing rereading and overlaying in order to make new patterns from previous disputes. (Haraway, 1997: 304–5)

When webs of thought share a history there is a cost in dividing and opposing. Indeed, one can notice that readings of feminist thinking webs that we find in Haraway's writings tend to highlight and foster the efforts to care for each other rather than settle into breaks and splits.

Yet the most striking messing up over categories into which Haraway's thinking-with has drawn her readers, is that of inciting us to enlarge our ontological and political sense of kinship and alliance, to dare in exercises of category transgression, of boundary redefinition that put to test the scope of humanist care. Welcome to a 'menagerie of figurations', a 'critical-theoretical zoo' where all 'inhabitants are not animals' (Haraway and Goodeve, 2000: 135–6). Kinships and alliances become transformative connections – merging inherited and constructed relations. This one was never an evident gesture. Promiscuous gatherings might provoke unease. I have seen concerned feminists fairly irritated with Haraway's suggestion that we connect with our machines. On the other hand many techno post-feminists would rather detach the celebrated cyborg from attachments supposed to be essentialist, realist, Second Wave, spiritual or any other term sounding misplaced. Look at how the extremely quoted final sentence of her celebrated *Cyborg Manifesto*, 'I'd rather be a cyborg than a goddess', has been systematically disconnected from the preceding words affirming that both figures are 'bound in the spiral dance' – a characteristic ritual of neo-pagan activist spirituality for which the figure of the Goddess is central (Starhawk, 1999). More recently there is some urge to split her *serious* work from that *stuff* she has been writing about dogs! What is both challenging and rejoicing with Haraway's thinking is that it renders such splits difficult to sustain.

The practice of thinking-with gives an atypical density to Haraway's writing: it is her explicit purpose to make things 'thicker' (Haraway and Goodeve, 2000: 108). We are often introduced to such thick gatherings through a specific event: when/where/how an encounter worked for her, changed her, taught her something. Long enumerations exhibit multilayered worlds she both describes and generates. Engaging with inherited worlds by adding layers rather than by analytical disarticulation translates in an effort to 'redescribe something so that it becomes thicker than it first seems' (Haraway & Goodeve, 2000: 108). 'And' is the predominant word here – more than 'or', 'either' and 'rather'. Situated, implicated and grounded writing makes it uneasy to skim through, or generalize the claims, especially when writing is deliberately plagued by obstacles to challenge reductionism, the dissection of the webs of

relatedness that compose a world. There is no single-issued reading of Haraway because she does not write single-issued worlds.<sup>4</sup> An excess of layering might be the weak spot attached to the singular strength I am associating here to thinking-with. There could be a downside to this appetite for layering: it demands from the reader awareness of multiple roots and openness to follow lines of surprising connections; it requires an effort to sense how each of her stories is situated in crowded worlds; or simply it invites a letting go of trying to systematically control a totality. Odd effects occur for readers who feel unfamiliar with her milieu of thinking: some can be amazed and inspired, others can be irritated by a flow of unfamiliar stories and notions and criticize this writing for being obscure.

What this style could reveal is that Haraway does not write for a 'general' reader. These ways of thinking-with reveal a commitment to a *collective* of knowledge-makers – however loose its boundaries and complex its shapes. It is for me a specific meaning of thinking with care that appears here: **the embeddedness of thought in the worlds one cares for**. But if care is a *doing*, is there a practical feature of this form of caring? In Haraway's work this commitment is written; and written-in, pretty obviously, through a **lively politics of quotation**. This way of writing gives credit for many of the ideas, notions or affects nourishing her thinking to fellow researchers and students, but also friends, human and non-human, affinity/activist groups, whether inside or outside academic or 'intellectual' realms. To acknowledge the inscription of this singular thinker is thus not to disregard her idiosyncratic position and distinctive contribution in a collective intelligence. On the contrary by reading these ways as those of thinking with care, I want to value a style of connected thinking and writing that troubles the predictable academic isolation of consecrated authors by gathering and explicitly valorizing the collective webs one thinks with, rather than using the thinking of others as a mere 'background' *against which* to foreground one's own.

The point here is not hagiographic – indicating some remnant in Haraway's work, for instance, of second wave feminist alternative forms of organizing intellectual work – but to read this style in a speculative way that can teach us something about the subversive character of care. **Academic settings do not really value eclectic writing-with, especially when it explodes the category of disciplined 'peers'**. Here also a resistance to prefixed wholes is at stake. **As Munro puts it, what is masked in the ' "convention" of publishing whereby academics put their own names to works' is the extent to which it is 'the product of a wider collectivity'**. And authors are not the only instrumental wholes at play in this masking, so are universities. Objectified, separated from each other in order to become 'comparable' and enter into competition, they use complex processes of attribution and reordering to detach the work of their employees from complex intellectual webs. Only then can thinking and knowledge become individualized property of an institution (Munro, 2005). Indeed, as Susan Leigh Star (1991) showed clearly in her work, in order to be projected into purportedly manageable futures (eg resource allocation) the

messiness of the present has to be 'standardized'. The question is what will be the consequences of these processes on future modes of thought? What will get to disappear?

In this context, there is no point in idealizing writing that performs the collective; or in suggesting that careful quotation will do the trick. Yet I believe seeking ways of inscribing the collective might deserve more attention for its potential to counterbalance the drying effects of isolating academic work. It would be sadly insufficient to reduce these gestures to basic intellectual honesty, academic politeness or political loyalty to the insiders of a cause. What is interesting to me here, what I find compelling in fostering a style of writing-with, is not who or what it aims to include and represent in a text, but what it generates: it actually creates collective, it populates a world. Instead of reinforcing the figure of a lone thinker, the voice in such a text seems to keep saying: *I am not the only one*. Thinking-with makes the work of thought stronger, it supports its singularity and contagious potential. Writing-with is a practical technology that reveals itself as both descriptive (it inscribes) and speculative (it connects). It builds relation and community, that is: possibility. This way of relating does not speak for creating 'unions' – nor will mere 'juxtapositions' do. These paths follow the relation as 'something that passes between [the two] which is neither in one nor the other' (Deleuze and Parnet, 1987: 10). Such is also my hope here in weaving meanings of care with Haraway's work. To create 'interest', in the sense emphasized by Isabelle Stengers, by situating in-between – *inter-esse* – not to divide, but to relate (Stengers, 1993).

This approach can also involve resisting a form of academic thinking based on positioning theories and authors in a field by pointing out what 'they' are lacking and that 'we' come to fill – a puzzle-making approach to knowledge that depends on what Munro (1999) calls the 'disposal of the gap'. And maybe it can alienate those who seek in a social sciences' text *new* data that completes the objective analysis of an issue. Moreover, this form of writing with also troubles the expectation of a 'critical insight' that would break with the past by offering a novel pattern emerging out of an obsolete background. But probably the perception most challenged by relationships of knowledge based on care might be that affective attachments to collectives are misplaced in academic texts, deemed empathetically uncritical, or even self-indulgent. Sceptical judgements can be particularly acute towards work dedicated to foster commitment to a particular 'interpretive community'. Academia trains us to be watchful not to tie ourselves to what Joan Haran calls 'dialogic networks' that 'limit the play of reading' and seek common grounds for hope in concrete forms of situated 'praxis' (Haran, 2010, 2003). Indeed, much of the trouble with notions of 'commitment' is the defiance they inspire in academic work dedicated to advance *specific* visions versus a general interest of social description.

This is an ongoing challenge for research connected to feminism since the second wave: 'politically committed' is identified as 'biased'. For many femi-

nists, to disrupt this identification was ‘fundamental to hopes for democratic and credible science’ (Haraway, 1997: 227, n. 3) and a major motivation for the development of feminist ‘epistemology’ – especially of ‘standpoint theory’ as a ‘justification strategy’ for the knowledge produced with its groundings in feminist and other oppositional movements (Harding, 1986). I come back to that particular discussion below, for now I want to try and ‘stay with the trouble’ (Haraway, 2010) of political commitments in order to further unfold the demanding aspects of thinking with care.

## Dissenting-within

*Corrosive scepticism cannot be midwife to new stories*

Donna Haraway (1991b: 78)

Care in knowledge making has something of a ‘labour of love’ (Kittay, 1999; Kittay and Feder, 2002). Love is also involved in compelling us to think with (and for) what we care about. But appealing to love is particularly tricky: romantic idealizations of love are not rare, just as the nastiness accomplished in love’s name is plentiful. Precisely because of this, it is important to insist that knowledge-making based on care, love and attachment is not incompatible with conflict; that care should not be reduced to smoothing out of differences, nor love enjoined to the moral order that justifies any aims (hooks, 2000). A non-idealized vision of practices grounded on committed attachments needs a multi-layered, non-innocent, approach to the meanings of caring. Relationality is all there is, but this does not mean a world without conflict nor dissension.

Ontology grounded in relationality and interdependency needs to acknowledge not only, as said before, an essential heterogeneity, but also ‘cuts’ out of which heterogeneity can flourish. For instance, attached and intense focus on an object of love also creates patterns that re-order relations through excluding some – like when we respond to the ‘demanding’ character of a relation (Munro, 2004). In other words, where there is relation there has to be care, but *our cares* also perform disconnection. We cannot possibly care for everything, not everything can count in a world, not everything is relevant in a world – there is no life without some kind of death. However, thinking with care compels us to look at thinking and knowing from the perspective of how our cuts foster relationship, more than how they isolate figures. This allows looking at ‘cuts’ from the perspective of how they are re-creating, or being created by, ‘partial connections’ (Strathern, 2004 [1991]; see also: Munro, 1996; 2005). That is, we can draw attention to how ‘new’ patterns inherit from a web of relationalities that contributed to make them possible.

Moreover, as discussed above, affirming that beings do not pre-exist their relatings means that our relatings have consequences. Multiplying through connection first, rather than through distinctive taxonomies is consistent with a confidence that feminist (knowledge) politics are not dedicated to decon-



struction of the given, but to 'passionate construction', to 'passionate connection' (Haraway, 1997: 190). We can see as the basis of careful constructivism, an attempt to offer 'a better account of the world' rather than just showing 'radical historical contingency and modes of construction for everything' (Haraway, 1991c: 187). In sum, thinking-with belongs to, and creates, community by inscribing thought and knowledge in worlds one cares about in order to make a difference – a diffraction. Nonetheless, the ways in which (a) difference is made here do not reside so much in contrasts and contradictions but in prolongations and interdependencies. Thinking with care is a response led by awareness of the efforts it takes to cultivate relatedness in collective and accountable knowledge construction without negating dissent. To explore ways of taking care for the unavoidably thorny relations that foster rich, collective, interdependent, albeit not seamless, thinking-with. Below I propose an account of two moments drawn from Haraway's work that I read as concrete instances of engagement with the articulations of a caring 'we', as efforts vital to thinking-with.

The first account features 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', Haraway's seminal and notorious intervention against 'organic' unities in feminism. This written manifestation of unsettledness in feminist recent history shows how thinking-with can be inspiring, empowering but, mostly, not easy. It helped to reveal conflicts in feminism, as well as re-weave narratives of solidarity-building. It stressed how trajectories and positions can connect and transform each other without needing to erase their divergences. A shared urgency manifested in the call: 'the need for unity of people trying to resist world-wide intensification of domination has never been more acute' (Haraway, 1991a: 154). The proposal was to avoid models of resistance to domination that would expect us to rely on evident or given bonding and, beyond this avoidance, open ourselves to unexpected 'unnatural' alliances: cyborg-coalition politics. The intervention was inspired by, and accountable to, a wide range of feminist work and activism, but more particularly to knowledge and positions conceived within black feminisms and other 'oppositional consciousnesses' – in Chela Sandoval's wording (Sandoval, 1991, 1995) – that brought radical unease with the ways the multiple situated meanings of 'women's experience' were concealed by a white, privileged and heterosexual feminist 'we'.

The 'Cyborg Manifesto' tried to provoke humour at the heart of something as serious as dreams for political unity (Haraway, 1991a). But the laughter came from an inside, with a commitment to share the problems of a community. This is different from ironical snigger: 'I laugh: therefore, I am . . . implicated. I laugh: therefore, I am responsible and accountable' (Haraway, 1997: 182). Laugh with, not laughing at, comes from thinking embedded in communities one cares for, and it is an example of a form of thinking with care that I propose to call *dissenting-within*. However, the stance does not only concern visions we are committed to foster. Recognizing insiderness, *withinness*, to the worlds we engage with even if critically is to relate with 'complex layers of

one's personal and collective historical situatedness in the apparatuses of the production of knowledge' (Haraway, 1997: 277, n. 3). Such a stance is born within complex feminist discussions about the possibilities of objectivity<sup>5</sup> and advocates for knowers not to pretend being free of 'pollutions' to our vision. Refusing self-erasure is about acknowledging our implication – and of daring to say it especially when one is in a position to afford it.

Interdependency, again, also problematizes the revered critical distance at the heart of so much enlightened knowledge. *Dissenting-within* is openness to the effects we might produce with critiques to worlds we would rather not endorse. Caring for the effects this way can make us particularly vulnerable. Recognizing vulnerability has been reclaimed as an ethical stance;<sup>6</sup> in the practice of thinking-with, it comes as a consequence of accepting one's thought as inheritor, even of the threads of thought we oppose. It might be also the inescapable price of commitment: if care is to *move* a situation, those who care will be also moved by it.

This brings me to a second, and perhaps most salient, example of another 'unnatural' alliance in which Haraway's work was strongly involved since the late 1980s and well into the 1990s: the fragile alliance between what Sandra Harding insightfully described as the 'women question in science' – concerns for the position of women practising science – and the 'science question in feminism' – the feminist critical approach to science as a practice itself (Harding, 1991, 1986; and Keller, 1985; see also: Rose, 1994). The thorny background for this alliance was described by Londa Schiebinger when reflecting on the split between science studies and the sciences: 'Collaboration became even more difficult when . . . certain factions started practicing interperate constructivism to the extent that scientists' distrust of scholars examining their disciplines escalated into the "science wars".' Schiebinger notes that many feminist researchers developed a refusal of both 'reductive constructivism' and 'unreflective objectivism'. The critical insight that scientific 'data', or facts, comport ambiguity due to socio-political factors, was balanced with respect for the loyalties to 'empirical constraints', typical of modern scientific traditions (Schiebinger, 2003: 860).

Feminists were of course not the only ones involved in seeking more careful forms of constructivist approaches to science. However, my point here is that they had particular reasons for this caution, more related to the difficulties of thinking-with than to quarrels around finding out which is the best normative epistemology. Indeed, how could this conversation take place if critiques of the practice of science are made from a position of critical distance (Rose, 1996). Or if social scientists claim that their 'strangeness' to a field allows knowing better the 'native' practitioners' practices – that is, explaining their sociality. In this respect, an account related to some receptions of Haraway's *Primate Visions* (1992) particularly touches me. Haraway saw this book as an act of love and her passionate concern for primatology as a terrain of encounters between multilayered interests. Though it opens with a quote from Eugene Marais: 'For thus all things must begin, with an act of love', the book held no

illusions of innocence about humans' devouring love for non-human others, including epistemic love. But neither does it approach this love with cynicism. However, some aspects of her descriptions made primatologists angry. Commenting more than ten years later on the adverse reactions to her book by feminist primatologists, Haraway thinks that her ethnographical engagement should have been 'thicker', by being more 'in the field', and says: 'I would have spent more time with my own rhetorical apparatus inviting primatologists into this book – reassuring them. Giving them more evidence that I know and care about the way they think. It became a very hard book for many primatologists. They felt attacked and excluded' (Haraway and Goodeve, 2000: 56).

How do these particular experiences speak through Haraway's (1991c) declared uneasiness, not only with social constructivism and deconstructivist approaches to science, but also with abstract philosophical realism and critical descriptions from any side disengaged from practising scientists' concerns? In her work on relationships of love, power and knowledge, Hilary Rose sees the 'both/and' positions that Haraway has taken in feminist epistemological debates as tributary of a 'close observation/participation of and in this outstanding group of feminist scientists' who are primatologists' (Rose, 1994: 93). Is a certain closeness of relation key for the awareness that creating knowledge has consequences, that those we study are not there only to think-with but also to 'live with'? The wording comes from another context, Haraway's *Companion Species Manifesto* (2003). Exploring the 'cobbling together' of caring relationality in human-dog love, the creation of 'significant otherness', Haraway affirms: 'Dogs, in their historical complexity, matter here. Dogs are not an alibi for other themes. . . . Dogs are not surrogates for theory; *they are not here just to think with. They are here to live with*' (Haraway, 2003: 5, my emphasis). Although this assertion refers to inter-species love, its acknowledgement of interdependency offers a generic warning against idealized forms of caring. For living with is laborious. Relations of otherness are more than about accommodating 'difference', co-existing or tolerating. Thinking with should always be a living with, aware that relations of significant otherness transform those who relate and the worlds they live in.

Dissenting-within speaks of a way of living, hand to hand with the effects of one's thinking. Conflicts transform, and continue to transform, the meanings of feminist collectives in many places, they challenge our political imagination – again, *feminism does not pre-exist its relatings*. In reading these accounts of moments of dissenting-within as instances of thinking with care, I want to stress the difficulties of taking care of relations in knowledge creation. In this context, thinking care, from a perspective of radical heterogeneity and of vulnerability to each other's sort, means asking questions such as: How do we build caring relationships while recognizing divergent positions? How do those we study perceive the way we think-with their practices? Answers to relational questions are always specific, situated. Creating significant otherness is a process rooted 'in vulnerable, on-the-ground work': 'there is no way to make a general argument outside the never-finished work of articulating the

partial worlds of situated knowledges' (Haraway, 1997: 197). Yet, we can still find experiences and stories helpful to learn about the pitfalls of, for instance, well-meaning caring for an 'other'. The following section offers a final account of tensions in feminist knowledge politics, to offer *thinking-for* as an additional feature of thinking with care.

## Thinking-for

Maybe the relation between knowledge and care is most clearly expressed in the argument around which Sandra Harding (1991) gathered the notion of 'feminist standpoint theory', namely, that knowledge committed to *thinking from* marginalized experiences could be *better* knowledge and help cultivate alternative epistemologies that blur dominant dualisms (Hartsock, 1983). The principle has been extensively discussed in relation to feminist reconstructions of women's experiences in oppositional struggles (Harding, 2004) but it advocates more generically for a commitment to value the knowledge conceived through struggles in any context of subjugation. A standpoint in that sense can be understood as an alternative vision of the world conceived in the process of dealing with situations that marginalize and oppress particular ways of living and knowing. I cannot discuss here the complex genealogies and debates about the meanings and possibilities of this vision,<sup>7</sup> but I hope to contribute to their prolongation by reading them as a form of thinking with care.

Standpoint knowledge politics represent an attempt of people working in academic worlds to use this space, their daily work setting, as a site of transformation through the way they produce their research and knowledge. Initially thought as a theory for knowledge producers who are also part of a community in struggle (eg black feminist women; Collins, 1986), standpoint theory also recommends thinking from marginalized experiences to those who do not necessarily belong to the 'margins' in which those experiences are lived. That is, building upon knowledge created in struggle. It is on this aspect that I focus here. In Haraway's words: 'I believe that learning to think about and yearn toward reproductive freedom from the analytical and imaginative standpoint of "African American women in poverty" – a ferociously lived discursive category to which I don't have "personal" access – illuminates the general conditions of such freedom' (Haraway, 1997: 199). This is about knowledge that 'casts its lot with projects and needs of those who would not or could not inhabit the subject positions of the "laboratories", of the credible, civil man of science' (Haraway and Goodeve, 2000: 160). This commitment attempts to connect sites that do not easily connect, making knowledge *interesting* in the sense emphasized earlier of creating a relation in-between.

And yet this specific feature of 'thinking from' might be called a form of *thinking-for*, in order to recognize its specific pitfalls such as: appointing ourselves as spokespersons for the marginalized, using marginalized 'others' as arguments we might articulate anyway, or fetishizing the experiences of 'the

marginal' as inspiring or uplifting. Again, the doing is in the *how* we care. Too much caring can be consuming. Women specially know how care can devour their lives, how it can asphyxiate other possible skills. But care can also extinguish the subtleties of attending to the needs of an 'other' required for careful relationality. All too easily it can lead to appropriating the recipients of 'our' care, instead of relating ourselves to them. This translates into yet another reason why creating new patterns by thinking-with requires particular care with our semiotic technologies.

Thinking and knowing, like naming, have 'the power of objectifying, of totalizing' (Haraway, 1991b: 79). Thinking driven by love and care should be especially aware of dangers of appropriation. And in fact, the risk of appropriation might be worst for committed thinking, because here naming the 'other' cannot be made from a 'comforting fiction of critical distance' (Haraway, 1991a: 244, n. 4). Finally, if thinking with care requires acknowledging vulnerability, this implies that, as approached before in the case of the angry primatologists, our 'subject matter', our recipients of care, can answer back. How to care will require a different approach in different situations of thinking-for. Some oppressed 'others' do need witnesses to act as their spokespersons – for instance tortured animals in a human dominated world. But groups of humans engaged in struggle can refuse (academic) 'speaking for' as usurpation. Appropriating the experience of another precludes us from creating significant otherness, that is, from *affirming* those with whom we build a relation. How to care for the 'oppressed' is far from being self-evident. Haraway's hesitations about standpoint theory are very pointed in that sense: 'how to see from below is a problem requiring at least as much skill with bodies and language, with the mediations of vision, as the "highest" techno-scientific visualisations' (Haraway, 1991c: 191).

In prolongation of the work of Nancy Hartsock and Sandra Harding in particular, Haraway affirms that a standpoint is not an 'empiricist appeal to or by "the oppressed", but a cognitive, psychological and political tool for more adequate knowledge'. It is another name for an oppositional vision that is the 'always fraught but necessary fruit of the *practice* of oppositional and differential consciousness' (Haraway, 1997: 199, my emphasis). Insisting on practice brings us back to the hands-on side of care in the purpose of thinking with others. That is, looking at care as a practical everyday commitment, as something we *do* that affects the meaning of thinking-for. As a privileged woman involved in conversations on the nature of knowledge in feminist science and technology studies, I can sincerely acknowledge how much my work is nourished by the risks taken by women scientists to speak out. Simultaneously, I may fail to join them in questions such as: how do we actually open the space of science? How do I act in solidarity within the unequal power relationships that keep many apart from places I am authorized to work in? We can try to think from, think for, and even think with, but *living-with* requires more than that. To attempt to multiply the ways of 'access', not just to think-for the perpetuated absent. To not confuse care with mere empathy, or with becoming

the spokespersons of those discarded. Creating situated knowledge might also mean that thinking from and for particular struggles require *us* to work for change *from where we are*, rather than drawing upon them for my building of a new theory and for my continued inclusion in educated conversations.

Finally, a crucial contribution of standpoint theory to a thick version of thinking with care is how it showed that dismissing the work of care contributes to building disengaged versions of reality that mask the ‘mediations’ that sustain and connect our worlds, our doings, our knowings. From early on, the ‘marginalized experiences’ these theories referred to were mostly labours of care.<sup>8</sup> By reclaiming these as a source of knowledge, they were rejecting a particular type of willpower for transcendence; an opposition to the obliterating of everyday actual relations in order to sterilize the production of knowledge, something that Nancy Hartsock (1983) called ‘abstract masculinity’. Thinking of mediating labouring bodies as political (ie as problematic) is a feminist practice that standpoint feminisms theorize as a production of positions for building other types of knowledge. ‘Care’ here refers us to those layers of labour that *get us through the day*, a material space in which many are trapped. In many cases, in Latimer’s (2000) felicitous phrase, care is not behaviour so much as it is ‘conduct’. Reminding that care is not a hygienic moral task troubles idealized ideas of caring.

I read Haraway’s stance against ‘political and ontological dualisms’ as a continuation of these conversations. The affirmation of the political potential of valuing the world of sticky mediations as a thinking device is prolonged in her generic refusal of *purity*: ‘The point is to make a difference in the world, to cast our lot for some ways of life and not others. To do that, one must be in the action, be finite and dirty, not transcendent and clean’ (Haraway, 1997: 36). In her most recent work on interspecies relationalities, Haraway has explored the predicaments of caring for non-humans in a nature-cultural world (Haraway, 2007b). But the impurity of caring was at the heart of a question asked more than decade ago, ‘Which is my family in this world?’ (Haraway, 1997: 16; 51), when she was trying to think with a transgenic rodent, Oncomouse™, produced to serve research on breast cancer. Caring for this mouse is a weird experience; at least the way Haraway told her story cut dry any temptation of sentimentalism: named both a ‘she’ and an ‘it’, her specious boundaries are impure, she lives in labs but she is not a mechanical device, she suffers, but she is not ‘just’ a collateral effect of the experimental setting; she was serially born-produced to suffer. By dying or surviving Oncomouse™ was supposed to *prove* what type of being cancer is. But by thinking-with Oncomouse™’s life with a feminist perspective, by asking questions such as ‘for whom Oncomouse™ lives and dies?’, Haraway’s testimony – illustrated with Lynn Randolph’s effective portrait of a naked martyr mouse wearing a crown of spines and under constant observation in a peep-show lab – also proved something unexpected: our sister mouse was born to play a part in what Lochlann Jain calls the *Cancer Complex*, a world where a wealthy business of health care feeds on the pacified scandal of cancer and where some bodies *deserve* the dollars of costly health care

innovations while others are left behind (Lochlan Jain, 2007). Vis-à-vis such beings, and of these kind of technosciences, the feminist sense of caring is urged to mutate, and now more than ever. Oncomouse™ is an edifying story of anti-significant otherness in an enlarged sorority.

This gaze at experimental ways of life through the eyes of our sister mouse revealed the ethos of the *disinterested* modest witness in the experimental lab as the utmost uncaring insult. Upsetting the illusions of modern science by forcing us to look through the eyes of this high tech lab rat, Haraway diffracted a matter of fact into a *matter of care* (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2011). What this gesture reveals is that thinking-for, as with thinking-with, can never be settled, one theory for care will not do the job in the worlds that come with Haraway's writing: calls for caring will continue to come from an 'unexpected country' (Haraway, 2007a).

## Conclusions: how are you doing?

*But what is it that happens precisely when we encounter someone we love?  
Do we encounter somebody, or is it animals that come to inhabit you,  
ideas that invade you, movements that move you, sounds that traverse you?  
And can these things be parted?*

Gilles Deleuze (1992: 17; my translation)

Thinking with care inevitably brings us to the limits of academic knowledge. Yet in this essay I have argued for the meaningfulness of care for thinking and knowing *within* this context. So is this all about a new theory of knowledge? But then, how is thinking with care a non-normative proposition? If there is an ethics and a politics of knowledge here, it is not a theory that would serve us as a 'recipe' for doing our encounters. Care is a good word to exhibit the singularity of the non-normative ethics carried here. Not only because caring is always specific – a mode of caring is not necessarily translatable elsewhere – but because it cannot be reduced to a moral disposition, nor to an epistemic stance, a set of applied labours, not even to affect.

Yet, the pitfall always looming when trying value care in knowledge relations remains a form of epistemological moralism. Something holds together, something matches – something feels *true* enough as to impose it. Funnily enough, the term *accurate* derives from care: 'prepared with care, exact'; it is the past participle of *accurare* 'take care of'. Here, the notion of doing something with care led to that of 'being exact'. The tempting proximity between these terms reveals a risky ground: the ambition to control and judge what/who/how we care for.

This controlling aim echoes what happens with purposes of collecting knowledge practices under normative epistemologies that tend to erase the specificities of knowing practices. How do we keep thinking with care from falling in a *too much*, into a devouring will for controlled accurateness, to be *all*

right? Haraway's knowledge politics help to thicken and complicate the meanings of caring for thinking and knowing precisely because they reflect a resistance both to epistemological formatting and to tempting 'orgies of moralism' (Haraway, 1997: 199) as solutions to sort out the difficulties of respectful interdependency.

Maybe Haraway's antidote to normativity itself, whether epistemological or moral, is an appetite for unexpectedness pervasive in her ontological web-bings: 'I am more interested in the unexpected than in the always deadly predictable' (Haraway, 1997: 280, n. 1). Because 'nothing comes without its world' we do not encounter single individuals, a meeting produces a world, changes the colour of things, it diffracts more than it reflects, distorts the 'sacred image of the same' (Haraway, 1994: 70). Knowing is not about prediction and control but about remaining '*attentive* to the unknown knocking at our door' (Deleuze, 1989: 193). But though we do not know in advance what world is knocking, inquiring into *how* we can care will be required in how we will relate to the new.

Foucault once reminded the etymological acquaintance of care with 'curiosity', to revalue the latter as 'the care one takes of what exists and what might exist' (quoted in Latimer, 2000). Haraway also has explored curiosity as a requisite of better caring for others in her later interspecies work (Haraway, 2007b). I am tempted to end this journey, or rather to continue it, with a basic curious query: *how are you doing?* It sounds like a mundane way of caring, within a respectful distance, for what/whom we encounter and we do not necessarily know; a communication device required for thinking with care in populated worlds. But what does this question mean in practices of and relations of knowing? It could indicate curiosity about how other people keep care going in the dislocated world of contemporary academia and its corollary, the anxious delirium of permanent reorganization.

'How are you doing?' here might also mean 'how do you *cope*?'. Because ultimately thinking with the notion of care does illuminate the affective aspects of knowledge politics. The tensions of care are present in its very etymology that includes notions of both 'anxiety, sorrow and grief' and of 'serious mental attention'. One could wonder, aren't anxiety, sorrow and grief actual threats to the serious mental attention required to care? Does the attention required to keep our knowledge aware of its connections and consequences lead inevitably to anxiety? Here again we meet the major pitfall of caring: too much caring can asphyxiate the carer and the cared for. But should this prevent us from caring? Aren't anxiety, sorrow and grief unavoidable affects in efforts of paying serious mental attention, of thinking with care, in dislocated worlds? Or do these affects belong to an out-of-place sense of *inaccurateness*; that something does not match, does not hold together, that something could be different?



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## Notes

- 1 In a letter addressed to Gilles Deleuze, Bergson is reputed to have said: *Mais il ne suffit pas de crier 'Vive le multiple!'; le multiple, il faut le faire*. This phrase is translated in Deleuze and Parnet (1987: 16) as: 'proclaiming "Long live the multiple" is not yet doing it, one must *do the multiple*'.
- 2 The notion of 'diffraction' proposes an alternative to 'reflexivity', or reflection, to foster thoughtful and accountable knowledge practices (Haraway and Goodeve, 2000; see also Barad, 2007).
- 3 This statement is Whiteheadian, and it matches well with early Marxist-feminist ontologies such as Nancy Hartsock's whose world is produced in the interactions of labour (agency) and nature (materiality). Some of Haraway's earlier work prolongs socialist-feminist projects (see Haraway, 1991d), and in developing her singular thinking on 'naturecultures' Hartsock remains as part of her thinking-with web.
- 4 I am of course paraphrasing Audre Lorde in *Sister Outsider*: 'there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, because we do not live single-issued lives' (Lorde, 1997: 138).
- 5 These conversations are not bilateral, however the dialogue between Haraway and Sandra Harding is particularly significant in this respect. For instance, Haraway's thinking on 'situated knowledges' is crafted within a discussion of Harding's framing of the 'science question in feminism', while Harding's notion of 'strong objectivity' is conceived within a philosophical discussion of 'situated knowledges'.
- 6 Notable thinkers of vulnerability as an ethical stance and problem of the late 20th century ethics are Immanuel Levinas and also Judith Butler.
- 7 See Harding's *Standpoint Theory Reader* for an anthology of these discussions (Harding, 2004). This kind of 'thinking-from' is an illegitimate crossing between a critique of traditional epistemology – as the theory that defines legitimate grounds for knowledge – and feminist political interventions. As such, to see feminist standpoint theory as merely epistemological theory, a method, or a search for 'truth', misses the originality of this connection of theoretical insights and practical politics. See the discussions around Susan Hekman's 'Truth or Method', collected in Harding (2004) including Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2002). See also Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa (2009).
- 8 Dorothy Smith (1987) described the everyday material details a sociologist can ignore in order to be able to write the social *out there* – while sitting in an university office where the bin has been emptied and the floor cleaned by the invisible night worker; Hilary Rose (1983, 1994) shed light on the work of the invisible 'small hands' in laboratories, mostly female, that actually *do* the sciences and also claimed to bring back the *heart* into our accounts of how science works – the forgotten world of loving and caring absent from most Marxists' analysis; Patricia Hill Collins (1986) recalled the black woman who provided care to children of slave owners. Insights to which we could add feminist descriptions of the invisible work of migrants often separated from the families they support while they clean houses and take care of the children of those struggling with better paid jobs, attending political meetings, or sweating in fitness clubs: figures of a globalized 'chain of care' (Precarias a la Deriva, 2004).

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