

The Fortune Roulette

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Acknowledgement

I want to dedicate my master thesis to two special persons in my life: Mirjam Dalkilic and Torsten Schmittel which were present during my process of healing.

Introduction

It all started on the first day of spring in 2020. My father lost his job because he was a risk group for COVID-19, we had nothing left. This moment of crisis was the start of my own survival. A long journey full of upheavals where I became aware of basic necessities such as hunger, a roof and heat. One year later, on the same day. My roommate takes me for a walk in a valley in Upper Austria. We had a very surreal walk accompanied by a philosophical discussion on where are we heading, what awaits us, where it takes us, what destiny will bring us? This whole trip was magnificent. It was a cloudy day as if the winter did not want to leave, it was becoming eternity and this confinement was too long. I can't take it anymore. It was the starting of a snowstorm and a certain magnetism was pulling us towards the forest. There was such a bizarre scene at the entrance to this valley located somewhere in the Mühlviertel. Two storks on a tree, symbol of a newborn baby, are looking at a witch who was shattered in flight with her broom and who died on the ground. It gave an atmosphere of an esoteric entrance from the start, very mysterious.

This valley was hollow and carried a river which reverberates on the rock faces everywhere on this place. This omnipresence fades into the background as we walk and we hear our cautious footsteps which were careful not to fall down. The path is steep, there is nothing that is straight. Little by little we were leaving civilization for nature and silence or rather an idea of silence. In my head all my frustrations were resonating all the time: job interviews, my master's degree, how I will manage to survive until the end of the month, etc. While crossing a rather rustic bridge, an enormous crucifix appears with a bleeding Christ of human size plated asleep on his cross. Below the citation "*Im schönen Tempel der Natur siehst du des großen Gottes Spur. Doch willst du ihn noch größer sehn. So bleib bei seinem Kreuze stehn*"¹. It reminds me of the very religious side of the Austrians in the countryside which is similar to my roots in Central America. I begin to wonder about this Christ in the middle of this wild nature surrounded by the pagan spirits of the Celtic

¹ "In the beautiful temple of nature you see the trace of the great God. But if you want to see him, greater. So stay by his cross".

religions of yesteryear. A bit like a victory for a distant civilization which imposes a patriarchal dogmatism in very remote lands like this one. A foreigner from Palestine who comes to this land where he does not belong.

We continue the winding road with very beautiful passages that arrive. We had drunk a lot of water and our bladders were full. We decide to take a little Pipi break or as she would say “lulen” in her dialect. Steam comes out of my penis with the golden liquid that bathed the earth and rocks. A touch of warmth in this cold and humid environment. It made me think of a kind of baptism where I returned a part of me to nature or if I had to give this currency in exchange to be able to reach the heart of this valley. It reminds me of my natural state where we have our basic needs to be able to survive and shed that weight to make way for that relief.

The more we go in the valley, the more we are in silence and we find ourselves alone with ourselves. My head is bombarded by deadlines, all the priorities to survive: finishing writing my thesis, job interviews that I have to ensure to survive, transversal projects, whether I will stay in Austria or go abroad due to this constant feeling of being a stranger, etc. I decide to focus on the path. And I start to ask myself questions about my roommate. How does she see me? What does our relationship mean? Especially this sharing of intimacies, pains, desires, frustrations and the different cultural point of view which works like sunglasses on the vision from one another. She also has an imaginary world that makes her enjoy these instances in nature. She notices stalactites in the middle of the river in a waterfall and goes without hesitation and without direct vision of danger to approach even in the middle of the river to be able to see it at best. This cultural relationship with nature is intriguing, especially for me, despite coming from very distant lands I have always lived in the city and nature is demarcated by human hand. Here, there is nothing marked out, just the presence of the paths created by the different hikers.

I wanted to document this “year after” journey on video and my roommate carried the camera. What is interesting is that we are rarely alone in this seemingly untouched nature. There are always a couple of hikers constantly appearing. Even when you want to take a wee break.

As an artist of the *Zwombie*² generation, I want to record everything but my roommate as soon as she had the camera, she did not dare to record passers-by. There was a cute guy with his girlfriend who said to her: "*Ich verstehe, das du uns nicht auf dieser Kamera oben haben willst*" (I understand that you don't want us on this camera). I began to ask myself questions about the meaning of private life, which is really cultural. Even my position as a young artist is disturbing for me because it is normal that what I see belongs to me since it is part of my live experience. It reminds me of a guy from Berlin with whom we had a long discussion about a photo his mother took in the 1970s of a little girl in Japan during her first travels. What worried him was that this now grown girl does not know that her image is in the middle of a beautiful Berlin living room. It reminded me of when I was a kid, I had so much volume in my hair that I looked like Bart Simpson or this dwarfs with long pink hair yellow that girls in the '90 used to have in their bag. Back there, at the airport of Miami, a Japanese tourists did not hesitate a single second to take several photos yelling "it's Bart Simpson". Today I ask myself after this dialogue if there is a picture of me somewhere in a living room in Tokyo or somewhere in Japan from this precise moment in my past.

She shows me a path that zigzagging up to the right. I feel warm and sweaty because we've been walking for over an hour and now the climb is becoming quite strong. The sound of the river begins to subside as the swoosh rushing through the branches invites you to meditate. I start to feel hungry at this point. This way up seems long, but we were approaching the sky. When you get closer, a very round rock appears at the beautiful summit of the pines. It is crowned with a small crucifix. We continue the climb until the end of the path and this rock becomes longer. She absolutely wanted to show it to me. This rock is called the "Kerzenstein" because of its candle shape. As it was formed of massive and rounded blocks of stones with the top slightly broken where the cross sprouted. This whole mass that we were admiring looked rather like a penis. It is common to have a small picnic while having a view of this giant phallus. I asked myself questions on topics that I am researching at the moment like queer art, patriarchy, being gay and how in fact this rock is a symbol of power and domination which represents our society. The funniest part of all is this mini cross at the top where religion takes control of all this social hierarchy admired by the hikers around it

² a generation borned and addicted to technology

who were eating before continuing their path.

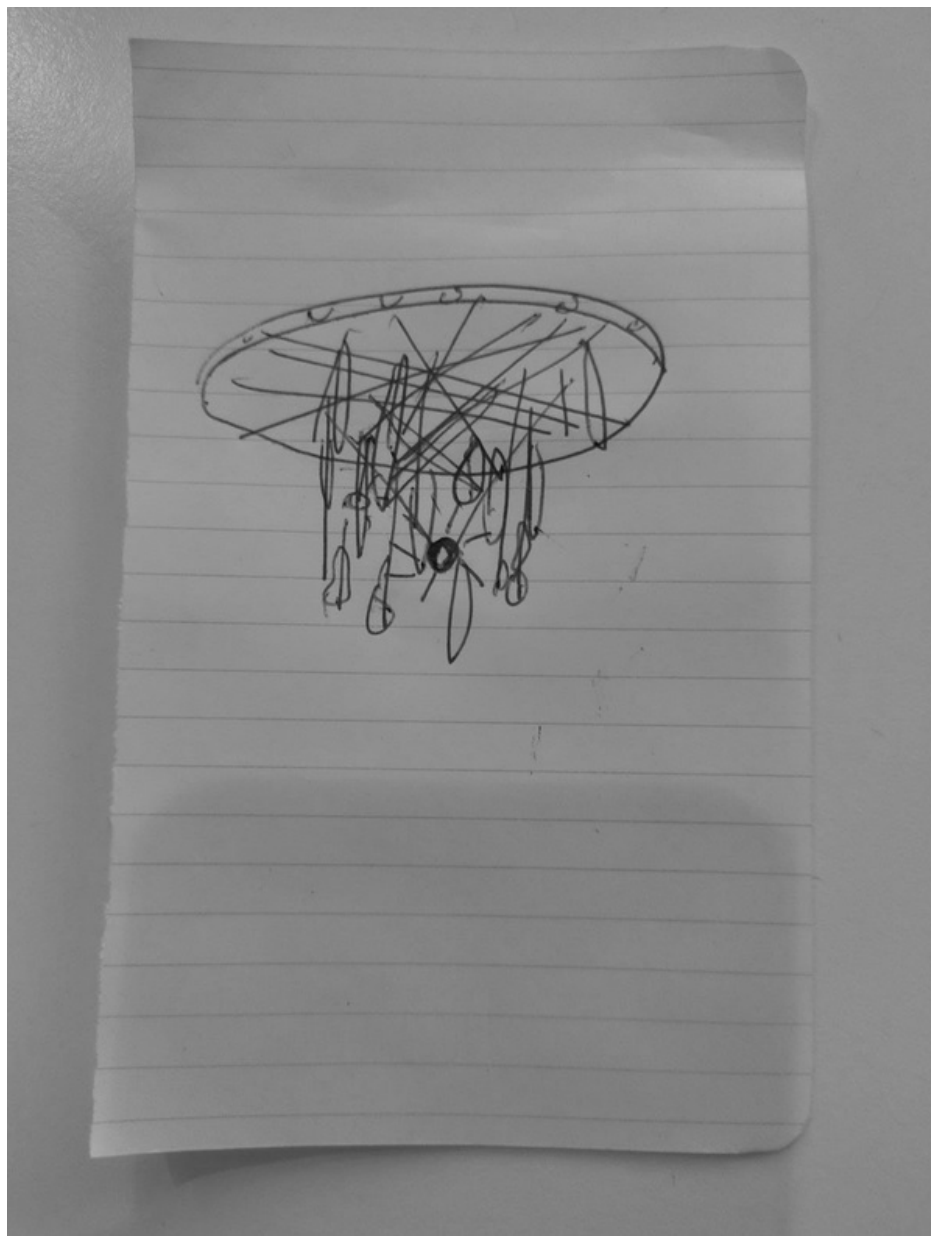
After this break, we climbed at the top of this hill. A beautiful view over the fields of upper Austria takes my breath away because we had a clear, green and open view that we did not feel over this valley. These are a farmer's fields. We do not cross the fields for respect but we stay on the side. In the middle of this line between nature and culture, there is a strange hut that I have never seen. It consisted of a roof to protect the straw and at the bottom a rock of salt. I wanted to approach but my roommate prevented me. It is a thing made for deer in the forest and they are very sensitive to the smell of humans. What a serious mistake I was going to make! I didn't know there was this kind of structure as a rite for nature.

I felt caught in a breathing organism. Something that is cleaning me of my aches and pains that I am going through during this time. On this path at the top we look at a lot of abandoned machines whose function I do not know but which are used for agriculture and working the land. It asks me questions, precisely on the edge of this limit. On two stones covered with snow, my colleague takes a piece of wood and makes two drawings: on the left a sort of sun flower and on the right a spiral. It reminds me of the stars and the universe, which were invoked by a kind of ancient language such as the Celtic runes, to make this invocation and leave a mark behind as men, a spiritual mark for this world of yesteryear that no longer exists. 'doesn't exist anymore. In the end, she tells me the story of an old lady who appeared in this place. They had spoken at length about the region and she had shown the various secrets of this field. As I told this story, it reminded me of the witch at the very beginning of the journey. From the feminine strength which is in a fight and must hide in order to survive and pass its secrets of aromatic and medicinal plants from mother to daughter. I compare them to the omnipresent Christianity of this forest, which even appropriates very strong symbols such as the deer. An order of unjustified chaos, where we always see this presence even in the most natural things, such as sexuality including this erect phallus in the heart of this valley.

It started to get dark and we had to hurry back home. We had to go down the hill on a very steep slope in the middle of this organism. I am very careful but I lose my balance because the inertia makes you

descend faster, as if I were falling down a precipice. I try to hold to every branch, because I was afraid of having an accident. Suddenly I see an electricity box that I naively thought would serve as a brake. Fortunately nothing happened to me while collapsing, but this break could have returned my body to nature. Moving away from the danger, we see a typical Heuriger. Unfortunately it is closed because of the pandemic normally it offered plenty of good drinks and meals. We found ourselves back to civilization, but everything seemed abandoned, the park for children to play and even the hen cage. This place was empty and we found this childhood again by discovering a swing with my roommate. We find life again by finding a place that brings you back to our earliest memories.

We find ourselves at the bottom in the second road designed for cars. There were plenty of affirming signs on this side about healing. To heal from what? What is this spirituality that re-emerge in nature? I feel that I am starting to heal myself from past traumas through art. The Schopenhauerian sentiment that only art can save us from the nonsense of life. We are starting to debate nature and culture, ecology and saving the planet. What is nature in the age of technoscience? How can we preserve it in a world that forces us to exploit, while we ourselves are exploited for our survival? I see Christ again at the end of the valley. Suddenly, we find ourselves again in front of the witch, observed by the two storks. A bit as if we were back at a starting point and nothing has changed during this trip.



Mauricio Suarez, *The Fortune Roulette*, Preparatory Sketch, 2021

The artwork

My fears evoked me a vision that I must create an alchemical force to protect myself from society and attract all forces of nature surrounding me. It is like an amulet that will bring me luck and happiness, to be able to find the balance and the vital force to guide me in my life. By consulting old alchemy books and reenactments proposals that I saw in Prague, I want to create my own wheel of fortune to attract this money magnetism. The artwork must be placed in the middle of a room and contain parts of my body, in order to be able to constantly communicate with me via my own DNA. I want to collect partly things produced by my body, as a way of exchange with nature. Like a coin to make a deal with it. Like Dr.Faust when he makes this contract with the devil Mephistophiles.

At the same time this wheel serves two things: first like a biobank preserving some parts of my body for eternity and secondly checking my health status in analyzing the different parts of my body. The parallel of body and economy is not foreign as we are going to see, there are a lot of analogies. Therefore, I want to expose some of my bodily products to offer them to destiny, thus hair, nails, excrement, poop, blood and tooth.

I have been researching the body and its parts for a long time before to understand why I was doing that. Like if my intuition and my unconscious were trying to rationalize my instinct of surviving. Collecting body parts for analysis is not something new and is as old as humanity itself. The first element "urine" that I am using for the wheel was thoroughly studied and it was considered by the ancients to have a magical principle. Today, we see some therapies putting this liquid on the skin or on hair, but it was historically proven very common in war or when there was an accident, to urinate on a scar. Urine heals. This process works of course if the individual is healthy. Today scientists would recommend using it as the last option. The burning sensation sterilizes the scar.

Development

During this pandemic I was not able for a long time to go to the hospital for a blood result to get my “healthy” sexual status checked. Every time I go and get my blood sample taken, it reminds me of a time I had to sell my blood plasma to survive and feeling sick about watching my own liquid being collected as a merchandising product. I was wondering how we negotiate these body transactions in the sphere of art, science and biotechnology. I choose for this artwork to use my own bodily materials. It is a natural process where there is no negotiation required for the use of my own blood, urine, faeces, saliva or erogenous fluids in the making of my work. It is an intrinsic and valuable material that I take care of as a relique and I feel like so. Indeed, an abandoned part of my body, stating my health at a certain period of my life, is the most precious thing that maybe one day could awaken me from death. Traditionally the history of medicinal science has never been picky about the body’s ethics, as the relationship of our own body is constantly transforming, especially at a time where medicine as an institution is in crisis due to the pandemic and a world more and more informed.

In the contemporary western world, healthcare operates on the basis of highly entrenched paradigms. We are told that our health is our own responsibility as we see right now with COVID-19. The restrictions and the civil obedience shows how much we are passive receivers of care as a traditional paternalistic doctor(medical institution)-patient relationship. I don’t want to discuss the scientific method but rather to position my practice as a traditional knowledge production, which has been used over time and disappeared for a hierarchy of care and knowledge systems. If caring implies the democratic allocation of care responsibilities between a caregiver and care receiver, body-on governance³ plays a main role in implementing new practices of care. This artwork therefore is ment to open a question about biobanks as medical institutions, forging this castle with big walls of medical information and thus maintaining a western paternalistic medicine care and trust in the system. Who I am trusting for my own life and who is responsible for it?

³ Tarkhanian, Serina , “Re-Forming Health: Towards Somatic Phronesis and Caring With Microbial Flux”, *the fictional journal* 04, 2020

Today we are not used anymore to see such body parts like at the time I have seen losing my mind while selling plasma for my own survival. I was scared about the sacral part of my body and the commercial aspect. People are already sensitive about topics like slaughterhouses and watching certain forms of sacrifices, whereas TV is constantly offering series with high amounts of violence and blood. The hygienist revolution that emerged in parallel with industrialisation and the development of medicine made this gap about our own natural bodily processes associating them with the idea of dirtiness and something to frown upon. It was not like that before despite the religious morals of christianism. Men, women of the Middle Ages and animals released organic matter on the roadway on a daily basis: excrement, blood from numerous bleeds, guts and viscera, not only near slaughterhouses or fishmongers. In the middle ages, it was important to be dirty and there was the general belief that being dirty helps to survive. The winding and congested streets retain the rubbish in piles massed in front of the carriage doors. The receptacles of this pollution are certainly the roadways, but also the public places, the canals, the innumerable channels which crisscross the urban territory, the streams, the ponds and the rivers. In antiquity, the Egyptian, Assyrian and Greco-Roman civilizations bequeathed us solid curved paved paths to facilitate the flow of water, but the secondary paths poorly protected by dirt and pebble coverings did not resist. In addition, the laxity of city officials, individual selfishness and lack of conscience worsen the situation. Only major events such as the preparation for a religious procession or a royal entry require municipalities to take rapid hygiene measures.

During this quarantine and my thesis work period I have been reading a lot of books about the evolution of medicine and how it was taken care of from different times in history. We find the first studies in medicine in the middle-ages. Infallible in its properties, the urine collected in a glass vial called *matula* has remained one of the bases of medicine, since its simple observation makes it possible to indicate the weak points of the patient, and consumed, it also serves as a medication. The droppings and various excrements in particular humans, based on the biblical principle of the man decreed as the noblest of creatures enter, are cooked or mixed with other ingredients in medical preparations. The excrements of a young man in good health mixed with honey are sovereign against throat aches and those of a red-haired man distilled in water

heal wounds and ulcers. Of course we begin to ask questions about the use of our own body parts in modern medicine again. Two of the main studied topics at the moment are the microbiotica of our guts where bio-banking has a special place.

Across cultures, human feces are reviled. Thanks to its bacterial load, they can be a disease vector that causing outbreaks of cholera, typhoid fever, and E. coli. Humans didn't truly figure that out until the 19th century and feces was for a long time used by some as medicine. Excrement was conceived as powerful and ambivalent, capable both of signifying and causing not just bad, but good as well. In ancient Mexico the concept of divine excrement was not paradoxical, and excrement could be, indeed, divine. Excrement, like sex, has been traditionally taboo. In Christian discourse, it predictably signifies the opposite of sacred. Dante describes in one part of the inferno people drowned in human excrement⁴. In Western culture nowadays, "Holy Shit" functions as an exclamation of surprise or dismay precisely because it has no reference beyond itself; its power as a profanity derives from the paradox embedded in it⁵. For us, excrement is never divine.

The perception of this ambivalence between dirtiness and something sacred and valuable, can not better be illustrated any other than in nahuatl - the aztec and mayan language - as the semantic words designating gems and minerals as excrements. The word Mica was identified as the moon's excrement, whereas gold was named calledcoztic teocuitlatl, "yellow sacred excrement" or tonatiuh icuitl, "the excrement of the sun."⁶ There was a common riddle that says "What is a tiny colored stone sitting on the road? Dog excrement"⁷ as well as the stars are "brilliant stones" that were scattered over the night sky when the moon defecated. The sun was a god and gold represented the traces of the body wastes that he deposited during the night as he passed through the underworld as it is described in the different codex and sources this civilization left to us. The form as Gold is found in nature in some places, there appears in the dawn something like a little bit of diarrhea - very yellow, very wonderful!

4 Dante Alighieri (1945 [1472]) *La divine comédie: l'enfer*, edited by Jean Porson (Paris: Jean Porson).

5 Robert L Chapman (1987) *New Dictionary of American Slang* (London: Macmillan).

6 Cecelia F. Klein (1993) "Teocuitlatl, 'Divine Excrement': The Significance of 'Holy Shit' in Ancient Mexico" in: *Art Journal* 52, no. 3, 20.

7 ibid Cecelia F.Klein

The exploration of my own body and my central american roots makes me wonder a lot about my genetic package inside the body wastes and the sacred pre columbian past of my ancestors. "Filth" was associated with the goddess Tlazolteotl and was declined in different forms in mesoamerica. This goddess represented a lot of things and she was designed as "the eater of filth". She is one of the 9 lords of the night and means that her influence happens at night hours. She is the goddess of sexuality, childbirth, pregnancy and medicine as well as sexual transgression, partner cheating and unbridled lust. Her nocturnal filiation makes her one of the fertility goddesses and above all regeneration. Therefore in my artwork the symbols of the moon and stones are very important elements for this invocation and the ambiguity of two opposites that actually makes one.

This association is not only found in pre columbian civilization, but also my surrealist side makes me explore the unconscious processes of the production of shit as a comparison of producing gold. To cite especially Freud's research on children development and psychoanalysis in this context. *"The excrement is the first gift, a part of the body of the infant, from which it is separated only on the injunction of the loved one and by which it shows its tenderness [...] Defecation provides the child with the first opportunity to decide between the narcissistic attitude and the attitude of object love. Either he obediently yields the excrement, he 'sacrifices' it to love or else he withholds it for autoerotic satisfaction and, later, for the affirmation of his own will [...] Persistence results from anal eroticism, as a significant reaction of the ego against the demands of others; interest in the excrement shifts to interest in the gift and then in the money."*⁹ As we can see in this citation, Freud's train of thought says, junk = money = gift = child = penis. Excrement is linked to luck, to fortune and it is directly mentioned in the ducat shitter as an emblematic figure of our relationship to excrement and what it reveals. Curiously, psychoanalysis brings us here a more anthropological light than psychoanalytical. Freud states following theory of the anal status of a child. This period lasts for 2 to 3 years on average. The child discovers the pleasure that comes from retaining feces or expelling them. It is also, at this age, a period of opposition. The loss of excrement is assimilated, by the young

⁹ Sigmund Freud (1981 [1917]) "Über Triebumsetzungen, insbesondere der Analerotik" in: *Internationale Zeitschrift für Ärztliche Psychoanalyse*, 4, no.03 (Vienna: GW), 401–410.

child, to the loss of a part of its body; the child may be distressed. The “social fruit” of this anal stage is autonomy in space⁹. Freud adds this remark: “*It is possible that the opposition between what man has learned to value most and what is most devoid of value, and which he rejects as waste, conditioned this identification of gold and excrement.*”¹⁰

This makes me also think about my experience in the queer and homosexual milieu of getting this pleasure from a sexual encounter. Furthermore because Freud compares the fecal form to the men penis, suggesting the eroticism and enjoyment of the anus while making this product or receiving seeds. It is well known that the gold which the devil gives to his lovers turns into excrement after his departure, and it is certain that the devil is nothing other than the personification of the repressed unconscious drive to live. Our judeochristian civilization sees undoubtedly excrement as well as sex as one of the most taboo things in life. In the Christian discourse, it predictably signifies the opposite of sacred. As we saw before, Dante, for example, describes one part of the inferno of the people drowned in human excrement¹¹. Children will consider on the contrary the act of defecation with the discovery of treasures. They will begin to control their sphincters, and the anus becomes, according to Freud’s theory of the anal stage, an erogenous zone under the influence of the requirement of cleanliness expressed by the parents. They will exclaim with joy, as the child presents it to them as “*what a beautiful gift you have made us!*”. The anus, a zone of passage between the inside of the body and the outside world, is subject to the will of the child who realizes that he can prevent the expulsion, and therefore derives from it a pleasure of retention arising from the application of his will. He gradually becomes aware of the relief associated with letting go: it is the discovery of the pleasure of expulsion. And we can say something similar with pee and other bodily parts later as adults such as for example sperm. According to this theory, it is common for the child to take an interest in his stool and manipulate it, explore it or show it off as he also does with his toys.

The fecal sausage stimulates the erogenous zone, and is perceived by the child, according to this theory, as a part of his body that

⁹ Nicole Derboghossian (2017) *Le développement psychologique de l’enfant*, (Paris: Dunod).

¹⁰ *ibid* Freud

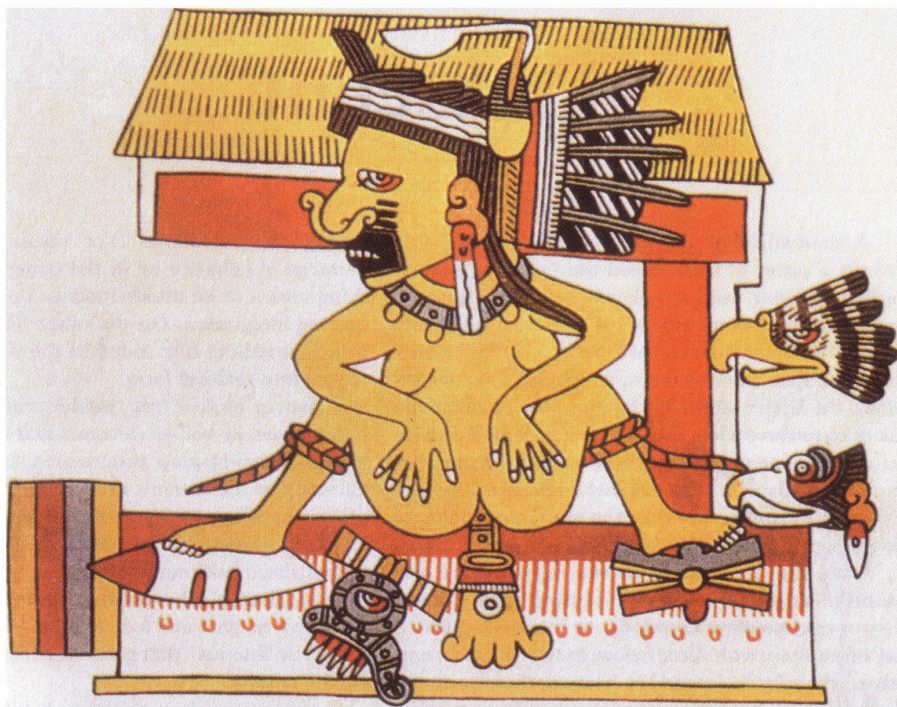
¹¹ *ibid* Dante

he loses. This part is valued and can therefore serve as a bargaining chip, as some children react very afraid as they feel like a part of their body amputated. To love means at this stage to give and to keep, possessiveness is one of the dominant aspects of the anal stage. The child can satisfy his mother by letting go where and when she wants. It can also oppose it by holding back, it is the development of a feeling of omnipotence in the child. It is the mother who will imprint the notion of filth and the feeling of disgust, creating in the child the assimilation of the rejections of forbidden pleasure. The child can develop retention as an opposition to the mother and expulsion is an expression of aggression. We are in the presence of a phenomenon of assimilation of the noble to the ignoble, of the object without value to the one which embodies this very value, which finds echoes in various areas of our existence. I am insisting on that because I was longtime meditating about this use of my bodily materials and all the polemics. Directly in society, this is associated with dirt and garbage as something that we have already consumed and we have to get rid of by polluting the planet. But for me these elements are sacred and have high value because they are a part of myself. In addition to that, it is interesting to analyze the union of two extreme parts of the laws of our psychic life. The anus and the mouth are linked together in dermical studies and they are considered as the exterior of our body. As in the expression "kiss my ass", we have this direct link that goes beyond to a world of pleasure thus introducing as well sexuality in this human=human interaction in a new form of sexual relationship. To come back to our aztec goddess, the common ritual for the priest was eating his own poop as a demonstration of the good functioning of the cosmic order. This was important for the regeneration of nature through the lunar cycles and regenerating celenic waters in the womb.

This practice is not foreign in nature. Coprophagia is very common in animals and anyone who has a pet sometimes surprizes it tackling mouth and anal pleasure. The use of poop in medicine is not something new. Diseases of the eye were caused by sexual impropriety, and explains why glaucoma and ectropion (a disease of the eyelid) were treated with powdered human fecal matter or urine.¹²

Urine was frequently collected for agriculture in some cultures .
For example the aztec state in Mexico collected this liquid gold, which

¹² Ibid Cecelia F.Klein



Representation of goddess Tlazolteotl urinating or/and defecating,
Codex Borgia, 16th century

was used as a mordant in dyeing, it is not surprising that in some languages like Nahuatl - the ancient mesoamerican language - it exist a separate word for soil and a soil that had been urinated upon. Urination was not only a metaphor for impurity, due to its saltiness, its bad smells and the fact that it is a dust produced by the body. It was actually considered as a fertilizing act, comparing it to water or rainfall and sexuality. The Aztecs had another word for soil that had been fertilized with human excrement: *tlalauiyac* that alludes directly to a practice of collecting human excrement from public privies along the major roads as fertilizer¹³. The excrement becomes food, the dirty becomes clean and the clean becomes new. Goddess Tlazolteotl ate transgression and transgressors as a form of purification in the form of digestion for the regeneration

¹³ H.R. Harvey (1981) "Public Health in Aztec Society." in: *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 57, no.2,157-165. PMID: 7011458; PMCID: PMC1805201.

of the earth. This has to be the explanation for the curious name Tl-aelquani, “Eater of Ordure”, and of all almanac figures representations which consume their own excrement¹⁴.

Urine is a liquid by-product of the body secreted by the kidneys through a process called urination and excreted through the urethra. It is not only produced to eliminate many cellular waste products, but also to control the amount of water in the body. Its volume regulation is part of homeostasis, in which it directly regulates the blood volume, because greater amounts of urine will reduce the volume of water in blood. It is an aqueous solution of greater than 95% water. Other constituents includes (standard constitution)¹⁵:

- Urea 9.3 g/L.
- Chloride 1.87 g/L.
- Sodium 1.17 g/L.
- Potassium 0.750 g/L.
- Creatinine 0.670 g/L.
- Other dissolved ions, inorganic and organic compounds (proteins, hormones, metabolites).

In this reference study of Urine it is concluded that any abnormal constituents found in urine are an indication for a disease. This makes me wonder about what is normal and standard in our body constituent, and can be also said the same in blood analysis as the one I was longingly waiting for, that was suddenly cut by COVID-19. Before blood, urine was from all our bodily discharges, the first studied by doctors, as it is the easiest to access and one of the first products of our body. This liquid, for example, was very studied in medicine in the Middle-Ages. There was an inspection of this fluid collected in a particular vial, the urinalysis. The first work the Peri ouron from the Byzantine Theophilus influenced Arab medicine increasing part of uroscopy in the clinical examination¹⁶. With Isaac Israeli, this author had a big influence on Western medicine. The uroscopic consultation scene was so profusely represented from the 12th century that it was the subject of an entire book by Friedrich

¹⁴ Ibid Cecelia F.Klein

¹⁵ John McMurry (2009) *Fundamentals of General, Organic, and Biological Chemistry*. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education).

¹⁶ Laurence Moulinier-Brogi (2019) Fonctions et pouvoir d'un flacon : l'urinal au Moyen ge. In: *Les Cahiers de Verre & Histoire* no 3, (Rouen: Sophie Lagabrielle) 93-102.

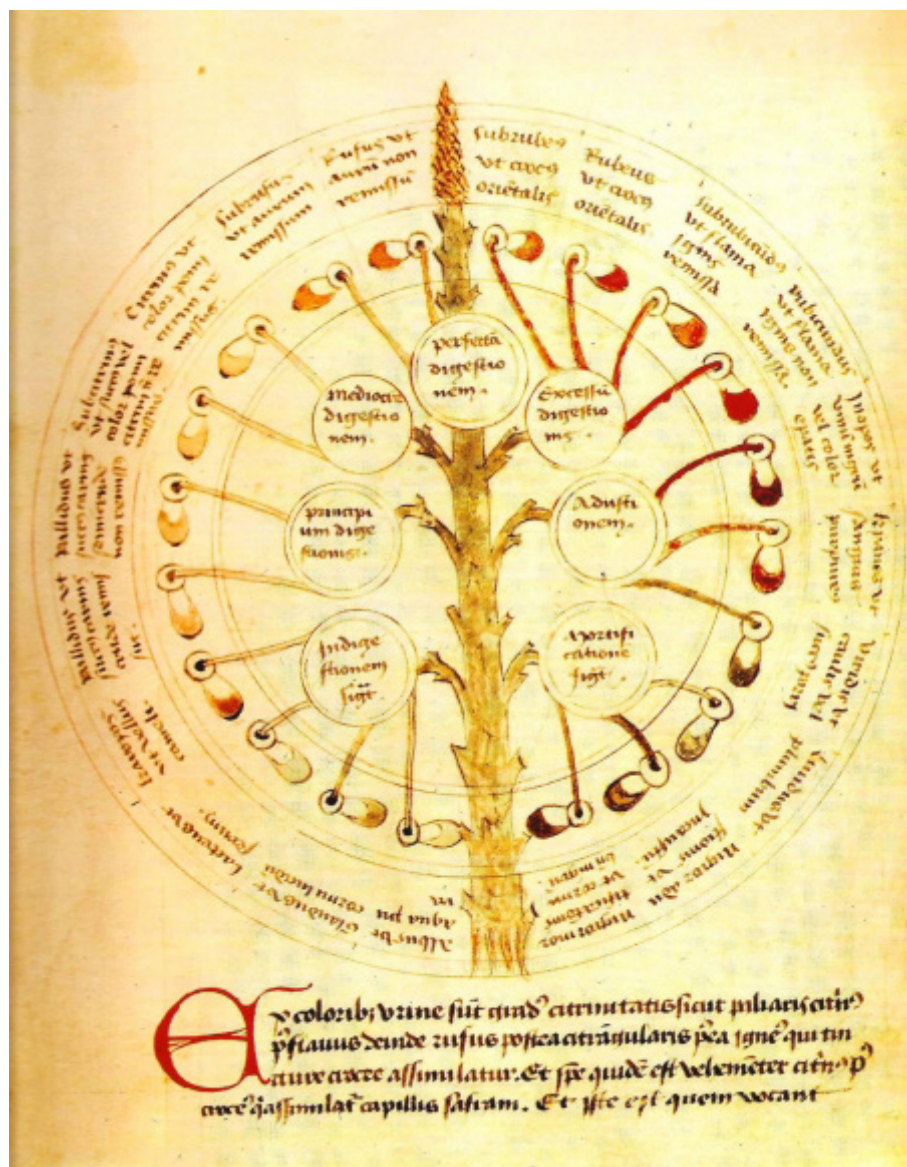


Doctor analyzing the urine of a sick patient, 14th century

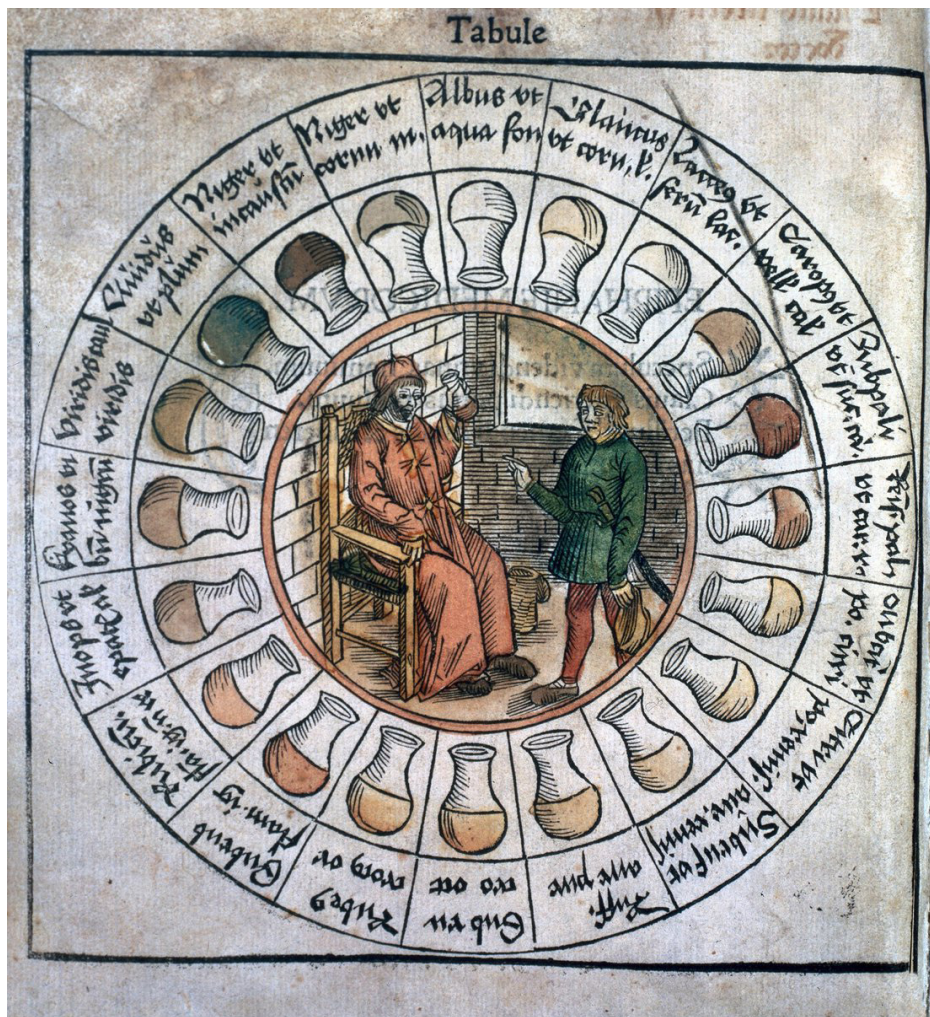
von Zglinicki¹⁷. Urinal representations are not absent from medical treatises, where they often appear in a drop cap, and of course in the “urine wheels”, representing the different colors of the fluid like so many bottles arranged in a wheel, from white to black. These representations also adorn books of hours and it is not always devoid of humor: the urinal has acquired the status of an attribute and “is to the doctor in a way what the palm is to martyrdom”¹⁸. The study of this phenomena shows how a reference, here the urine, shows the healthy status of an individual and for the first time in history there is a reference on this standardiza-

¹⁷ Friedrich von Zglinicki (1982) *Die Uroskopie in der bildenden Kunst. Eine kunst- und medizinhistorische Untersuchung über die Harnschau*. (Darmstadt: Verlag Ernst Giebler)

¹⁸ ibid Laurence Moulinier-Brogi



Urinal wheel, 13th century



Doctor analyzing the urinal of a patient surrounded by the wheel of urine,
14th century

tion about what is a healthy urine and which is not contributing to the development of scientific methodology in medicine practise. Taking the words of Berthold von Regensburg: “*The great scientists have the art of reading in a glass of urine the nature of man, his disease as well as the corresponding remedy, if the disease is curable*”. The study of this phenomena shows how a reference, here the urine, shows the healthy status of an individual.

Something similar to the urinal wheel will happen later with the types of faeces in order to distinguish who is a healthy patient and who is not. This is called the Bristol scale. The scale is structured from 1 to 7 according to shape and hardness, from hardest (type 1) to total liquid (type 7). The importance of this scale is that it allows the patient to see a drawing with the shape of the stool and, in addition, next to it the consistency and shape are carefully explained by putting easily recognizable examples (for example, in type 1, next to a color drawing of stool in the shape of separate balls is explained: “stool hard and separate balls. Like nuts”). Those are the different types of feces:

- Type 1: Separate hard lumps, like nuts (difficult to pass and can be black) - severe constipation
- Type 2: Sausage-shaped, but lumpy - mild constipation
- Type 3: Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface (can be black) - normal
- Type 4: Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft (average stool) - normal
- Type 5: Soft blobs with clear cut edges - lacking fibre
- Type 6: Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool (diarrhoea) - mild diarrhea
- Type 7: Watery, no solid pieces, entirely liquid (diarrhoea) - severe diarrhea

This is at the moment particularly studied in biobanks, specialized in faeces transplant, in order to regenerate the gut microbiota in unhealthy patients. It is funny to compare this research and this promotion of microbe at a time where disinfectant gels are omnipresent. For the moment there is no research on the long-term effects of fecal transplants, but some scientists are starting to look at the short-term effects. For example some patients who have received FMTs, the new bacterial

strains can survive for at least three months after the procedure¹⁹.

These filthy references inspired my work. The fact of collecting, archiving, analyzing and comparing to other individuals. The wheel reminds me of two things: the wheel of fortune and the russian roulette. While playing tarot and observing this random non scientific information, it opens a new door about uncertainty and exploring this notion. This by the way is highly studied in probability and artificial intelligence as the machine has to estimate and define what is the error. The wheel of fortune represents a sphinx on top of a wheel where there is a monkey and a sacred dog. This wheel is firmly placed on the ground. And it has a crank left empty. The Sphinx asks questions that the monkey takes charge of to find the answers and the sacred dog takes his answers back to the Sphinx. The wheel itself symbolizes fate in its ups and downs.

The Wheel of Fortune arcane is an image of destiny that I feel constantly and right now in my life especially with this pandemic, job search, all this uncertainty that we are collectively living in the moment and the capitalist illusion of finding happiness through a good well paid job, with all the risks it can implied illusion, desillusion, exploitation (like my plasma donation being used in plastic surgery to a wealthy person face) and burn-out like I had in my past. One can spin the wheel in any direction he wishes. It also represents the vagaries of life, the events that happen with their share of positives. On the other side the russian roulette seems to point a gun on my brain, placing the muzzle against my head, and pulling the trigger, with the hope that the loaded chamber does not align with the primer percussion mechanism, having 5 out of 6 chance to survive and 1 out of 6 chance to be killed. Hope and being lucky is the only way to survive. This is why the importance of this wheel aspect and the different elements being put in my own wheel of fortune. The only person who can take care of my destiny is myself and it is important this is invoked through my own DNA.

The most important part of my artwork is to preserve the status of this bodily part as something heavenly, like a reliquary. It doesn't belong to me any more but it is part of nature and nature is sacred. From its constitution of bodily material it may thus have a strong smell. It is

¹⁹ et al. (2016) "Durable coexistence of donor and recipient strains after fecal microbiota transplantation". In: *Science* 352(6285)

crucial as well as something that can hardly be archived. We can draw a relationship between smell, colonisation and space as for example many animals use urine, and sometimes even faeces, sweat or their bodily part, to mark the area they consider to be theirs – their territory. Territory marking lets other animals of the same species know that a conspecific is present. It also communicates the reproductive status of the individual and their status rank according to the other species marking possession. Human civilization made smell redundant for food procurement or identifying enemies or understanding opposite sex. This might have led to the loss of appreciation and importance of smell in men. However, for humans there is a dichotomy into good and bad smells, and of course like beauty it is rather individual than collective. Smells also show hierarchy in public spaces. People who can mask their smell with a personalized perfume are in the highest class, but people who possess their stronger own smell are below in the hierarchy. The good smell of the bourgeoisie invades space and forces the people to be submissive. The bad smells of beggars, old people, children and drunk students pissing in the metro are offensive and should be banished. Smells are associated with anyone who has been devalued particularly because throughout history, olfactory stereotypes have been used to justify degradation and commanding to various groups. The high status (or position) is maintained at a certain cost, to be vulnerable to be affected by the classes below. I want through this artwork oppose this hierarchy and expose the installation as my own self-portrait, opening up questions about the barrier between my organism and my identity.



The wheel of Fortune - the Marseille's Tarot



Mauricio Suarez, IDENTIDAD, Self-portrait, 2018

Conclusion

An alchemical amulette made of my own bodily materials not only contains the magical powers that it could have, but it opens a lot of questions and debates especially on censorship of the artwork. Natural material and processes are part of ourselves and should be thought of as a material for purification and regeneration. Indeed, an abandoned part of my body stating my health at a certain period of my life is the most precious thing that maybe one day could awaken me from death. It opens the question of psychoanalysis about the status and the parallels between gold and filth. The ambiguity about something holy like we see in the reliques in churches in opposition to biobanks and hospitals, the modern castle where knowledge is kept in secret and is forbidden to get any information by strict rules. Spinning my roulette, made with my own flesh in a certain ways, shows how I have control over my health and my destiny, having sovereignty over every patriarchal health system, and actually opening the debate about our preservation and data and our own responsibility to archive this information, our own information. To go beyond, I want to leave behind my trace in the universe making me immortal, holy and eternal.

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Affected by the misfortune of the Pandemic, I have begun a research-based installation consisting of an alchemical amulet made with my own body materials in jars and tied to a wheel of fortune with wool and magic. This wheel is used for prediction and can bring good luck as well as bad luck. Natural materials and processes are a part of ourselves and should be considered as material for purification and regeneration. This wheel mainly serves as a biobank that keeps some parts of my body for eternity to demonstrate my state of health in a certain period of history during a world pandemic. By analysing the results of the different parts of my body, the visitor can get an answer and an interpretation of his deepest concerns.