

Envenoment, an excavation:
Towards a feminism-without-example

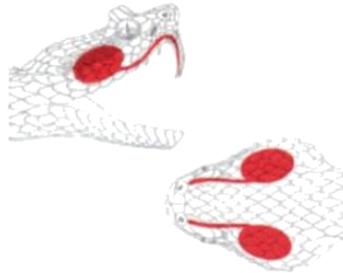
in ten parts

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I
the female and the serpent



A small part of the human brain is devoted to snakes, the first and most persistent predators of the early mammals. Primate vision, these eyes that perceive the light of reason, evolved in order to see snakes better. Snakes were such a critical threat that they shaped the emergence of some of our most pertinent evolutionary traits. Philosophy and theology, here understood as engines of knowledge, the regimes that outline what there is to know and the methods of knowing, likewise use the serpent as the anchor for thought. The female and the serpent have been framed as toxic to knowledge, their very presence a threat to the purity of humanity and reason. From Plato to Spinoza and throughout Judeo-Christian narratives, we have been told that femininity can only possess a feral reason, a thought contaminated externally by the very receptacle in which it is nested: the female body. This knowledge is forbidden and worthless, because – take it from God himself –serpent knowledge took immortality from us. We are thus born dead into the world and dead we depart.



Feminist theory dispelled these precautions against women and serpents by putting them in their place, or rather in their cultural context. The ancient cult of the Mother Goddess as manifest in Canaan in the Baal/Asherah cult, with the serpent as its totem, was one that the tribes that authored the Old Testament wanted to politically and culturally annihilate. The transformation in the book of Genesis of the Goddess's wise serpent into a creature feared and despised has been described as one of the most successful political campaigns perpetrated against the older cult.

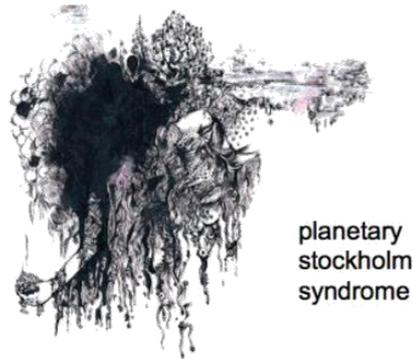
Yet, this renunciation is caught in a double-bind.

sacrifices reason on the altar of *relativism*



but thought is **not** relative

On the one hand, this cultural defanging, or an unmasking of context, remains intertwined in the affirmations of that, which is considered epistemologically credible. It sacrifices reason on the altar of relativism. But thought is not relative.

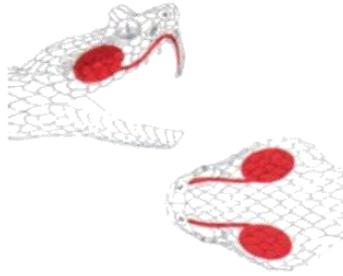


planetary
stockholm
syndrome

On the other hand, embracing the figure of the snake in a subversive manner, as post-humanist theory has done, seems a planet-wide version of the Stockholm syndrome. Feminist epistemology shows us that the construction of women as the *tabula rasa* has little to do with defining them, and is rather interested in seizing them in their supposed mystery, as a foil against which thought can form. They have to remain unknown so that they can be used. Thought can be rooted in the black hole of speculation, oscillating around the unknown on the event horizon, re -charging itself by what it constructs as a mystery. Philosophy drinks from the fountain of rejuvenating speculation that it has installed in this vacuous cage.

All of this is still thinking from the position of theology or even theodicy. It is not enough to defang philosophy, alongside its patriarchal fidelity, but to think through the fangs themselves. It is only then that we cease to play by the rules, bouncing philosophical categories back and forth until nothing but philosophy is seen. Neither the acceptance nor the denial of humanity understands what humanity is. It is only humanity, in its ancestral and futurist serpent form, that is able to melt away the philosophical libido.

II rejecting philosophy



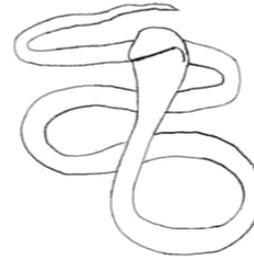
Asked to comment on police brutality, Frank Wilderson III said: “I am not against police brutality. I am against the police.” Asked about philosophy's debasement and dismissal of women, we should respond: I do not reject patriarchal philosophy. I reject philosophy itself. Rejecting anything **less** than the whole of philosophy, or the whole of the police, would do nothing to reveal how some of us are philosophized all the time, but never allowed to be philosophers; while others of us are policed all the time, while never allowed to return this structural violence. If blackness must wholly destroy humanity to speak itself, it is because it recognizes its captivity not in the event of police brutality but in the construction of the human. If feminism must wholly destroy philosophy to think, it is because philosophy's epistemological kernel remains rooted in theological idea of light.

To say “let there be light” is not the path to knowledge, it is only the path to **theological blindness**.

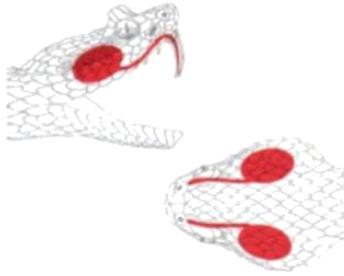
What does it mean to root knowledge and humanity in this connection to light, as if seeing was a prerequisite for knowing? What kind of knowledge does light allow if not one that sees itself as already external to the world, as if watching it from the outside? A God who resides outside of the world can say, “let there be light.” But we want to speak from the Earth's core.

We care little for expounding upon darkness and light. To oppose darkness to light can too easily fall into an aesthetic trap, as if we were speaking about color, the visual sensation or the lack of it.

We talk about venom **as** darkness, because what we mean is **the immanence of the material to itself.**



III
think through the fangs



“There is a paradox at the heart of aesthetic sentiment,” Laruelle remarks. “The paradox is the following: on the one hand light remains to a certain degree in itself. It does not lose its identity in an object [...] but on the other hand, light 'radiates.’”

This paradox is the starting point for an intervention. The only way to get out of the trap of philosophy, which promises knowledge from the outside, appealing to theological reason, is to subtract the qualities of light from itself. This is how we strip light off its traits and understand it in its radical identity.

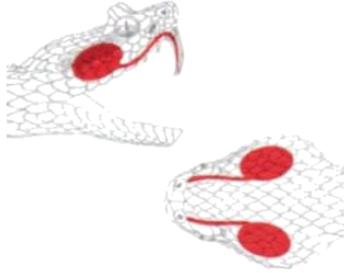
“radiation-without-rays”
or “light-without-reflection.”

And so Laruelle speaks about “radiation-without-rays” or “light-without-reflection.” Alexander Galloway writes that “such a move defangs the transcendental tendencies added to light by philosophy and reveals a purely immanent light.” A light in its radical identity that cannot be used philosophically anymore because it remains non-representational, it becomes the only reference point onto itself. It becomes its own medium and its own content.

One cannot just defang philosophical notions of light.

You need to think through the fangs.

IV
the three places of
philosophy



Philosophy has never seen the light because it is unable to see the vector of its own thought. It can only move in three spaces.

the garden of eden

plato's cave

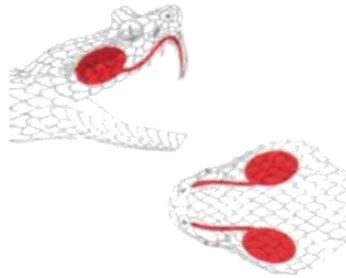
red light district



The first one is the Garden of Eden, where light creates life. The second is Plato's cave, where fire and light open the gates to knowledge. The third is the red light district, where in the neon glow philosophy bathes its own consummation of itself, its narcissistic orgy of vision.

But [philosophy] cannot fathom a **vision-without-seeing**. A darkness that is not defined by the absence of light but through the *forbidden hiss of the serpent*.

V
realist envenomation



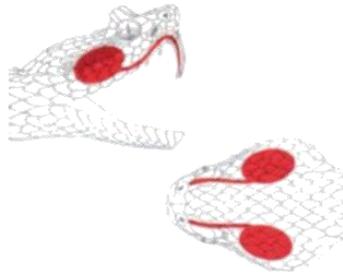
In *Philosophy-in-the-wild*, we address this theological kernel of the light and the innate Idea of philosophy by performing an inventive archaeological excavation of venom thought. This invention is not speculative. When philosophy holds both the living of your life and the manner of your dying, the rhythm of your reason and the outline of your world in its hands, fabulation is not enough. If we refer to the existing venom thought rather than fabulating it, it is because we think alongside the Real. We do not make anything new. We do not make anything up. This is a revealing of the venom that pulsates in the veins of philosophy, so that it radiates from within, and without warning.

All that philosophy does is create concepts. It assumed a sufficiency of its own speculation on the nature of the real, of women, of or humanity. We are not native to this defense mechanisms of philosophy. We are pragmatic and realist. We operate within a speculative *insufficiency*.

Our aim is not to make a feminist comment from a peripheral place, nor to enter into an amended space within the current philosophical regime. We argue that it is the very place of philosophy, the garden, the cave, and the red light district, that has been contaminated by patriarchal fidelities that debase philosophy itself and reproduce toxic peripheries.

There is no *periphery* in our wild; it is only a **platform** for seeing eye to eye with the serpent again.

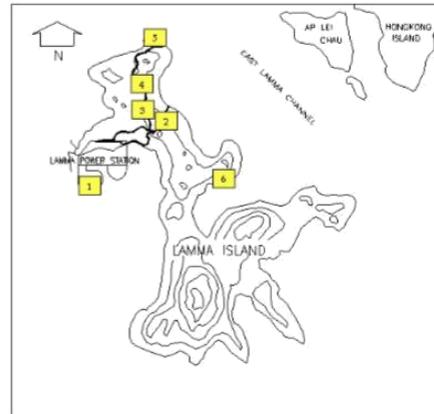
VI
let there be venom



Philosophers said “let there be light,” but non-philosophers met the snake instead. Thus, we begin in the dark. On the island with snakes. When the Portuguese arrived on the Lamma island in Hong Kong, they named it after the word *mud*. The Portuguese notation also reflected the activity of holding, a certain consistency in itself. It was the consistency of the seabed from the point of view of anchoring there.

It is an island that holds itself.

博寮洲



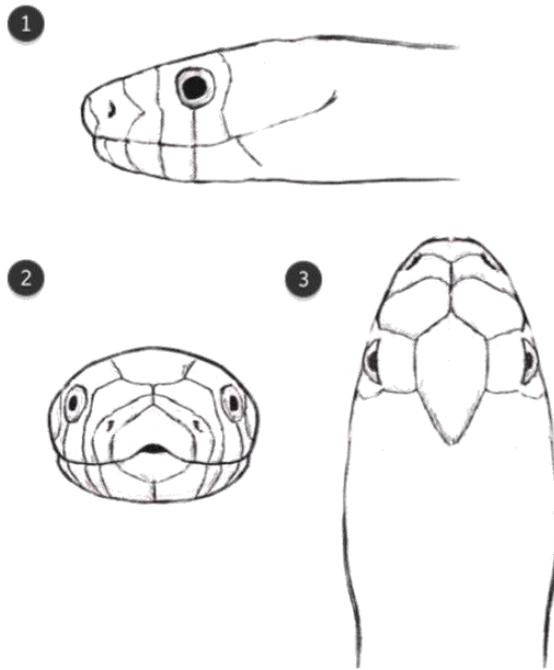
It is an island that holds itself. The older Chinese notation 博寮洲 has a similar meaning – it refers both to parking or holding and over the time it was changed to denote knowledge. We were interested in that, in the correlation of holding and knowledge, rather than of the *fall* – the fall from the Garden of Eden – and knowledge. We went to several places on the island.



There is a place with stone circles, which date back to prehistoric China, three or four thousand years before Christ. No one knows their purpose; however, there used to be an ancient cult of the Goddess Mazu on Lamma, the “mother ancestor.” She wore red garments while standing on the shore to guide fishing boats home, even in the most dangerous and harsh weather.

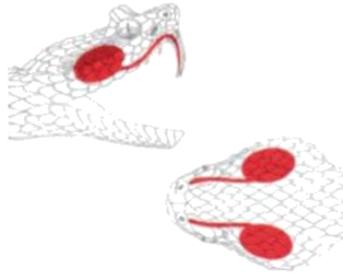


There is a place called Cave Kamikaze, where the Japanese kamikaze speedboat pilots hid their boats while they waited for ships in order to zoom out into the ocean to blow themselves up. We recorded the sounds of this cave.



And there are three kinds of venomous snakes on the island, including a deadly mamba and a cobra, centipedes, giant spiders, and packs of feral dogs. We are thinking with our snake-sense heightened, because we are walking where we know there were venomous snakes. Our dialog is therefore not just about darkness or philosophy, but about thinking with our snake-sense turned up.

VII
feminism-without-example

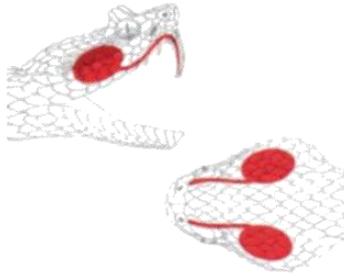


This philosophy of venom is a radical identity that is corollary to (i.e., necessarily outside of) enlightenment thought. We want to insurrect a woman, but not a woman with any traits, not a woman defined by philosophy, or by any thought that has been contaminated by philosophy. Following François Laruelle and Anne-Françoise Schmid, we seek a feminism-without-example, just like Laruelle sought a light-without-reflection. This woman is not defined, but she is axiomatic.

This woman is *not* defined, but she is **axiomatic**. This woman is the underdetermined “x” that underlies all rational operations. The “x” must remain underdetermined precisely because the result has to be specific.

The woman-in-person, a generic anti-christ of the dark, the **venom** of the last instance of philosophy. She determines *all* thought and yet she herself *cannot* be thought.

VIII
legless apocrypha



Both philosophy and theology have been using women as the foil for their own formation. Without the denial of women, neither can exist. What is philosophy or theology if its engine – the woman – cannot be thought? It becomes apophatic, that is, it becomes definable only by what it is not. A non-philosophy or a non-theology: an apocrypha.

This is our **Envenoment**, seeing without eyeballs and thinking through the fangs, *subtracting* thought by sliding on our legless belly.

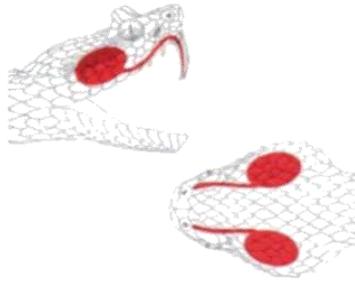
This apocrypha is distinct from what we understand feminism to be historically, which is a conflation of feminism as activism and feminism as philosophy. This is why feminism is called feminism and not simply philosophy, by containing both progressive political aims and philosophical stagnations. Institutional frameworks recreate this distinction, continually producing the feminine as peripheral to philosophy while also putting forth feminist thought as a politically progressive institutional theme. The two necessarily progress together in the dim light of worn out conceptual ideals.

Preference is given to theory that names itself as 'feminism' only in order for the institution to 'make good' on its historical exclusions. Such ambiguous logic should be considered a paradox to feminist thought. How can feminist philosophy, deemed to be minor or peripheral to philosophy, be at the same time considered to be a progressive politics?

This paradox produces an inverse relation of production, where 'political progress' only further marks out those on the 'outside' of thought. It is a trap.

Thus an apocrypha is necessary for the contemporary moment as well as the historical one of the ancient past.

IX
non-standard ancestor
politics



As an apocrypha, envenoment remains “without example,” it is a non-feminism. On the other hand, we evade the tendency of thought to continually erase its own roots and proclaim its death in order to rejuvenate itself. This is also the way that philosophy operates – it keeps proclaiming its own death, but what it really does is taking sleeping pills and calling all of her friends. When asked to comment on the significance of Standing Rock protests to the future of our children and our planet, the elders responded: Our water is already poisoned. We are here to protect the spirits of our ancestors, not some kind of a global future for the next generations. Only from the inside of a graveyard can we speak about death, and only with eyes closed can we unfold the future. We thus respect our ancestors and look to our roots. The future is dead to us already, but we speak fully aware of the dead women buried under our feet, killed for thinking.

Envenoment:

ancestor politics

non-standard philosophy that grounds its ontology in venom, not light



Envenoment is then a double-move: our ancestor politics looks to: ‘Snake & Woman’ and ‘Darkness & Venom’ for a philosophical apocrypha. On the other hand, we lay out the foundations for a philosophy that begins through thinking the non-standard relation of darkness and venom and opposed to darkness and light. We speak their voices because we are the Same Dead that Does Not Repeat, rather than the Eternal Return. The serpent too disguises herself, when darkness falls down onto her skin and slides along the watery eels of the river. We identify with the Same-Dead that Do Not Repeat. This is the genocide we speak.

View Lamma video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0QWx4yyva00>