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Communication and Feminist New Materialism:
Methodologies to understand the continuum between matter and discourse

Abstract: The relationship between literature and social networking sites (SNS) is a material context in which authors and readers merge into each other to create a literary communicative process that transforms contemporary politics. The aim of this paper is to analyse the communicative process by investigating the continuum between matter and discourse from a new materialist approach. From social sites, we can understand how elements, such as readers, authors, context, novels, culture and digital platforms, "intra-act" (Barad 2007) to create an affecting/ed communicative process. We propose feminist new materialism as a theoretical terrain that helps to reconfigure politics and communication in order to build a methodological framework for contemporary feminist politics and theory related to Literature. Using a digital genealogy and the theory of new materialism, we identify communication in literature as a trapping force in which different elements intra-act with each other and become indivisible. Affecting/ed communication is a dynamic conceptualization, a literary activity in which active agents participate in creative spaces for future social changes.

Keywords: Novel, co-creation, facebook, Feminist New Materialism, communication.

Kommunikation und Feminist New Materialism: Methodologien zum Verständnis des Kontinuums zwischen Materie und Diskurs

Zusammenfassung: Literatur generiert im Kontext Sozialer Netzwerke einen literarisch-kommunikativen Prozess, in dem Autor*innen und Leser*innen ununterscheidbar werden, sich verbinden – einen Prozess mit politisch transformativer Kraft. Ziel dieses Aufsatzes ist es, diesen kommunikativen Vorgang zu analysieren, indem das Kontinuum zwischen Materie und Diskurs aus der Perspektive des New Materialism betrachtet wird. Aus der Betrachtung Sozialer Netzwerke können wir verstehen, wie verschiedene Elemente, z.B. Leser*innen, Autor*innen, Kontext, Romane, Kultur und digitale Plattformen „intra-agieren" (Barad 2007) und dabei einen affektiven (affecting/ed) kommunikativen Prozess hervorbringen. Wir schlagen vor, die theoretische Grundlage des feministischen New Materialism als Hilfsmittel zur Neukonfigurierung von Politiken und Kommunikation zu nutzen, um zeitgenössischer feministischer Theorie und Politiken in Bezug auf Literatur ein methodologisches Gerüst zu geben. Indem wir uns digitaler Genealogien und der Theorie des New Materialism bedienen, identifizieren wir Kommunikationsprozesse in der Literatur als eine fesselnde Kraft, durch die verschiedene Elemente miteinander in Beziehung gesetzt und untrennbar verbunden werden. Affektive (affecting/ed) Kommunikation ist eine dynamische Konzeptualisierung, eine literarische Aktivität, bei der aktive Akteur*innen in kreativen Räumen an sozialen Veränderungen teilhaben.

Schlagwörter: Roman, Co-Gestaltung, facebook, Feminist New Materialism, Kommunikation.

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More than thirty years ago, Adrienne Rich (1986: 217) warned feminist theorists of one of the most important premises for the kind of research that we do: "if [theory] doesn't smell of the earth, it is not good for the earth". Currently, the political of New Materialism has been under intense scrutiny for being considered at times vague, at times nostalgic (Hemmings 2011). Nevertheless, considering that theory and practice should always be two sides of the same coin it looks like not enough critical, or rather empirical research following the approach of the Feminist New Materialism might be more suitable than former research approaches for achieving this objective. Feminist New Materialisms are an ethic-onto-epistemological trend of knowledge that attempts to intervene in different socio-cultural structures, that highlights unequal distributions of power through a monist approach, and that escapes from dualistic approximations to knowledge creation and circulation (van der Tuin 2015; Rogowska-Stangret 2017; Colman 2010).

When we think about contemporary society and current constructions of subjectivities, the area of social networking sites (SNS) comes to the forefront almost inescapably. SNS have become part of our daily basis to share and find specific information (be it personal preferences or professional interests). On these spaces/relations in the SNS, Feminist New Materialism is a matter of politics, a matter of location because of that looking for "genealogies of surprising futures" (van der Tuin 2015: 59) through an 'agential realism' (Barad 2007).

Thinking through the theoretical framework of agential realism in this context means a referential change in the object of study, a difference in the ontological configuration of the subjects to activate "a politics of the process" (Grosz 2005), instead of a politics of the results. This means that this analysis will focus on the relations between the different subjects through affinities and through the same affective forces that generate the processual ontology of communication, will obtain a series of differential patterns that produce differences in their relations. The application of new materialist politics situates empowering patterns outside of the relation between research and researcher while intra-acting with this relation. SNS are increasingly studied as digital interventions in society and culture at large. Therefore, taking into account that structures of power are changing towards a representational neo-liberal context (as it has always been), but renewing their mechanisms, and in trying to look for the political in New Materialism through constructions of subjectivities.

In this article, we propose Feminist New Materialism as a theoretical terrain that helps to reconfigure politics and communication in order to build a methodological toolbox for contemporary feminist politics and theory related to Literature. To situate the theory construction and materialization of politics (Haraway 1991), we chose Toni Morrison. She was the first black woman to obtain a nobel prize for "Beloved" while, at the same time, two of her books (precisely "Beloved" and "The Bluest Eye") can be found in the top ten list of banned books at North American public institutions in the last ten years. We address the relationship between Literature and SNS as a real context in which authors and readers merge with each other to create a literary communicative process (Revelles-Benavente 2014) that transforms contemporary politics.[1] A literary

communicative process created through SNS in which collective readings of specific novels placed in time and space where readers are able to respond and communicate with the author rereading her work. From this social site we can understand how elements such as readers, authors, context, novels, culture and digital platforms 'intra-act' to create an *affecting/ed communicative process*. The structure of this paper will firstly present a brief discussion on Literature and SNS, such as Facebook. Second, we will present the methodology and the case study that allows the articulation of this theoretical approach. Afterwards, we will provide an analysis of the materialization of communication through specific selected entries in Toni Morrison's official Facebook page dealing with the two aforementioned novels so that a theory-making construction of the politics of New Materialism can be built upon empirical data.

Social Networking Sites and Literature.

The transversality of SNS is the focus of much research in media studies, communication studies and cultural studies (Lincoln/Robards 2014; Zywica/Danawoski 2008; Uldam 2016; Larsson 2016; Klinger/Svensson 2015; Grace et al. 2015; Jin 2015; Schwartz/Halegoua 2014). Gillian Rose states that issues concerning the accessibility of technology matter because "the social site in which that technology is deployed and the different aspects of the cultural capital created there" (2001: 224). This capacity to use technologies and communicating strategies is not only a technological development but also "social sites and how ideas are shared in them" (ibid.), taking part in the development of variability and diversification of contents. Nevertheless, technology may also infer unequal structures of power, in which social oppression is created and reinforced.

In contemporary society, as much as every communicative act, literature has also been reshaped by technological solutions creating new literary genres, for example, "electronic literature" (Zaldibea/López-Varela 2014; Hayles 2008), or "fan fiction" narratives (Jenkins 2006; Rettberg 2005). However, from a scholar's point of view, the relationship between literature and Facebook has not yet been studied sufficiently. Tosca (2012) explores this relationship in order to dismantle traditionally hierarchical relations between authors and readers by claiming a more horizontal one. In this sense, Tosca (2012) builds a theoretical inquiry into the relationship between authors and readers without falling into the trap of categorizing elements of the act of reading as active and passive.

Thinking literature primarily as a communicative process implies the prioritization of one main dimension: the reading process, i.e. the way authors and readers relate to each other. The reading process has been traditionally identified as the ontological split between the text and the reader and, consequently, it has failed the nature of the reading process (Phelan 1997). Nevertheless, more recent approaches to the analysis of literature point towards different conceptualizations of this reading process. For instance, Das and Pavlícková claim that "the act of reading is selective and the potential text is infinitely richer than any of its individual realisations" (2014: 383).

The relation between Literature and the SNS is intra-relational insofar as it helps to disambiguate some aspects blurred in Toni Morrison's novels, the relation with the reader and the dis-location of space and time with them. In this sense, SNS offer a creative alternative in order to produce a differential relation of power based on a contemporary action: the collective readings of specific novels placed in a time and space where readers are able to respond and talk with the author and reread her work.

We argue that these *intra-relations* are produced via affects (Colman 2010), that intra-act between the writer and readers. In fact, as described in the analysis, affects are *relata* that produce indivisible bonds in all these participants of the communicative process of literature. Relata (Barad 2007) are those ontologically indivisible relations, between human and non-human elements, in which boundary-making (therefore meaning-making) and agenciality take place. They are affective because they are transversal, crossing every dimension of knowledge, the subject as individual and reality itself. Besides, they imply a substantial change in politics, methodology and pedagogy. According to van Doorn, "[b]y sharing their stories in these spaces, they [participants] create mediated memories that become socialized as digitally material artefacts which are durable as well as mutable, reflexive as well as performative" (2011: 541). Then, literature becomes a *mutable, reflexive and performative* instance of reality, since it becomes open to reworking on SNS.

Digital Genealogies

In order to explore how new materialist theories affect an understanding of the link between Literature and SNS as always already political we will develop a digital genealogy. According to Iris van der Tuin, "genealogies provide a window to the *surprising* futures that have been dreamt in past feminist expressions, since we are no longer deceived by narrow circumscriptions of them originating in classificatory accounts." (2015: 59, emphasis of the author) Genealogies allow a contemporary reconfiguration of historically established canons in academia, which, more often than not, respond to certain biases that materialize according to specific interests (González Ramos/Revelles-Benavente 2017). Literary Studies have been profoundly interested in the changing notions of the literary object in the course of literary history (Eagleton 2012). A history that has been "His-Story" for many years as the Nobel Prizes awards demonstrates (50 years celebrating the Literary Nobel Prize, which has been won by women only 8 times).

According to van der Tuin, "genealogies divert from strictly referential approaches because their focus is on the very moment of creating innovative concepts." (2015: 59) Equally, Toni Morrison herself explains in *Playing in the Dark* that "[she] wanted to identify those moments when American literature was complicity in the fabrication of racism, but equally important [she] wanted to see when literature exploded and undermined it" (1992: 16). Likewise, an innovative moment in the intra-action between Literature and contemporary

politics disrupts a traditional approach to literature as a passive object that prioritizes either the point of view of the reader (Phelan 1994), the piece of work under revision (compendiums like the Norton Anthology for English Language) or the author. This, as Grosz affirms, makes it impossible to definitively answer the question if literature can be feminist or not (1995). Classifying a piece of literary art as feminist would point to the conflicting claims of what exactly makes the artwork feminist: the sex of the author, the sex of the reader, (or) the content of the novel? (ibid.)

Here, Feminist New Materialism helps dismantle some of these paradoxes if we think of these elements as *affective intra-actions*. Affects are relational forces (Colman 2010; Bargetz 2014; Sullivan 2001) that materialize historical contextual forces under the frame of feelings (Bargetz 2014; Ahmed 2004). However, this historicity implied in feelings does not imply a concrete definition of a particular feeling even if situated in a concrete element (such as a particular novel or an entry in the social networking sites) (Ahmed 2004); rather, historicity is the embrace of all complexity (van der Tuin 2015: 76), a complexity that becomes materialized in a particular discourse through thinking past, present and future as a 'quantum entanglement' (Barad 2010). Barad defines "quantum" in relation to movement as "a measure of the *discretness of nature* [that] troubles the very notion of *dicho-tomy* – the cutting into two – itself." (ibid, 246 [author's emphasis]). To understand the inseparability of our measuring practices (that of the SNS and the novels themselves) implies understanding what kind of affective forces, communicative processes, materialize change for feminist politics. Besides, it also entails diffracting (reading through each other) the different physical contexts that are involved in these two measuring agencies (novels and SNS).

Looking at Morrison's official Facebook page, we find debates with specific quotes from her novels, sparking hundreds of comments through which different readers share their opinions and affects. Banning the above mentioned novels from public institutions (libraries and high schools) is clearly a manifestation of how hegemonic discourse gets rid of 'uncomfortable' *her*stories. That is, by using illustrative examples from SNS that relate to these two novels, we will materialize this digital genealogy with diffractive patterns so that we can explain new materialist politics and differing subjectivities with an alternative literary object. In Barad's words, "a diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the *effects* of difference appear." (Barad, 2007: 172 [author's emphasis]). In illustrating different moments of what we consider to be an *affecting communication*, we will build up an intra-action between literature and society.

Affecting Communication through Social Networking Sites

The relationship between Literature and SNS transverses different spaces and times by offering a dynamic process in which multiple elements take place. One of the elements participating in this dynamic process is the context that we understand as an active part of the process engaging diverse possibilities of *affecting/ed communication*. Affecting communication refers to a capturing force in which different elements relate and become indivisible. It is a dynamic conceptualization, especially of a literary activity, in which active agents move in creative spaces for future social changes. This communication is affecting particular changes in the conceptualization of Literature, SNS and all the participants in this relation, while, at the same time, it is affected by these participants. Facebook, as a primary SNS, can be considered a theoretical laboratory for its users, where the authors are able to communicate with their readers in order to illuminate new recreations of their work. As Barad claims:

> If the goal is to think the social and the natural together, to take account of how both factors matter (not simply to recognize that they both do matter), then we need a method for theorizing the relationship between "the natural" and "the social" together without defining one against the other or holding either nature or culture as the fixed referent for understanding the other. (2007: 30)

In other words, we use "the social" and "the natural" as a figuration (Haraway 1988) that catalyzes a material understanding for SNS (as a social component intervening in what was already written, novels) and literature (as a traditionally/natural canonization of a knowledge that has been hierarchically constructed). Thus, elements that have been rarely paired to serve as measuring agencies to each other, are producing affective relata, they are becoming ontologically inseparable. Neither Morrison's novels, nor her official Facebook page, can be understood as a fixed referent to understand each other.

Taking into account that one of the requirements for understanding Morrison's work is the active participation of the reader (Morrison 1992), Facebook provides this *agential* context (Barad 2007) in which readers intra-act simultaneously. At the same time, Facebook physicality and its structure provide a space of open possibilities that move towards a common understanding of Morrison's novels, although it cannot avoid the limits of this site (the physical distribution of the news, the requirements to "friend" people, the language with which this Facebook page is constructed). These limits are also an active part that matters in our research and creates boundaries that enact literary works and political meanings (although they cannot be displayed in this paper for reasons of space).

The Materiality of Language in Toni Morrison's Work

In this section, we develop the materiality of language, which, methodologically speaking, entails the pursuit of affective performances of language relating to both digital platforms and traditional literature. These affective performances of language determine the agency of bodies (socially, theoretically and materially constructed) in which political transformation occurs only when considering differing intra-actions. In order to prove this, we will use the novels "Beloved" and "The Bluest Eye", and her official Facebook website as starting points. This affectively materializes controversies and paradoxes from the micro-structures revealed in North American politics. Morrison's work clearly depicts how the contemporary situation of black females is deeply rooted in a past that depends on the present, and vice versa.

Looking at these three starting points, we will analyse how "affect becomes a force of social *indeterminacy* that offers the opportunity for us to look at what is, imagine what could be instead, and grasp that this 'instead' is always already happening." (Bakko/Merz 2015: 8 [author's emphasis]). In order to 'grasp' affects, we will relate genealogies coming from Literary Studies to Morrison's novels and to the digital platforms in order to shed light upon which communicative concepts affect determined preconceived subjectivities and transform them into relational affective indeterminacies with the capacity of producing social transformations.

These two different entry points (the novels and the Facebook page) have to do with one quote from "The Bluest Eye". To illustrate that the historicity of subject formation can be considered another entry point to this analysis, we have chosen a quote that explains how "Beloved" was based upon a real black woman. A third point of entry has to do with the intra-action between the novel and the platform (so that we have chosen a quote that is originally from the novel "Beloved" and then taken up on the platform). These beforementioned entry points are empirical pillars to build a Feminist New Materialist approach to communication that helps to understand how literature and society are mutually dependent on each other, that is, theory smelling of the earth. In addition, these compose the digital genealogy of Morrison as a writer and the relation between past, present and future of material-discursive practices permeating contemporary society.

In order to clarify our in-depth analysis of the material discourse of this Facebook page, we should consider that the materiality of language has two different, albeit mutually dependent, elements. These two elements provide a methodology to understand what Critical Feminist Materialisms (or a Feminist New Materialism) provide regarding power dynamics and how to analyze them in a concrete situated context. These elements provide features and characteristics of the materiality of language or, in other words, features to analyze material-discursive practices in order to understand how different mechanisms of power materialize hierarchies.

1. Diverting love: focusing on how.

This Facebook entry was posted on the 28th of November, 2017. It also belongs to the novel *Love*,

> Love is never any better than the lover. Wicked people love wickedly, violent people love violently, weak people love weakly, stupid people love stupidly, but the love of a free man is never safe. There is no gift for the beloved. The lover alone possesses his gift of love. The loved one is shorn, neutralized, frozen in the glare of the lover's inward eye. (Toni Morrison 2017)

The post received 1 million reactions and 44 comments. All comments have to do with how much the readers love the artist and how 'true' this feeling is, as well as the need to reread this particular novel. By linking the artist, the Facebook page, the novels and the individual experiences of each participant on the Facebook page, the birth of a collective strategy for social movement is being initiated. The body of the artist becomes a political threshold where many different intra-actions come together. Thus, it is important to consider the writer's body as a cartography of intra-actions and not as a human body with absolute agency. In this sense, we are suggesting a new materialist analysis of how to understand bodies and their relation with power.

The most frequently repeated comment of the actors interacting on Facebook is "so true". It becomes "true" for one of the most famous quotes used by Morrison ("I get angry about things, go on and work") and also for understanding fans' expressions. Moreover, that readers tend to understand their embodied experiences through the characters appearing in her novels produces a *truthful effect* in the act of reading. Following Cuttler (2000: 61), narratives always move toward an end determined not only by the author but also by the reader. This is a common end for any novel independent of the multiplicity implied in their readings.

Readers tend to avoid rereadings and that is why, when the end is complex, they pick one scenario. However, with the birth of this "Facebook" form of communication multiple entries point out that depending on the writer, at least, this process of re-reading may even be prompted. (We will see this in the following example). The engagement with the text becomes an iterative reworking and the pressure inflected in the novel affectively differs according to the affinities expressed by the readers in the digital platform. One of the most frequently repeated instances was "I need to re-read it" or "time for a re-read". This does not prevent the readers or the characters from looking for "provisional truths". The truth is hurtful but everyone should know it, so that knowledge, as well as power, can be shared, in order to disrupt oppressive systems. This does not necessarily mean that readers are wrong or whatever they are reading is not true. It means that the relationship between literature and SNS conveys multiple truths that co-exist, in order to provide differing meanings.

Regarding the definition of love, we can see how this particular affect materializes "the small dramas of the every day, [which] are not only shaped by

current but also by past relations of power, as well as by modes of power and exploitation that one may not have personally experienced […,] drawing attention taken-for-granted and thus nearly invisible forms of power." (Bargetz 2014: 295) On this occasion, the subject affecting/ed becomes automatically oppressor and oppressed at the same time. Besides, since it is a mutually dependent feeling (there is no lover without a loved one), they become oppressor by imposition while oppressed by the same system. Here, love becomes a diverting starting point so that a non-hierarchical relation can be produced between subjects. Warning about the consequences that a literal understanding of love might have for individuals, Morrison implores her readers, her characters and her contemporary society to situate this particular feeling in context so that we can transform this affect from individual to relation. This affect does not exist outside the relation and when we take it for granted, an absence of agency or possibility to become subjects appears in the surface. That is, we need to look for the intra-action between past and present in order to find surprising futures (van der Tuin 2015).

2. *Intra-acting reading and writing, becoming political*

> In January 1856, a young black woman named Margaret Garner killed her two-year-old daughter with a butcher knife, wounded her two other children, and was prepared to kill herself to avoid being sold back into slavery. There is no known plaque that commemorates Margaret's life, no public artifact that seeks to remember the desperate actions she took to retain some form of autonomy over her persecuted black life and that of her kin. In 1987, over a century and a half after her act of self-reclamation, American author Toni Morrison wrote *Beloved*, a novel inspired by Garner. (Morrison 2017)

This entry was posted on the 9th of September, 2017 and it has 6.5 millios of reactions, 664 shares on other pages and over 150 comments. Beloved has had a global impact, not only because it won the Pulitzer Prize for Ficiton and its author the Nobel Prize for Literature, but also because it was the subject of much analysis in Literary Studies. These analyses mainly focus on the relationship between mother and daughter, since Beloved is 'supposedly' the materialization of Sethe's (the main character's) dead daughter (Hirsch 1984; Mock 1996; Cutler 2000; Eckard 2002; O'Relly 2004; Gallego 2011, among others). Nevertheless, Beloved is much more than the presence (or absence) of love in a relationship between mother and daughter. Other literary critiques have focused on subject formation (Boudreau1995; Fuston-White 2002) or history and memory (Mogle 1993; Barnes 1998).

A novel is multiple and in itself a differing approach that creates innovative concepts, that is, each novel can in itself be its own genealogy (van der Tuin 2015). These different literary entry points exploit the nature of the literary object. Depending on the selection of quotes, depending on the researcher and how and when they have read the novel, the approximation changes. Nevertheless, these different entry points also depart from the preconceived

assumption that the literary critic holds the knowledge-power to decide what the influence of literature upon contemporary society is.

In intra-acting Literature and SNSs we can look for the aforementioned digital genealogy. Coming back to the entry on Margaret Garner on the Facebook page, we can find the following reply: "I recently visited the new Smithsonian African-American museum, and there is recognition of Margaret Garner there. Among other things, they have a framed newspaper story on the killings. Morrison is of course recognized in the museum" (Miller 2017). Grosz (1995) maintains that the body becomes the socio-political threshold in which matter and discourse merge. Then, we can anticipate the political view in the relation between the reading and the writing. Through these excerpts, it can be seen how an *ethical respond-ability* that implies the ability to take responsibility for something and to respond to social injustices (Haraway 2008) is produced between the author, her characters and her readers in this communicative process. In this instance, Literature has actively produced a material consequence that infers divergenting patterns in North American society, which is what really matters for the Facebook readers, or followers. Taking into account the magnitude of Facebook reactions, shares and comments, we can say that a significant sample of people are *affecting*, that is self-transforming during the relation itself, different relations that have to do with the necessity to alter the present by bringing the embodied past through the intra-action between Garner's body and Morrison's work.

The Facebook page dislocates the process and turns it into multiple networks/slides in which intra-actions are constantly being produced. The process is not linear, but multiplicating and interferring its own development. The following quote, taken from the same novel and posted on the Facebook page on the 21st of November, 2016, follows the contemporary reading of *Beloved* and highlights how it constructs divergent subjectivities

> There is a loneliness that can be rocked. Arms crossed, knees drawn up, holding, holding on, this motion, unlike a ship's, smooths and contains the rocker. It's an inside kind – wrapped tight like skin. Then there is the loneliness that roams. No rocking can hold it down. It is alive. On its own. A dry and spreading thing that makes the sound of one's own feet going seem to come from a far-off place. (Morrison 2016)

This loneliness has been defined in literary research as the absence or presence that "Beloved" materializes in the relationship between mother and daughter (see the literary review before mentioned). Nevertheless, there are other starting points which conceive of this loneliness as an affect that exceeds, an intensive force that materializes certain intra-actions driving social change, the corporealization of the ghost of "Beloved" being its maximum exponent. An example of this is Christopher Peterson who claims:

> The mourning that can be contained, rocked and wrapped up inside one's skin is contrasted to a mourning that roams, that cannot be rocked or held down, that spreads beyond the borders of the self-contained body. This illimitable mourning corresponds to a plurality of Beloveds, the 'sixty million and more' to whom Morrison dedicates the novel. […] Yet 'Beloved' also signifies a generalizability that exceeds the (one) body of the daughter. (2006: 558-9)

The skin becomes the material surface in which everything intra-acts, either by presence or absence.

Nevertheless, for Facebook readers, this quote reads in a completely different way. Without taking for granted the "small dramas" (echoing Bargetz 2014), a very crucial fact happened two weeks before this entry was posted: the presidential elections in the United States. That is why, in the responses offered by the Facebook readers, one can read the following:

> A racist rant against white people... So sad. Hillary the criminal lost because the Democrats have abandoned the white working class of Middle America for the minority-based politics of Black Lives Matters, Transgender bathroom access, and sanctuary cities for criminal illegal aliens. That is why your party lost. (Cihomsky 2016)

Clearly, a very racist comment that completely goes against any kind of message that Morrison is spreading in her novels, without any kind of rational argument only to justify a loss of the Democrats in the elections. This kind of discourse responds perfectly to the polarization of the dichotomies via the above mentioned economy of fear (Ahmed 2004). Fear of Trump provokes the surface of racism in its most vivid expression, intra-acting with class and gender. Nevertheless, this comment does not go unnoticed and it is fiercefully punished by Facebook users:

> Cry me a river with your poor oppressed white folks tears. I'm so damn tired of you no accountability accepting bigots. Try something new, be introspective. Examine your own bullshit for once in your sorry ass existence!! (Vicente 2016)

The debate goes on and on for a long time and with many comments. What remains clear is one thing: here, "affect is the matter in us responding and resonating with the matter around us" (O' Sullivan 2001: 128). By extension, and exceeding its literary purposes, literature becomes the agitating platform to activate the political.

Conclusions

In this article we have defined digital communication as a *processual* line of research that understands language as an affective intra-action with different properties that help understand how material-discursive practices are materially performing from a feminist new materialist angle. These processes have been highlighted as mutually dependent on each other. When participating in this kind of communication – shared in SNS – the participants transform their bodies, in order to intra-act with computers and to create relating selves intra-acting with each other. This type of intra-action primarily means two important things: the multiplicity of the relationship between the reader and the writer, and the significant change in the nature of both literature and SNS. It has produced ontological shifts in the areas explored so far. The literary object has turned out to be the intra-action between different elements partaking in the relation between readers, writers, socio-political context, digital platforms, novels, etc. SNS have been configured as the materialization of affective dislocations, subverting traditional meanings attached to these digital platforms. That is, they become the communicative performance of politics and gender, while, at the same time, they transform themselves into experimental laboratories where knowledge becomes power. Referring to Facebook as an experimental laboratory here is illustrated by the multiple iterative workings that society brings to the novels. Through SNS, the literary product becomes invented over and over since, as many participants have stated, every time they re-read the novel it is a different one.

This paper has displayed the importance of thinking about communication as an open-ended practice that allows political interventions in societies and a referential shift from closed categories, or properties to dynamic processes constantly defining themselves. It is also a methodological approximation so that we can understand how concepts such as identities, bodies, agencies and power are performed in the continuum between material and discursive practices. Feminist New Materialisms provide interdisciplinary frameworks in order to illustrate the multiplicity and dynamicity of matter, while reconfiguring politics, gender and communication in the making.

The materiality of language in Morrison's work is unquestionable but it is not the unique determining factor in itself; it is instead necessary to understand its role in the process of intra-action between bodies, places, times and subjectivities, producing affects that are empirically accessible through feelings. Communication is always gendered and raced and, therefore, language is always political. Likewise, it affects a particular subject construction that is, at the same time, intra-acting past, present and future in order to shed light upon social injustices. Intra-acting literature and SNS enables a platform in which reflections coming from feminist new materialist theories alter how we approach the literary object itself (theoretically) and also, how literature embeds and affects contemporary society (politically). Power dynamics become materially alive and visible depending on different forces and on how they relate with particular subjects (intra-acting between Morrison's characters and Facebook readers).

Proposing a digital genealogy allows us to empirically sustain theories of Feminist New Materialisms that convene diverting entry points in which hierarchical structures of knowing and power become unstable and slippery. In the intra-relation between gender, sexuality, memories, and bodies, texts permeate the socio-political threshold that configures the body, exceeding the categorization of gender or race as a static one and moving towards them as affected/ing intra-actions.

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Remarks

1 The sample chosen to sustain the empirical part of this article has been obtained from Revelles-Benavente's PhD thesis „Literature, Gender and Communication in the Making: Understanding Toni Morrison's work in the Information Society" defended at Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, December 2014. http://openaccess.uoc.edu/webapps/o2/handle/10609/43763.

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