



UvA-DARE (Digital Academic Repository)

Performance anxieties in Elfriede Jelinek's online private novel, 'Envy'

Bala, S.

Publication date

2012

Document Version

Final published version

Published in

Gender & performance

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bala, S. (2012). Performance anxieties in Elfriede Jelinek's online private novel, 'Envy'. In K. Röttger, E. Buchheim, M. Groot, E. Jonker, A. Müller-Schirmer, M. de Vos, E. Walhout, & H. van der Zande (Eds.), *Gender & performance* (pp. 31-44). (Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis; No. 32). Amsterdam University Press.

General rights

It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations

If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: <https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact>, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

Colofon/Colophon

Redactie/Editorial board: Kath Rötiger (gastredacteur/guest editor), Eveline Baath-Jelinet, Marjan Grooth, Ellis Jonker, Andrea Müller-Schmied, Michele de Vos, Evelyn Vailhout en Hanneke van der Zande.
Engelstalige redactie/English editor: Sarah E.C. Smith.
Het *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis* werkt met anonieme vakredacteurs/The *Yearbook of Women's History* is peer-reviewed.

Amsterdam University Press, Herengracht 221, 1016 BG Amsterdam
T: +31 (0)20 420 0050 (reception)
www.aup.nl

Redactiesecretariaat/Editorial contact:
Evelien Vailhout, e.vailhout@ed.nl

Ontwikkelwep/Cover Design: WAT-ontwerpers, Utrecht.
Ontwikkelwep/Cover Photo: Guillermo Gómez-Peña, La Pocha Nosta & Collaborators, *Ex-Centris*, Live, Art and Performance at Tate Modern 2003 (photo: Hugo Cluendinning).
Vormgeving/Design: Nelly Artens.
Pagina-opmaak/Page Layout: Bert Heesen Producties.

ISBN 978 90 8964 469 5
E-ISBN 978 90 4851 772 5
E-ISBN 978 90 4851 773 2
© Copyright 2012 Stichting Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis, Amsterdam University Press en de auteurs.

Niet uit deze uitgave mag worden vermenigvuldigd en/of openbaar gemaakt door middel van druk, fotokopie, microfilm of op welke andere wijze ook, zonder voorafgaande schriftelijke toestemming van de uitgever. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of the publisher.

De uitgever heeft getracht alle rechtshandelingen op copyright te authenticeren. Wie toch meent aanspraak te maken op copyright wordt verzocht contact op te nemen met de uitgever. The publisher tried to locate all holders of copyrighted materials. If you think you own the copyright, please contact the publisher.

Deze uitgave kwam mede tot stand dankzij financiële steun van/This publication was made possible by financial contributions from the following supporters:
Stichting Professoor Van Winter Fonds
Stichting Vulgo
Stichting Vriendinnen van het *Jaarboek voor Vrouwengeschiedenis*
Stichting Fonds voor Geld- en Effectenhandel

Inhoud/Contents

GENDER & PERFORMANCE

Redactioneel/Preface 5

INLEIDING/INTRODUCTION 9

Kath Rötiger

Gender and Performance at Odds?
How to Deal with Paradoxes, Paralysis and Provocations

Sniti Bala 31

Performance Anxieties in Elfriede Jelinek's Online Private
Novel, *Error*

Caroline Rötter 45

Women's Empowerment in Chiapas
Political Theatre and Battlefield Theatricality in
FOMMA and EZLN

Katharina Pezany and Charlotte Gruber 67

Queering *Antigone*
The *artist:in* de/interdisciplinaire's Gender Performance

Maren Butte 87

Speak Out Loud
Performing Dissent in the Work of Ann Liv Young

Amber Müller 105

What's *Shit* Got to Do with It?
Language, Translation and Transformation of a
Global Protest Movement

Tatiana Parilla 123

Beauty that Matters
Imelda Marcos and the *Balins* of the Philippines

JAARBOEK VOOR
VROUWENGESCHIEDENIS 32

Gender & Performance

 AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS
2012

Performance Anxieties in Elfriede Jelinek's Online Private Novel, *Envy*

Sruti Bala

A simple internet search of the term *performance* would generate results that can be clustered into two broad semantic fields. The cultural-philosophical concepts of performance and the performative (related to artistic execution, presentation in public and the constitution of identity through acts and language) seem to have no connection to the most commonplace usages of the term in English (related to business results, the fulfilment of technical requirements, and as a descriptor of sexual climax). Yet the two semantic fields or paradigms of performance may perhaps not be as distinct as scholars of performance might like to acknowledge. What would it imply to bring these seemingly disparate usages of the term in conversation with each other? What does the performance of gender have to do with what drug advertisers refer to as 'enhancing one's performance'? Is there a connection to be found in performance theory linking artistic performance with business performance, or the performative speech act with our understanding of automobile performance? Is it more than a chance etymological connection, and if so, what does it imply for the way we understand gender as being performed?

The answer to this final question can be found in the 1000-page novel *Envy* (*Neid*) by Elfriede Jelinek, published in 2007-08 in a series of sparsely formatted PDF files available on her website.¹ The novel became accessible to me as I listened to the radio adaptation of the oceanic text in the form of ten hour-long podcasts by the German public broadcaster *Bayerischer Rundfunk*, aired between October and December 2011.² It may come as a surprise to claim that a German novel, in which the word *performance* does not appear even once, could be a source text for a theorisation of the concept. *Performance* is not etymologically a German word,

although it has been recently included in the Duden dictionary. Here it integrates three meanings: (i) a staged act, or an art-like event such as a Happening; (ii) the achievement potential of a machine or a market share; and (iii) actual language usage.² The English term *performance* could indeed be translated into German with at least two different words: firstly, *Aufführung* or *Vorführung* in the sense of an artistic, cultural performance or show; secondly, as *Leistung* or *Leistungsfähigkeit*, in the sense of capacity for achievement and accomplishment of a standard. In referring to the notion of the performance of gender, neither of the above terms would be used in German, rather it is more common to find the anglicised term *Gender-Performanz* or *Performativität*.

The novel *Envy* does not directly address the issue of gender performance as a philosophical, social or linguistic problem. Yet, as a non-native speaker of the German language, while I found myself trying to make sense of the vastness of the text and the 10-hour radio adaptation by mapping its main narrative strands through mental translation and paraphrasing, what struck me most were the rhetorical tropes and techniques employed by Jelinek in semantically linking these seemingly incongruous fields, thus questioning their dissimilarity or separation. The category of woman is linked in a complex manner to the notion of non-performance or failed performance in the text and in the radio adaptation. This is a category that appears in both paradigms of performance, albeit in very different ways. In vocabulary commonly used in the humanities, any gendered category, such as *woman*, is understood as being performatively generated: it is a *process* of the historically constituted sedimentation of acts, rather than a fixed identity. In common language vocabulary, gender is a marker of performance as a *goal*, and is often evident in terms of the failure to perform; it stands for the anxiety and inability to perform the acts that constitute 'successful' manhood or womanhood. By making apparent the ways in which the idea of failed performance penetrates the common thinking of the category of woman, the text poses questions for the theory of performance and gender.

Envy: An Online Private Novel

As with all of Jelinek's writing, *Envy* (*Neid*) is a tightly woven tapestry of motives, narratives, themes and intertextual references. Part novel, part internet blog, part diary, it draws from a variety of genres and subcultures and, in particular, delves into the language of trivia and the sensationalist media. On one level, the novel follows a crime plot: Brigitte K., a violin teacher in a small industrial town in Austria, an ageing woman ditched by her husband for his younger secretary, engages in a secret affair with one of her teenage music pupils, offering him a car in exchange for sex and eventually murders his girlfriend out of envy. This crime story is woven together with quotes and references from the yellow press coverage of other sensationalised criminal cases in Austria, including stories about women detained in cellars for years and one that reports the activities of a 'cannibal murderer'.⁴ The motif of underground, criminal secrets is further expanded on in another level of the text: the town of Bichstein, in which Brigitte K. lives, refers to the site of a historically documented incident called 'The Death March of Präbichl', wherein 200 Hungarian Jews were killed in a racist mob attack in 1945. The problematic of historical erasure is examined in the text by linking these killings during the Second World War to the recent economic refutishment and aggressive promotion of the region as a winter sport attraction. The ghosts of the past are rendered impossible to forget or eliminate in the texture of the novel, and their eerie presence lurks in what is itself a ghost town: the outcome of a collapsed economy, which is yet another complex theme of the text. The virtuality of the internet is contrasted with the virtuality of financial capitalism; the housing crisis is interwoven with the crisis of national memory. The spectres of the past are set against the 'living dead' (*lebende Tote*) figures of the present. On yet another level, *Envy* deals with the relationship of the narrator to her parents and other members of the family. In particular, the text focuses on the guilt the narrator feels about her mentally ill father, whom she 'deports' to a sanatorium in collusion with her overbearing mother. At the interface between these relationships lies the envy the narrator feels towards 'the living, who know how to live so well', a quality she believes is impossible in her own life.

Envy, one of the seven cardinal sins depicted in the table top painting by Hieronymus Bosch that appears at the beginning of every chapter of the novel, is sewn into all the narrative strands of the text and, crucially, into the language of speaking of and representing the self: 'Nothing is true, everything is I ... Where it says I, it may contain I, but in any case this I is not Master of its own house, it is at best the housekeeper, who sweeps the grounds of the groundless'.⁷

The decision to publish a novel in serial form on her website, three years after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2004, is closely connected to the issues of authorship and the publishing industry, which are vehemently critiqued in Jelinek's work.⁸ By uploading the novel chapter by chapter, often with long intervals in between, without a clear indication of how much more would follow and when it would come to an end, the author, a very public figure in the Austrian press and in the German language literary and theatre scene, seems to have consciously sought to steer clear of the pressures and mechanisms of the book market and the attention of the media. By 'hiding' the text in the most public and open space of the internet, Jelinek ironically evades and simultaneously comments on the hypocrisy in the culture of book reviews that create the cult around and then attack the author, rather than appraise or even read the book. The irony of substituting *Envy* a 'private novel', available only on the internet, and yet ephemeral and escaping attention precisely because of its overwhelming presence, is thus not to be missed. The radio version of the internet novel also retains a sense of being grasped only in a cursory and fleeting manner, with thoughts (hyper-)linked as it were, in a chain of associations, digressions and seemingly random connections that employ the rhizomatic structure of the internet as a textural principle. It is clearly a spoken text rather than a narrated text, and that is further attested by the physical discomfort one encounters in reading it through large swathes of fine print online, or the difficulty of printing out a thousand pages.⁹

Spanning a landscape of shrinking cities, dying economies, menopausal women, crime-obsessed boulevard news, historical erasures and digital presentations of the self that are invisible in their very hyper-accessibility, *Envy* offers by way of methodically digressive narration a clash between different connotations of 'gender performance' by focusing on its perceived failures and

non-performance. The category of woman is ironically unravelled, not only as a process of subject constitution and becoming, but equally, as decay, collapse and degeneration, it is not described as an identity marked by possibilities alone, but recognised as an identity constantly and viciously attacked for being insufficient and lacking.

The text generates indirect but sustained contrasts between the trivial, sexualised usage of notions such as 'performance enhancement drugs' or 'performance anxiety', as well as economically, industrially derived usages such as 'non-performing loans' or 'automobile performance' on the one hand, and the feminist theorisation of gender as constructed identity on the other. This results in a semantic incongruity that is witty and insightful, and that refuses the possibility of a straightforward explanation. Figures of speech such as zeugma and syllepsis, which grammatically combine disjoint phrases, are systematically employed in the text. This complex play with language is typical of all of Jelinek's writing, but the specific connection between gender and non-performance is uniquely elaborated in a barrage of extraordinary detail in this particular text and sensitively adapted to the auditory medium in the radio play.

Envy is the emotion that constitutes the fabric of the text. More precisely, envy is used as a method of evoking that which is not there, which is lacking or withheld or denied, in order to constitute an idea of the self. Referring to psychoanalyst Melanie Klein in an audio feature accompanying the radio production, writer and filmmaker Eva Meyer explains envy as 'the angry feeling that another person is enjoying and withholding something desirable, whereby the envious impulse lies in taking this away and spoiling it. Unlike greed, envy does not only strive for destructive intentions, but also projects excrement and bad objects from within outwards'.¹⁰ By foregrounding and interweaving the so-called trivial connotations of performance with the notion of the performance of gender, the novel and radio play implicitly point to the absence of this connection in theoretical understandings of gender performance.

Two Paradigms of Performance

For the purpose of this essay, and at the risk of oversimplifying an admittedly vast field, I would like to distinguish between two different usages of the term *performance* as follows: one semantic field emphasises performance in terms of its creation, constitution and becoming, whereas the other emphasises performance in terms of success, accomplishment, growth, reputation, or inversely, non-performance, failure, collapse and inadequacy. Whereas the former emphasises the processuality of performance, the latter emphasises the fulfilment of a goal or the failure to do so. The former usage is predominant in the humanities, referring to artistic, linguistic, cultural, and gender performance. The latter usage is most common when referring to economic, technical and sexual fields. Linguistically, the two paradigms could be argued to correspond to the performative and the constative dimensions of language and speech.

Here is a tentative glossary of the different paradigms of performance in the English language:

Performance as Process

1. *Artistic or Cultural Performance*: public presentation, exhibition, creatively developed work belonging to the realm of the performing arts; culture as articulated and consolidated in practices and intangible archives and repertoires. This paradigm is outlined in most of the founding texts of the field of performance studies;
2. *Linguistic Performance*: ability to use language, linguistic competence to accomplish meaning and acts; the term performative as enunciated in speech act theory derives from this field;¹¹
3. *Gender Performance*: gender as identity being historically constituted through a 'stylised repetition of acts';¹²
4. *Technical Performance*: the manner in which a mechanism accomplishes a task, as well as the measurement of its output;
5. *Business Performance*: an indicator of the difference between actual results vs. desired results in a business-related activity; the quality of execution of an action, operation or process when measured against a standard;¹³

6. *Sexual Performance*: vocabulary referring to the ability to carry out sexual activity and the norms associated with virility and libido.

It may be argued that these two fields remain largely distinct from each other, employing very different vocabularies and pointing to different trajectories in their conceptual histories. However, they curiously overlap or intervene with each other in relation to gender. When speaking of performance as process, gender is theorised as a subject position that is not natural or biologically given, but is generated and constituted through linguistic, sociopolitical and cultural acts and interactions. When speaking of performance as goal, gender is commonly understood in terms of the accomplishment of certain norms and the judgement of successfully fulfilling these standards or, more frequently, failing to do so. Feminist theories and practices have sought to critique and re-imagine exactly this norm, which determines what acts or behaviours are implied in being either a woman or a man. In the field of performance studies, the theorisation of gender as a generative, material category rather than as a fulfilment of a given role is an attempt to introduce the possibilities of active transformation and agency. Yet the two different meanings of the term are at odds with each other. When referring to the performance of gender from a cultural-theoretical point of view, we mean that gender is a never-ending process; this process is historically determined and is not random or merely a matter of free will. It cannot be quantified or verified. From the perspective of common language usage, gender is either performed well or not; it is a matter of accomplishment and having a potential for achievement in a utilitarian sense. Strong judgements of one's gender are made, as in the case of constative speech, which can be verified by its truth claims.

In terms of what it achieves as an artistic engagement with gender and performance, *Envy* does not ignore or overlook these different understandings of gender performance and also does not treat them as equally valid; rather, it works out a complex, feminist critique of how they are interrelated. *Envy* brings into sharp focus the extent to which the idea of performing one's gender (performance as goal) often becomes equivalent to the failure to do so. That the notions of success and failure are, in effect, two

sides of the same coin becomes evident in the way the figure of the woman in public discourse is inevitably represented and measured against patriarchal and capitalist standards in the novel. Further, *Envy* attacks the complicity of women in retreating themselves and other women as inadequate according to a capitalist world view and in their overdependence on being recognized by the patriarchal norm. At the same time, the text proposes through its strategies of digression – specifically, the tropes of interweaving and interruption – a highly specialised language and form of representation that provides insights and hints at ways of unsettling conventional perceptions and irritating the familiarity of language through experiment and error.

Strategies of Interweaving and Interrupting

The phrase *faule Kredite*⁴ may be translated into English as 'non-performing loans', referring to loans that have not been repaid and are close to default. In the text, Jelinek plays with the literal meaning of the phrase, 'lazy loans', by contrasting it with a neologism, *fliegige Kredite*, literally 'hardworking loans', thus drawing a connection to the US-American companies that fuelled the housing and financial crisis, and from there the association with the woman's body ownership of which is willingly or unwillingly surrendered to others for their use:

[W]e could all only profit, if our lazy non-performing loans, but also the hardworking performing ones, would be flogged to the locust Cerberus (this honey beast [*Hinrichen*], which will cost us our homes), would be gotten rid of at a blanket rate and a good price, though not good for us! – Well, the main thing is that our bodily apartment, at least the one still available, will be lived in by someone else, or be furnished to facilitate quick use, to be possessed by someone and become possessed!⁵

What comes across as an absent-minded slip of the tongue, leading to seemingly random associations, is in fact a careful and compact interweaving of the text's diverse thematic strands. On the one hand, the term 'locust Cerberus' refers to the private American investment firm, ironically bearing the name of a three-headed

mythical beast, which bought out several multinational companies and thus destroyed thousands of jobs, as a locust swarm does to a field. On the other side, the word *Hinrichen* means both a house cricket as well as a pejorative term for a housewife, which I translate as 'honey beast'. The term to *flog* (*verschieben*) refers here to the possibly illicit sale of an heirloom: property that is primarily valuable for sentimental rather than financial reasons, such as domestic silver. These references form a link between the financial housing crisis and the language that looks down upon and condemns women as functional caretakers, who forsake ownership of their houses, implying their residences, their inherited property, as well as their bodies. The idea of the acquisition and possession of the woman's body thus interrupts a smooth reading of the language extracted from the news related to the housing crisis. The subject of the economy is interwoven with the object of patriarchy. It is not a simple equivalence that is laid out, but a gesture of linking fields generally perceived as disconnected while simultaneously splitting up the habitual connections that wear down our capacity to see what lies behind them.

The critique of capitalism in *Envy* extends from addressing the financial crisis, to the phenomenon of shrinking cities in the emergent post-industrial economy in the West, to tourism and the role allocated to and performed by women – particularly ageing women – in all of the above. The text abounds with phrases and expressions that bite into the calves, as it were, of capitalism and patriarchy: 'The woman is the work she does, the man eats the work she does',⁶ 'the wife doffed aside as a coat',⁷ 'the being of this woman has been discarded, recessed, and will now be removed from storage',⁸ 'the others are the ones who are unfriendly, we women are extremely service-oriented'.⁹ The careful and unrelenting scrutiny of language lays bare how, within the logic of profit and the service of patriarchal interests, women repeatedly fail to 'perform' and seek instead a legitimisation of their own existence through male recognition. The experience of growing old as a woman is carefully interwoven with ongoing economic and political developments. The language describing a hill that has been exploited for its mineral resources and a city that is deserted for its declining profit-generating potential is contrasted with language that speaks of the ageing woman's loss of desirability, devalued because her body is not youthful and attractive:

[T]here are, for instance, tortuous changes in the relationship of the sexes, with which I have already tortured you enough, for which I even have pity, culminating in younger women going away, whereas the older ones stay on, as receptionists, concierges of some reality housing, which they manage, supervise and with which they have entered into a shaky reality relationship, a comfortable relationship of convenience (for no one else enters into a relationship with them), into which one can penetrate in a lasting way, as indeed into this hill, which was excavated from within and without. Now nothing is left in it and nothing of it.²⁰

The social mechanisms by which human beings, here specifically ageing women, are humiliated, and in which they play a significant part, are shown as being related to the mechanisms that view a natural environment as an economic resource to be exploited or abandoned as required. The symptoms of the economic crisis relate to the symptoms of cultural crisis, particularly the loss of a woman's value when her 'performance potential' as an object of desire or utility declines. The critique of patriarchy is thus inseparable from an awareness of the profit-oriented values of the nation state, wherein the ownership of property and territory goes hand in hand with the ownership and regulation of gender roles. The critique is not a simple moral judgement, stating that something is good or bad. Rather, it recognises moral judgements themselves as having a pattern, which unfold in and through writing and language. The narration thus does not follow a mimetic procedure, wherein the author simply represents the world that she sees in front of her.²¹ The attempt is not to render a primary reality as authentically as possible, but to interrupt any sense of this being possible with a narrative method of picking up and using material from any available source, be it historical, literary, biographical, related to current affairs or trivial media reports, and to generate a convoluted complex of what is left behind, of what has already been said:

There are so many such as this woman, in the rural province, alone, which is dying, the place is dying, not the woman, not yet, not that this means they will be locked up yet, these

lonely beings, these dungeons of themselves, all the holes in the country may have been full of them by now, however this country is – like any other, even in that it won't stand on its own – full of arseholes, I don't exclude myself when I say this, I too wish to belong after all, I have acquired by birth a ticket to this country, and so I am now permitted to go everywhere with it, and anyone may go in me as well, as is appropriate to any respectable arse.²²

The all too obvious clash of meanings and references invite the reader and listener to be circumspect about the way language is used to create and sustain differences. The image of the hole in the passage above refers to several different 'types' of holes, literal and metaphorical: the abandoned mining ditches in the provinces; the criminal cases of women being locked up in holes underground; the holes or gaps in the national memory with regard to addressing its own past crimes; it also refers to the parts of the female body derogatorily perceived as 'holes' and the connotations of ownership and control this evokes, which in turn references the sense of entitlement and occupation that is implied with a privileged national citizenship. This literary strategy of interweaving and interrupting associations, of introducing ambiguity on the one hand where clarity seems to be in demand, and on the other hand of linking and connecting ideas deemed to belong to separate fields, is what I consider one of the main impulses provided by the text to feminist theory of gender performance.

While feminist theorisations of gender have struggled for a processual, transitive understanding of the way gender is performed and sought to irritate a fixed, normative understanding, there remains the problem that this contradicts the most commonplace usage of the word performance, stemming from a vocabulary of output, efficiency, profitability and utility. Far from being left untouched by this latter terrain, gender is very much incorporated into it, and materialised by the same logic that governs machines, industries, businesses and economies, where it easily compounds with appraisal, anxiety and failure. The general response to this clash, at least in the academic world of performance studies and in feminist theorisations of gender, is to strictly demarcate the use of the term from the paradigm of performance as goal and/or to introduce distinct terms such as performativity, which are

more precise in their scope. What happens, however, is that the two paradigms seep into each other in sometimes obvious and at other times subtle ways. This is not to say that feminist theorists are unaware or blind to the way the performance of gender tends to be commonly used as a conscriptive rather than a performative, but it is assumed the two paradigms of performance can be kept distinct from each other. At stake is not simply a debate between constructivism and essentialism, or between universality and particularity, or indeed about establishing 'performance as a new power matrix of globalization'.²³ Rather, it is a matter of acknowledging that there are two paradigms of the performance of gender that contest each other and claim primary authority.

I consider Jelinek's *Envy* to be a very complex and self-reflexive literary response to this problem. At the thematic level, the ageing woman's performance anxieties about not being beautiful-bodied and young, and not being valued for her loss of utility and desirability, are emblematic for the deep connections between the capitalist, nationalist and patriarchal world views. Envy is the emotive response to others enjoying the sovereignty and recognition that is denied to or unavailable to oneself. At the experimental level, this private novel that can be downloaded and read or listened to as a radio podcast marks the 'successful performance' of this very sovereignty and freedom to speak, without fear of the judgement and recognition of others. In its length and density, its convoluted language, its openness, it is impossible to say what exactly is private here, as if something is hidden precisely because it is there for everyone to see. Clearly, the language of the text and its narrative strategies emphasise the processuality and fragmented, multi-layered constitution of gender subjectivity. At the same time, the language is lifted and recycled from social fields where gender is strictly determined and judged. It does not claim to propose a theory or a form of perception that would displace existing ones, and yet it does not allow these dominant modes of perception to exist with ease. More than that I couldn't say, except that I definitely want the implicitness of the gender binary as a point of departure, in order to finally arrive elsewhere, but where?²⁴

Notes

- 1 See <http://www.elfriedejelinek.com> (Accessed 12 June 2012). The text was first published as a serial novel in the prose section of the website between 03.03.2007 and 24.04.2008, with five chapters, and a total of 14 issues; it is recently available in different versions. The three versions for PCs, e-readers and smartphones are simply duplicates of the text in various font sizes, whereby the font becomes larger as the reading apparatus becomes smaller. The page numbers henceforth cited refer to the compiled version for PCs, <http://ee-nr-gmbh.com/wessey/NEID.pdf> (Accessed 12 June 2012). All translations are mine.
- 2 The production, adapted and directed by Karl Bruckner and first broadcast from October to December 2011, consists of a monologue spoken by the actress Sophie Rois with occasional inserts by Elfriede Jelinek, and music by Frode Halhi and Maja Ratkje. The production was accompanied by a series of interviews and supplementary features, also available as a downloadable podcast, <http://www.br.de/radio/bayern2/sendungen/hoerspiel-und-medienkunst/sdiwcrpunkte/jelinek-neid100.html> (Accessed 12 June 2012).
- 3 Duden, *Rechtschreibung der deutschen Sprache*, 21st ed. (Munich/Wien/Zürich 1996).
- 4 These are the cases of Natascha Kampusch, kidnapped at the age of ten and locked in a tiny cellar in Vienna for eight years; the Fittzi case, involving a woman held in captivity for 24 years by her father and kept in an incestuous and abusive relationship in the town of Amstetten in Austria; and the case of the 'cannibal murderer' in a Viennese street where Jelinek's own family members once lived.
- 5 Jelinek, *Envy* (Neid), 216.
- 6 The original artwork is held in the collections of the *Museo del Prado* in Madrid, estimated date 1495–1520; oil on wood, 120 x 150 cm; Reg. No. 2822.
- 7 E. Jelinek, 'No Orders, no Payoffs, no Receipt, no Deceit: Remarks on *Envy* (Keine Anweisung, keine Auszahlung, kein Betrag, kein Betrug. Anmerkungen zu *Neid*)', <http://ee-nr-gmbh.com/wessey/faunerk.htm> (Accessed 12 June 2012); also available as podcast on BR Online, 03.10.2011, <http://www.br.de/radio/bayern2/sendungen/hoerspiel-und-medienkunst/hoerspielpod372.html> (Accessed 12 June 2012).
- 8 This is evident not only in *Envy* (Neid) but also in other essays and in the novel *Gretel* (Gretl). See J. Tuschling, 'The Face of the Brand: Author and Book Market in Elfriede Jelinek's Prose of the Noughties', *Austrian Studies*, Vol. 19 (2011) 1, 82–97.
- 9 In an introductory note on *Envy*, Jelinek pleads with the reader to do what s/he wants with the text, but to please not print it out. I must

admit I disobeyed the authorial instructions, as it would have been impossible for me to read and engage with the text otherwise.

- 10 E. Meyer, 'Born Digital: On Jelinek's Private Novel *Envy*' (Das digitale gebovrene Ich. Zu Jelineks 'Neid: Privatroman') <http://www.bude-radio/bayern2/sendungen/huerspiel-und-medienkunst/huerspiel-pool368.html> (Accessed 12 June 2012).
- 11 Most widely recognized here are the works of J.L. Austin and N. Chomsky, respectively.
- 12 I first came across this particular phrase in J. Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988) 519.
- 13 Both above definitions are from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd ed. 2005.
- 14 Jelinek, *Envy* (*Neid*), 4 and 161 (here: rotting loans or 'faulige Kredite', in German 'lazy' and 'rotten' are homonyms).
- 15 Idem 4.
- 16 Idem 59.
- 17 Idem 146.
- 18 Idem 277.
- 19 Idem 223.
- 20 Idem 66.
- 21 Meyer, 'Born Digital'.
- 22 Jelinek, *Envy* (*Neid*), 206.
- 23 J. McKenzie, *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance* (London/New York 2001).
- 24 Jelinek, *Envy* (*Neid*), 28.

Women's Empowerment in Chiapas

Political Theatre and Battlefield Theatricality in FOMMA and EZLN

Caroline Rodrigues

Women at Sites of Power: Two Cases from Chiapas

The Zapatistas' story has been told and analysed by several political thinkers including Gerald Raunig, Roger Burbach, John Holloway and Slavoj Žižek as a strong paradigm for building contemporary thoughts on political resistance.¹ Approaching two decades of existence, the Zapatistas are indeed a model of a society that craved transformations based on equality, gender equality being one of its main means to permanent revolution.

The region of Chiapas has been politically shaken by rebellious indigenous movements since the 1960s. In 1994, after NAFTA (the North-American Free Trade Agreement) was insisted in times of massive expropriation of indigenous lands, many seemingly utopian expectations of political affirmation were fulfilled. At daybreak on January 1, a vast crowd of sky-masked men and women, most of them Maya, occupied the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas, one of the oldest cities of Mexico and once an important capital of Spanish imperial power.

United under the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*, EZLN), the protesters' demands were clearly stated in the Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. Aside from the eleven abstract demands for work, land, home, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace, the declaration stipulated precise requirements related to democratic elections and land agreements.² These demands for basic citizenship had been vocalised for two hundred years. This time, the movement was unified under the name of one of the