

A Second Reader's Review Report of Daphnée Chauvette's Master's Thesis

Feminist Electrifying Art as Challenging People to (Re)think Their Relationship to Electricity

Daphnée Chauvette's Master's Thesis is an intriguing, thoughtful, and well-executed feminist analysis of selected works of art on/with electricity that provoke reconsiderations of human relationship to the non-human and more-than-human worlds as well as to the invisible effects (and affects) of electrical current, an agent aligned with modernity, and major social and cultural changes as well as colonial power.

Specifically, Daphnée uses feminist technoscience perspectives, new materialist approaches, and concepts of anthropology of electricity to convincingly argue for electricity's agency and for its radical rethinking through theoretical concepts of care, response-ability and responsibility. Such "thinking with" electricity may – ideally – aid one's greater appreciation for the environment that supplies resources and forces that help generate electricity for our use (and sustenance), or one's better understanding why saving energy is a key aspect in decarbonization and mitigating energy crisis (crises).

This educational hypothesis arises from the well-established arguments about the "invisibility" of and "human forgetfulness" about electricity as introduced in the literature review on feminist anthropology of electricity. Further, it is supported by Daphnée's critical reflection on how electric art has transformed her own views of electricity, which is well explained both in her positionality and further woven into the analysis of the two works of art: *Electrical Walks* by Christine Kubisch (a participative walk through a city in the course of which one listens and responds to sounds generated by electricity-powered devices and their electromagnetic induction) and Christine Beaulieu's play/podcast/book *J'aime Hydro* (a highly personal narrative/research/play on Québec hydro-power dams and electricity supplier). Daphnée's hypothesis about electric art's transformative potential is also confirmed in interviews by members of *J'aime Hydro* audience. Thus, the main research question „How can works of electric art challenge the relationship of ordinary people to electricity“ is established on the tacit assumption that such a transformation/challenge is possible, although this gets confirmed only WHILE the student conducts her research, not prior to the research. Since one sees that the discussed artists' as well as Daphnée's grasping of electricity are by no means linear, I think the text would benefit from a better communicated chronology of the methods employed throughout the thesis project. Still, this is a minor detail in otherwise meticulously explained methodology.

The thesis has an added academic value in the repeated self-reflection on the author's understanding of electricity, on her epistemological growth, and on her positionality which permeates the analytical as well as the theoretical parts of the thesis. Daphnée's careful observations and excellent use of theoretical concepts introduced in the chapter with literature review manifest themselves in the nuanced and detailed analyses of *J'aime* and *Electrical Walks*. These chapters make for a thought-provoking and challenging academic reading and intellectual practice. The writing made me think about how I personally relate to electricity and the forces it

comes from, the grid, its agential qualities as well as about the counter-intuitive question posed by Beaulieu's research and play, which is whether I can actually love my electricity supplier or the grid. While I must confess my (emotional and epistemological) limits here, I can absolutely relate to the appeal for responsibility, response-ability and care placed on the non-human and more-than-human worlds that make the production of (my) electricity feasible.

The thesis is well-structured and the development of Daphnée's arguments is logical and well-referenced; the thesis uses an extensive list of bibliography and most importantly demonstrates the student's analytical competence and intellectual imagination. On the other hand, I think the text – while eloquent and rich in its vocabulary – would benefit from grammar editing. There are frequent mistakes in missing prepositions and/or verb endings. This does not hinder understanding of the text but decreases readers' comfort and is simply formally wrong. The literature review is superb in conveying and defining theoretical concepts that are used later in the text, but some hints and/or examples of how they relate to the analyzed works of art would help build reader's expectations and tie the theoretical and analytical parts of the thesis together. Finally, I would have appreciated a more thorough clarification of how electricity and situated knowledges may be linked together theoretically and analytically.

It is my task as a second reader to propose some questions for debate at defense. I have enjoyed the intellectual challenge posed in the thesis through (re)thinking electricity, but still have some queries that might enrich the analyses: 1] It has been argued that electricity is frequently associated with STEM, i.e. a masculine domain. Does the student, however, perceive electricity as an agent that is (is not) gendered? Why and where/when? 2] In what ways could the senses spelled out in the thesis regarding electricity (vision and hearing) be analytically thought of as having gendered qualities? 3] Innu indigenous knowledges facilitate a major shift in conceptualizing electricity and human responsibility for the environment and natureculture in *J'aime Hydro*. Also, pride in hydro-power, it has been argued, is a significant aspect of national identity in Québec. What discourses regarding Québec's „weaning off“ of hydro-dams has the student detected in the current national narrative? Where do Innu knowledges stand in these narratives and what gender aspects can be identified in the national narratives regarding Québec energy self-sufficiency? I thank Daphnée in advance for addressing these questions.

In conclusion, I view the thesis as a highly competent academic text conveying nuanced analyses, displaying superb sensitivity as demonstrated in meticulous, eloquent and dense communication of the author's interpretation of *Electrical Walks* and *J'aime Hydro*. It is therefore with great pleasure that **I recommend Daphnée Chauvette's thesis for defense and suggest it be awarded the grade *excellent*.**

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