

Marina Gržinić and Jovita Pristovšek

Introduction¹

In 2002, I published an extensive volume on the body, entitled “The Body/Le corps/Der Körper,” in a special issue of *Filozofski vestnik*.² Little did we know that the post-9/11 necrocapitalism would bring about a transformation of capitalism that some could only vaguely imagine, but no one could foresee in it the renewed expansion of a murderous regime of destruction, exploitation, abstraction, financialization, and digitalization.

In the 2002 volume, I compiled positions that I admired and that opened up thinking that was not accepted in traditional philosophy. The proposed thinking and topics were mostly parked at the margins of philosophy, such as media studies, cultural studies, feminist studies, and postcolonial studies. However, I was very fortunate to be able to publish the volume and literally disappear from *Filozofski vestnik* for a while to research and write, which allows me to recapitulate the last twenty years with this volume.

The last two decades have seen the rise of global neoliberal capitalism and its hyper-fast changes that always already systematically involve destruction, dehumanization and subjugation. The other side of this process, which is developing at the speed of light, is the world of technomedia, the internet and artificial intelligence, which has opened a completely new debate about the body, intelligence, the unconscious, and geopolitics.

¹ Parts of this monograph are the result of the research programme P6-0014 “Conditions and Problems of Contemporary Philosophy,” and the research project J6-3139 “Reconfiguring Borders in Philosophy, Politics, and Psychoanalysis,” which are funded by the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency.

² Marina Gržinić Mauhler, ed., “The Body/Le corps/Der Körper,” special issue, *Filozofski vestnik* 23, no. 2 (2002).

This has led me, twenty years later, in 2023, to propose this comprehensive volume for *Filozofski vestnik*, Volume 44, Number 2, entitled “The Body in the Field of Tensions between Biopolitics and Necropolitics: Analysing the Future of the Prosthetic Body in the 21st Century.”

I invited my colleague Dr. Jovita Pristovšek to be a co-editor after the editorial board of *Filozofski vestnik* accepted my proposal. We set about compiling a list of authors we had been following for a long time, some of whom only approached us with their ideas and contributions as the work progressed, and whom we were eager to invite.

The exploration of the human body’s role within the intricate web of political, social, and technological power dynamics has remained a cornerstone of critical analysis. Rather than confining our scrutiny solely to the realms of techno-bio-power and bio-capitalism, a pivotal turning point occurred post-2003 with Achille Mbembe’s publication of “Necropolitics.”³ This seminal work underscores the imperative for any interdisciplinary discourse encompassing philosophy, aesthetics, politics, social constructs, and economic structures, alongside technological and institutional scrutiny, to acknowledge the intricate interplay of power mechanisms. This constellation necessitates consideration of power dispositifs, governmentality, sovereignty, ideologies, and the emergence of necrocapitalism.

Steering away from fixating on the techno-bio-power and biocapitalism paradigms, it becomes increasingly evident that a paradigm shift is warranted, embracing the interconnectedness of the human body with necropolitics, necropower, and necrocapitalism. This recalibration unveils a transformed geopolitical landscape wherein spaces evolve into arenas of ruthless hyper-power, marked by the rigid regulation and manipulation of bodies teetering on the brink of being designated as necro-bodies. While this concept might not always be explicitly articulated, its undercurrent resonates throughout the analyses presented in this volume.

³ Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 11–40, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>.

While biopolitics once held the potential for emancipation, albeit limited to privileged bodies in the Western world, the concept of necropolitics presents a starkly contrasting panorama, one that resists easy alignment with emancipatory politics.

Central to our focus is the intricate interplay of affective, biological, technological, social, economic, and political forces. These forces intertwine in a manner that inexorably draws the previously established biopolitical landscape into the gravitational pull of the necrocapitalist future—or rather, the lack thereof. Through such a recalibration we see the changed geopolitical landscapes transforming into spaces of brutal hyper-power of regulation and management of bodies that transform into necro-bodies. If for biopolitics it was clear that it can be seen as an emancipatory possibility in the Occident, for the visions of necropolitics we cannot simply accept any emancipatory politics.

In light of this, our inquiry extends to reconfigured bodies, the intricate nexus between body politics as both corpus and corpse of governmentality, a reevaluation of geopolitics, and the emergence of bodies within necro-techno-science regimes. These themes precipitate a profound interrogation of our contemporary condition, encompassing not only the unfolding nature of our lives, forever in a state of becoming and mediation, but also the foundations of our theoretical frameworks, terminologies, and horizons.

The volume's trajectory oscillates between two cardinal philosophical poles. On one axis lies a rigorous epistemological endeavor to unearth and articulate existing knowledge and analyses—an endeavor complicated by the normative dimensions that biopolitical paradigms impose on theoretical exploration. Simultaneously, the volume is entrenched in philosophical edifices we have constructed in the era of necrocapitalism, prompting us to grapple with the very essence of our intellectual production within this context.

Conversely, the question that remains is what contemporary philosophy has theoretically produced in relation to the body today.

When we distill the undeniable aspects from the volume, the foremost outcome involves a comprehensive exploration of Black cultural dialogues concerning technology's role in shaping intellect, social interactions, progress, and even

culture itself. This examination encompasses a review of diverse approaches to conceptualizing and theorizing Blackness, Black bodies, Black culture, and their interplay with technology. Central to this exploration is a sharp delineation that the concept of racialization reveals.

André Brock, in his chapter “Making a Way Out of No Way: Black Cyberculture and the Black Technocultural Matrix,”⁴ presents a sharp distinction that highlights race and makes another important point: “Black technology users are not white (even if they are Western), so it becomes necessary to interrogate how Black people make sense of their existence as users and as subjects within advanced technological artifacts, services, and platforms.”⁵ This is an analysis of Black cultural discourses about the impact of technology on various aspects of life, highlighting the particular perspective of Black technology users. The future that is the target, then, could be seen as both predicting “of a utopian (to some) race-free future and pronouncements of the dystopian digital divide [as] the predominant discourses of blackness and technology in the public sphere.”⁶

The volume consists of four parts and concludes with an extensive interview with Jill H. Casid and Anna Campbell and we close with an **extended review** by Nina Cvar of the newly published volume *Political Choreographies, Decolonial Theories, Trans Bodies*,⁷ revolving around the topics of this journal volume, but differently.

The first part, **The Body of (Necro) Politics** (with contributions by Marina Gržinić, Sayak Valencia, Adla Isanović, and Jonathan Beller) proceeds from Mbembe’s concept “Necropolitics,” which was further developed in his book

⁴ André Brock Jr., “Making a Way Out of No Way: Black Cyberculture and the Black Technocultural Matrix,” in *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures* (New York: New York University Press, 2020), 210–42.

⁵ Brock, 210.

⁶ Alondra Nelson, “Introduction: Future Texts,” *Social Text* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-20-2_71-1, quoted in Brock, “Black Cyberculture,” 215.

⁷ Marina Gržinić and Jovita Pristovšek, eds., *Political Choreographies, Decolonial Theories, Trans Bodies* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2023).

Critique of Black Reason,⁸ and in *Necropolitics*.⁹ The term refers to a particular form of governance and exercise of sovereignty that focuses on the power to dictate who may live and who must die. In other words, it examines how certain political regimes and structures exercise control not only over people's lives but also over their deaths.

Mbembe's concept of necropolitics is rooted in the history of colonization, slavery, and racial oppression. He argues that states exercise their political power by inflicting violence and death on marginalized groups, often for maintaining their dominance and control. In this framework, the power of the state manifests itself not only through the administration of life, but also through the administration of death. Necropolitics is concerned with how state power, biopower (the control of populations and bodies), and sovereignty interact to shape the lives and deaths of individuals and groups.

The body of necropolitics refers to the physical and symbolic ways in which this power is exercised and realized. It encompasses the violence, oppression, and control exercised by state institutions, as well as the cultural and discursive mechanisms that justify and normalize these actions. The body becomes a site where the politics of life and death converge, where the state exercises its authority over life through its capacity to cause death.

Necropolitics also means examining how certain groups are seen as expendable or dispensable by those in power and how this dynamic plays out in different social, economic, and political contexts. It draws attention to the ways in which structural violence, racism, and inequality intersect and determine who is valued and protected and who is subjected to harm and death.

⁸ Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), originally published as *Critique de la raison nègre* (Paris: La Découverte, 2013), translated in Slovene by Suzana Koncut as *Kritika črnskega uma* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2019). See also afterword to the Slovenian edition by Marina Gržinić, "Svet kot sopripadanje," 277–97; and Lev Kreft, "De te fabula narratur," 299–311.

⁹ Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019). See also Marina Gržinić, "Necropolitics by Achille Mbembe: Extended Essay on the Book," *Filozofski vestnik* 42, no. 1 (2021): 221–43, <https://doi.org/10.3986/fv.42.1.10>.

Necropolitics encompasses the complex and often brutal ways in which political power is exercised, particularly in contexts where marginalized groups are systematically subjected to violence, oppression, and death. It challenges us to critically analyze and confront the mechanisms by which sovereignty is enforced and maintained, and to consider alternative modes of governance that prioritize the dignity and well-being of all people.

The second part, **Labor-Techno-Racialization in Necrocapitalism** (with contributions by Neferti X. M. Tadiar, Nina Cvar, Kishona L. Gray, and Claudia Tazreiter) delves into the intricate interplay between labor, technology, and the politics of death and control.

Labor is used as a means of subjugating and exploiting racialized communities. By forcing individuals into low-paying, hazardous, or unstable jobs, those in power can maintain control over these groups and perpetuate social and economic inequality. The concept of labor as a tool of necropolitical subjugation and racialization intersects with other forms of oppression, such as race, gender, and class, and connects multiple layers of marginalization based on various aspects of their position.

Understanding labor as a tool of necropolitical subjugation and racialization requires a critical analysis of historical and contemporary labor practices, power structures, and their impact on marginalized communities. It underscores the importance of addressing systemic injustices and working towards equitable and just labor conditions for all individuals, regardless of their racial background.

Technological advancements have facilitated global supply chains and the outsourcing of labor. This has geopolitical and economic implications, affecting trade dynamics, labor rights, and refugee/migrant conditions across borders. How economic systems, driven by labor and technology, contribute to human suffering and death for profit. This involves investigating the role of necrocapitalism, consumer demand, and corporate interests. Algorithms, technologies, and scientific research involve conscious decisions that can influence how racialized bodies are treated and represented. Understanding the embodiment of technologies and their impact on racialized bodies raises important ethical questions.

It prompts us to consider issues of agency, consent, accountability, and the responsibility of technoscientific practitioners to address biases and injustices. The embodiment of technologies and their role in shaping racialized bodies is a complex and multifaceted topic. It requires a critical examination of how technologies are designed, implemented, and used, particularly in relation to algorithms and other forms of technoscientific practices. By understanding these dynamics, we can work towards more equitable and just interactions between technologies, bodies, and society.

The third part, **The Body of Affects, (Non)Human Animals, Performativity in Resistance to Oppression and Whiteness Racist Systems** (with contributions by Zarja Vršič, Vesna Liponik, Katerina Paramana, and Adam Rudder) highlights how emotions, the treatment of nonhuman animals, acts of resistance, and performative acts are embodied and interconnected.

The “body of affects” underscores that emotions are not just abstract psychological experiences, but are also deeply embedded. Exploring the body of affects is about understanding how emotions are experienced and expressed through the body and how they intersect with broader cultural, social, and political contexts. “(Non)human animals” is a term used to explore the relationship between humans and other animal species. It is concerned with the complex ways in which humans interact with and influence other animals, both domesticated and wild. This topic is important for discussions of animal rights, environmental ethics, and the political responsibility humans have toward nonhuman living things.

The “body of performativity” examines how individuals and groups use performative acts to shape and express their identities, challenge social norms, and engage in cultural and political critique. When these elements—bodies of affect, bodies of resistance, and bodies of performativity—are considered together, it becomes clear that emotions, resistance, and performative acts are intimately intertwined with embodied experiences and processes of racialization and subjugation. Drawing from theories of performativity that emphasize how language and actions construct identities and social norms, this concept highlights how marginalized communities can use performative acts to challenge, disrupt, and subvert oppressive structures.

“Whiteness,” with the social construction of White identity and the privileged exercise of power, results in violent racial inequalities and discrimination within structures, institutions, and practices; the focus is on the oppression and marginalization of non-White individuals and communities. Exploring the connections between these concepts involves analyzing how Whiteness is violently embedded in various social systems, resulting in systemic racism.

These themes are interconnected through the exploration of power dynamics, identity, and social structures. They illuminate the ways in which individuals and groups experience and resist oppression, whether through embodied emotions, relationships with animals, performative acts of resistance, or analysis of systemic racism. By examining these issues together, scholars and activists can better understand the complexities of oppression and how to combat it on many fronts.

The fourth part, **Bodies of Necrolives** (with contributions by Suvendrini Perera and Joseph Pugliese, Hiroshi Yoshioka, Fahim Amir, and Jovita Pristovšek) is about better understanding our past, present, and future in a world that has been fundamentally changed by necropolitics, and we have the opportunity to reshape what we might call the history of geopolitical transformations.

In the context of necropolitics, “necrolives” refer to the lives of individuals and groups subjected to the violence, oppression, and death-related practices of necropolitical regimes. The bodies of necrolives encompass the physical, emotional, and social experiences of those whose lives are marked by necropolitical dynamics. The physical bodies of necrolives bear the scars of violence, exploitation, and neglect. These bodies are subjected to state-sanctioned harm, such as police brutality, forced labor, or other forms of violence that are part of a necropolitical strategy. Their psychological and emotional well-being is severely affected by the constant threat of death, oppression, and discrimination. Living under necropolitical conditions lead to trauma, anxiety, and a sense of hopelessness. Necropolitical regimes often target specific groups based on race, ethnicity, gender, or other factors.

When considering geopolitics in Australia and Afghanistan, this points to the historical and contemporary implications of racialization, divisions, abandonment, and seclusion within these regions. Geopolitical dynamics often involve

power struggles, territorial disputes, and sociopolitical inequalities, which intersects one with the other. In relation to Covid-19, it illuminates how the pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities, leading to racial disparities, social divisions, neglect of certain communities, and the enforced seclusion of individuals due to lockdowns and quarantine measures. The pandemic's impact could be seen through a necropolitical lens, highlighting how power structures influence who is disproportionately affected by the virus and its consequences. Understanding the bodies of necrolives involves recognizing the complex interplay between structural forces, individual experiences, and collective responses. It underscores the need to confront and address the harm caused by necropolitical regimes while advocating for transformative change that respect the dignity and rights of all people, regardless of their social or political circumstances.

The **Conversation with Jill H. Casid and Anna Campbell** is a reconceptualization of several themes to develop an aesthetic that incorporates notions of the necropolitical and redefines the concept of the Anthropocene as the Necrocene. The Necrocene implies an era marked by death, decay, and the consequences of human impact on the environment, as well as a critical reflection on the choices individuals and societies make that contribute to the transition from the Anthropocene to the Necrocene. These reflections serve as cautionary tales or reflections on the unsustainable path of the Anthropocene.

References

- Brock Jr., André. "Making a Way Out of No Way: Black Cyberculture and the Black Technocultural Matrix." In *Distributed Blackness: African American Cybercultures*, 210–42. New York: New York University Press, 2020.
- Gržinić, Marina. "Necropolitics by Achille Mbembe: Extended Essay on the Book." *Filozofski vestnik* 42, no. 1 (2021): 221–43. <https://doi.org/10.3986/fv.42.1.10>.
- . "Svet kot so-pripadanje." Afterword to *Kritika črnskega uma*, by Achille Mbembe, 277–97. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2019.
- , and Jovita Pristovšek, eds. *Political Choreographies, Decolonial Theories, Trans Bodies*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2023.
- Gržinić Mauhler, Marina, ed. "The Body/Le corps/Der Körper." Special issue, *Filozofski vestnik* 23, no. 2 (2002).
- Kreft, Lev. "De te fabula narratur." Afterword to *Kritika črnskega uma*, by Achille Mbembe, 299–311. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2019.

- Mbembe, Achille. *Critique de la raison nègre*. Paris: La Découverte, 2013. Translated into English by Laurent Dubois as *Critique of Black Reason* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017). Translated into Slovenian by Suzana Koncut as *Kritika črnskega uma* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 2019).
- . “Necropolitics.” Translated by Libby Meintjes. *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 11–40. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>.
- . *Necropolitics*. Translated by Steven Corcoran. Durham: Duke University Press, 2019.
- Nelson, Alondra. “Introduction: Future Texts.” *Social Text* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-20-2_71-1.