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Appraisal of the MA Thesis *Feminist Electrifying Art as Challenging People to (Re)Think Their Relationship to Electricity* by Daphnée Chauvette

Against the backdrop of the urgent need for energy transition and further electrification (in so far as energy futures will be ‘electric futures’) and concomitant difficulties of humans to grasp electricity, in this thesis Daphnée Chauvette examines the workings of electricity through two feminist art projects: *Electric walks* by sound artist C. Kubisch, and the play and podcast *J’aime hydro* by C. Beaulieu. The author’s wager is that these art works bring electricity into *sensibility* and thereby offer novel ecological and ethical understandings of feeling kinship (!) and responsibility. A literature review draws together anthropological literature of electricity with feminist science and multispecies studies, bio art, feminist and indigenous theories of knowledge and new materialism. It shows why electricity is hard to think with and offers a conceptual toolbox of natureculture, assemblage, affect and responsibility that help to think with movement, force and process. The methodology chapter presents the research design and methods, specifically participant observation, interviews with audience/participants and analysis of existing material, as well the author’s own positionality that reflects on unthought implications in settler energy infrastructure.

Two detailed chapters take the reader through the process of creating ‘electrifying art’, and participants’ experiences of these artworks and their impacts on their relations with electricity. Chapter 3 zooms in on the affective sonorities of the *Electrical walks*, particularly how electricity’s electromagnetic waves in the city can be felt as sound vibrations as a way of ‘presencing’ electricity and touching and transforming the body of the listener. Chapter 4 on the podcast *J’aime hydro* takes us into the process of (not)knowing hydropower and what it affects– not from the position of an already credentialed expert or activist but through the encounters of the artist’s coming to differentially know (and love) hydro forces with managers, politicians, and indigenous leaders. A concluding chapter puts the strategies of these projects in dialogue.

Most commendable is the ease with which Daphnee’s brings these thoughts and sensation to life by drawing on a range of concept from diverse fields including the critical studies of race in ways that are both precise and inventive, and open up or ‘spark’ new ways of thinking not only electricity but also the body, the senses, care and responsibility: listening becomes



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vibration and seeing with the ear; the body becomes instrument and transducer, and electricity agentic; doing art becomes akin to doing science; and care is rethought as both love and obligation. Carefully attending to detail and nuances, Daphnée does not merely claim but traces how novel sensations render other ways of thinking and feeling obligation and care. Importantly, this does not brush over indeterminacies and ambivalences: encountering electromagnetic waves is both beautiful and intrusive; artists and indigenous people are vulnerable and implicated in the venture of hydropower and the ‘the scar’. Putting the projects into conversation, in Daphnée’s hands, the reader can hear the vibrations of the absent waterfalls dammed by hydropower and think in decolonial ways with the ‘technoecologies’ of electricity.

In short, the thesis is a pleasure to read and think with. Given the complexity of the argument, I invite Daphnée to comment on the following three interrelated queries:

First, if we think response-ability with Haraway through its etymology of ‘re-spect’ or ‘looking back’, learning to respond and cultivating the ability to respond, how is this possible in relation to something that appears to be indifferent to human pursuits?

Second, explain the idea of thinking through the encounter or relation and the implication that humans do not experience a pre-given world or electricity.

Third, the thesis puts a lot of emphasis on witness: becoming *with*, thinking *with*, and in one place caring *with* – how is the latter different from caring *for* or *about* electricity?

And, lastly, any afterthoughts on the potency of the scream that so resonates at the heart of the thesis?

I recommend the thesis for defence, and suggest the grade excellent (1).

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Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer, Ph.D., opponent