

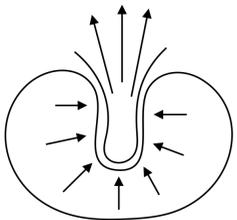
PETROFEMINISM

Bodies of oil and pools of discharge

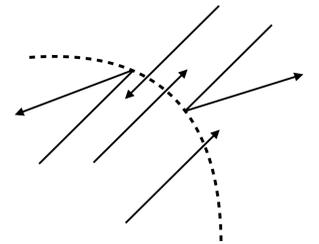
"From oily glands to oily world, we are bodies smeared with oil. Dripping grease, leaking pus, secreting goo and oozing tallow."

All bodies depend on oils for their survival – from the microscopic level to the global – oily regions function as molecular barriers sustaining and regulating structures. Creating separation between two bodies; articulating differences between conditions; formulating the margins according to which one identifies their own being. Without oils we would lose any sense of self and breach our own boundaries, eradicate the concept of personal integrity, let anything invade our private parts and uproot societal arrangements like nation states, hierarchies and infrastructures.

On a molecular level, oils perform this division through their hydrophobicity in a watery world. A hydrophobe, like oil, is simply repelled from any mass of water by the absence of attraction – water has polarity while oil tends to be neutral. Hydrophobicity as a physical property poses as a permanent condition of segregation; a law of nature born out of separation and a molecular need for some kind of structure. Oils as such form a strong enough barrier to prevent two thirsty, wet entities from totally absorbing each other through attraction. A demarcation of fluidity which brings to our attention the constant opposition of water and fat in our bodies as a vital condition.



Inside of mammals this is performed by oily pores and glands, organs which function as thresholds for that which goes in and comes out from the body. The sebaceous glands are biochemical producers that manufacture oily fluids and fatty material known as sebum to waterproof the body, lubricate any surface and manage the complex network for hormonal control. On the outside of the mammal the ability of the skin to shed water suggests that it is intrinsically hydrophobic, resisting intermingling and dissolution. These oily properties suggest some kind of barricaded individualism where the entity is defined by its conscious and active perimeters – slowly expanding itself though scalability from skin to boundaries to barricaded borders and politics.



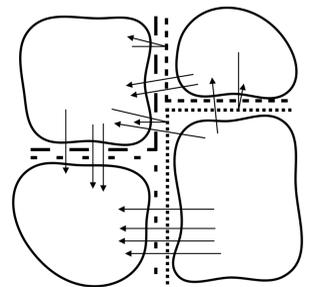
During any intra-human interactions our, mostly consensual, waterproofing constructs a protective layer obstructing unlimited exchange – defining biochemical restrictions for intercourse; forming an oily separation of mother and child during pregnancy; raising a saliva repellent protection during conversation. The consensual separation is rather straightforward, substances carefully examined and rated by glands and skins of all participants to deem them intrusive, hazardous or desirable. Any non-consensual division arises when the assessment is uneven or invasive, disrespecting or overly protecting the need for separation. Some saliva might be disgusting but devoid of threats and harmful substances.

On a global scale oily regions manifest separation in borders and physical division. Industry, storage and infrastructure provide some kind of intuitive, but highly politicised, deterritorialization and segregation of populations – a societal representation of hydrophobic isolation. Lines drawn with pipelines or borders in an all to telling geography of need and greed. These global separations, just like any other gland, functions as thresholds, gates or checkpoints where only some things are let in and out to serve the most dominant participant.



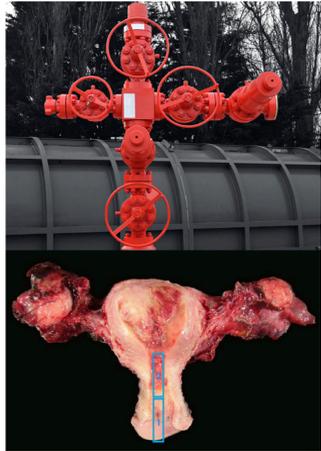
Gas and hydrogen pipelines and Migration Routes between Africa and Europe

As such, to be an oily body is to simultaneously exist due to actual separation and the cultural connotations of that term. We as barricaded individuals are not on the one hand defined by oil through intrapersonal and societal division while on the other hand primarily sustained by oily systems inside and outside of our bodies; we are both of these things, inextricably and at once sustained by internal or external separation but made comprehensible by discursive categorisations into singular embodiments.



To rethink embodiment and societal definition as inherently oily is to suggest that identification is performed through limitations, boundaries, skins and surfaces. We are not solely defined by either our substance or context but the constant exchange between them – enacted through glands, infrastructures, politics of division and segregating systems. Our oily matter is immersed

in a constant process of intake, transformation, and exchange. Always consuming, buying, burning, smearing or lubricating to uphold current systems of separation whether it be capitalism, individualism, industrialism, globalism, colonialism or geography.



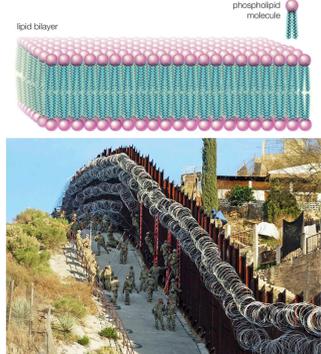
Wellhead and Uterus

To be a body of oil in this context is to actively or passively sustain and express these boundaries; to willingly leak, to violently secrete, to intensely erupt, to indifferently exclude or any other mix or intentionality and transgression. In this world our borders are constantly exposed to rupture and renegotiation, especially towards the intrusion of other oily substances; the only thing capable of passing through hydrophobic barriers. Given these vital but fragile systems of separation together with the anthropogenically exacerbated oil crises that our planet currently faces – from spillage and shortage to emissions and chronic contamination – these crucial systems of division are made vulnerable by ecological degradation, where certain boundaries necessarily need to be sustained to hinder radical collapse and violation. Crude oil when spread too generously across the planet's surface threatens all other oily barriers like skin and cellular membranes with its intrusion. The perfect amount of oil must be in balance with the amount of water, posing both as its counterpart and kin, inevitability linked through hydrophobicity. Consequently any consideration towards oily relations within a more-than-human petro-hydro-commons presents a challenge to anthropocentrism by proclaiming every single boundary as of importance and positing oil as actively expressed both within and outside of human bodies.



Oil spill and Stab wound

Separation from other oily entities is a lesson of survival – an enacted responsibility enforced by shared materiality – performed to respect boundaries and difference. On the molecular scale this demands us to restrain rampant emission and hinder chemical imbalance. On the intra-human level this means to respect personal space and accept individual expression. On the global plane this requires an addressal of the politics of separation which enables powerful nation states to draw borders with pipelines, racism and artificial differentiation to create cultural and economical segregation. All of the above points to a critical investigation of all types of barriers, of finding their weak point and understanding that it would mean to breach them.



Lipid membrane and Border fence

Petrofeminism

Petrofeminism attains its political potential through division, any oily separation, not by inducing rifts and ruptures but by examining oily regions and their physical properties: the molecular separation of hydrophobicity; the personal identity earned by skin and lubrication; the geographical segregation enabled by oil-filled infrastructure. This is not to say that the theory lacks potential, it just simply performs politics by exposing the physical foundation of contemporary structures (like segregation or lubrication) and then suggesting a material re-orientation based on the chemical properties of the molecular, intra-human and the global to enable political rearrangement. To begin with we need to establish what a politics of separation like petrofeminism attempts to do other than positioning oil as something as vital as water in the realm of the more-than-human petro-hydro-common.

Politics of separation define 'politics' as the force which decides over the conceptual framework of "the inside and the outside" based on the acknowledgment of known boundaries, subconscious categorisation and unconscious aversion. Superficially it can seem to emerge as in conflict with itself, posing as a highly normative claim somewhat similar to western individualism. But to radically accept

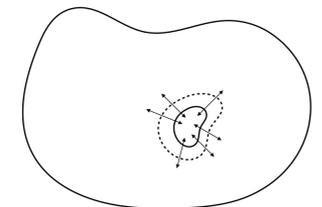
the singularity within each and every one of us escapes any definition performed by categorisation, even that of individualism. Therefore the politics of separation simply uses this conflict as a point of departure, a fixed basis in the contemporary culture it inevitably has to separate itself from in its continuation. Pushed to its philosophical limit, politics of separation recognises the impossibility of defining anything outside of the singularity defined by oily regions and hydrophobic barriers and radically rejects even survival, evolution, development and progress due to their rigid categorisation.

It is easy to misinterpret petrofeminism as an ideology which simply obeys western norms and capitalistic hierarchies by proposing gendered redistribution of fossil fuels, "girl power on an industrial scale" and female empowerment. A petrologic continuation of thought and matter where the separation of states and phases are meaningful and transitional in its linear evolution of detachment; "we are now at this point of equality because we have left that primitive point behind". A political agenda performed through the idea of chronology and development. But why should the petrofeminist politics of separation stop at gendered categories and not make endless distinctions within them? We should rather interpret petrofeminism as a critical perspective on petrocultures, highlighting any tendencies which favour uneven embodiment and identification with oily regions – questioning who is allowed to cover an acne prone face with makeup and pass through the gates in the fence surrounding an oil well. Petrofeminism tries to reveal which aspects of oily separation that are tiresomely overused to validate infrastructure and which ones that are ignored in favour of political convictions. The aim is to interpret separation as a natural condition but not as a fixed category fully accessible through ideology.



Pipe stab and Power pumping

Accordingly petrofeminism points to any feministic potential within oil, industry, consumption and separation without distinguishing degrees of usefulness; it is more of a suggestion with certain nodes for radicalism or repulsion to latch onto. So let's think of petrofeminism as a specific type of attention, born out of chemical circumstances, travelling up the scale of consciousness to finally reach the possibility of developing a distinct form of awareness of how things can exist in proximity without hierarchal incorporation – the most powerful, no matter its size, should not simply consume and invade its surroundings through posthuman ideology or radical collapse. We as fleshy carriers need to consider the importance of the distinction between the inside and the outside and reflect upon how our boundaries tend to hold things in relation. We have not consumed the microbes in our bellies to simply merge their flesh with ours, we have let them pass our oil barriers for equal gain. To respect others' boundaries is to acknowledge that our own separation also needs to be respected. That we can only endure as singular entities if we are able to define our limits and maintain our integrity.



Baby bump and Oil pocket

Oil suggests this scalable singularity to us clearly in our surroundings: how it shifts shape, colour and consistency according to its environment; how it flows through living tissues somewhat cohesively; how it has the ability to distort seemingly (f)-rigid systems into something impressionable and metamorphic. Oil remains oil in this way throughout changeable conditions and shifting demand due to its neutrality. Like any other fatty material, oil lacks polarity, its singular embodiment poses as indistinguishable from its surrounding, attracting no further attention than through its volume and physicality. We need to rethink singularity and separation accordingly, as an inevitable condition born out of materiality. This type of oily embodiment thus presents a challenge to three different traditional feminist understandings of corporeality by: questioning anthropocentrism through the similarities between pregnancy and oil formation; distorting phallogocentrism by activating lubrication and overloading individualism with separation.

Pregnancy

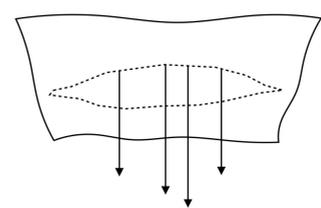
In a famous metaphor we compare the planet to a childbearing woman: Mother Earth, Mother Nature or Earth Mother are all verbal personifications of nature as nurturing and life-giving. This functions both as a divine representation and as a narrative iteration, constantly repeated across the planet's surface. The trope mimics all placentas, peat or organic material that are constantly swelling, growing and transforming – creating bumps or raising the seabed by force, obliged, convinced in separation. A clear boundary of motherly division; a maternal necromancy of things we do not yet deem living; a maternal transformation of assembling new life from old substance.



Pregnancy and Oil formation

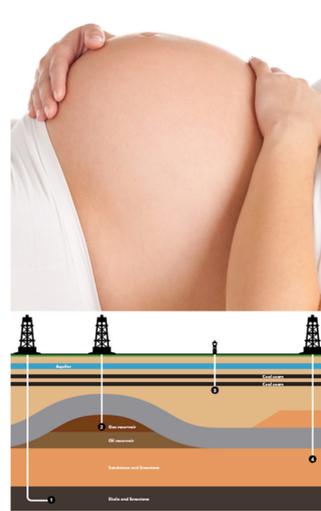
To situate the concept of 'a pregnant Mother Earth' within our industrialising structures we need to approach it through the framework of 'petrosexuality' to be able to further evaluate what this anthropomorphism evokes in contemporary culture. Petrosexuality as a theoretical concept traces and exposes the simultaneous invention of the term heterosexuality and the implementation of

the steam engine in the 18th century and exposes how the two have come to rely on each other. In this specific context the term helps us to position the act of extraction in a more ambiguous state than mere penetrative exploitation thus when the drill breaches the surface, oil, water, goo and mud always willingly come gushing out through the opening in an industrial enactment of heterosexual intercourse and normative gender dynamics. This simple metaphor confirms the claim of a pregnant Mother Earth' by the planet's culturally ascribed position as an orifice but adds a vague notion of agency to all participants.



But the similarities between materials, the planet and our bodies do not stop there: to be given something randomly out of an opening – whether it is a child, breastmilk, natural resource or an orgasm – is to experience magical (re)-production through mysterious means of creation and obscured ecological implications. It is the ultimate act of care when someone opens their oily barriers and allows a grand exchange between the inside and the outside to occur. Consequently both cuts and the planet serve the same self-sacrificing purpose for capitalistic accumulation of resources and bodies through their unpaid, mystical effort. A fossil capitalism erected upon the foundation of free resources and almost free reproduction of the workforce emerging from Mother Earth's crust or the hole of any mother.

To propose similarities between pregnancy and oil formation is to radically question anthropocentrism, wonder at the mystery of matter and embrace the events of carbonic decomposition or growth as fragile processes that only can occur in confined areas during the right conditions and then be delivered through the opening of a barrier. Some kind of biological unconscious shaping uteruses and oil pockets into resemblance by forming lipid oily membranes in living tissue to protect cells, fetuses, substances and organs from unwanted intrusion. The constant state of separation and its generosity enacted by fragile human reproduction and molecular attraction. In the age of "the oil barrel theory of action" where we currently find ourselves surrounded by pipelines, storage and combustible progress this amounts to lines drawn between the bodies that can contain confined (re)-production like pregnancy and those which can not, useless for the nation state and boundless in their identity. To be pregnant is to be a valuable carrier bag of capitalism; to enact relationality between the inside and the outside in a more conscious and active sense than merely through chemical properties.



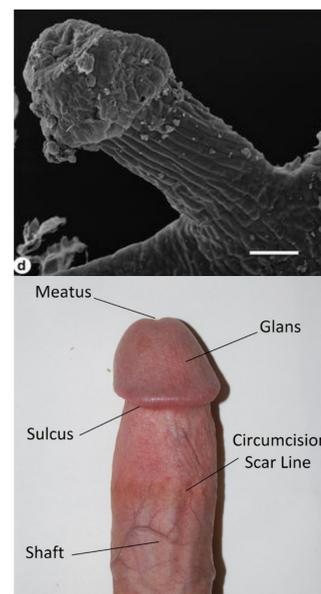
Baby bump and Oil pocket

In this context petrofeminism performs politics on the one hand through this comparison of the amniotic sac surrounding the foetus to oil formation and on the other hand by interpreting increased sebum production during birth as a source of inspiration for, or an inherent inclination towards, fossil capitalism. During delivery extra lubrication is secreted around the vagina and on the baby's head to make the procedure more slippery and separate. Enabling an easier passage through the birth canal by compensating for a big brain with a greasy, acne prone face and head. In this sense, oil, and every iteration of that substance, has made increased (re)-production and growth based societal trajectories available for humanity. More oil during certain procedures equals progress, development and a bigger population. Politics of separation must therefore elevate birth and resource extraction as the ultimate acts of division and treat them accordingly; as moments when humanity, societal trajectories and individualism is indefinitely defined.

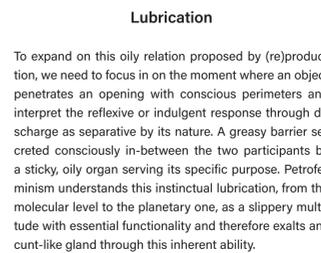


Birth and Blowout

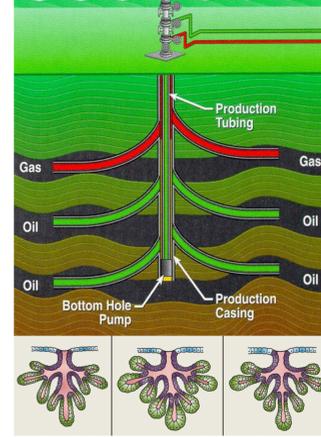
To speak of these processes in the same manner is not to simplify them through comparison and suggest geological empathy through anthropomorphism but rather an enunciation of the importance of separation and barriers in certain formation. An eradication of anthropocentrism by extending seemingly human features to non-living processes and expanding exploitation by likeness. By rejecting once again any notion of female empowerment to instead wonder at the miracle of life and investigate the discourse around any entity categorised as female and the value we extract from within them, we move beyond any representational politics of gendered extraction and arrive at a type of feminism which is based upon an unlearning principle where we are forced to leave things alone in an otherwise constantly extractive culture.



Oil gland in leaf and Human penis



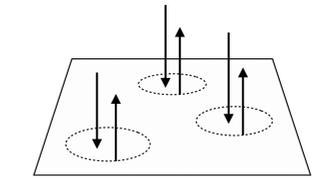
Lubrication



Oil well and Oil gland

The gendered division based upon the amount of lubrication our genitalia secretes is both a cultural categorisation based upon genital abilities (think about the difference in how we sexualise vaginal discharge and sebum-filled ejaculation) and an inherent connection between our lubricous glands and hormones (to which we tend to ascribe gendered characteristics). In this manner lubrication both makes intercourse wet n' slippery and plays a part in defining sexuality even when disregarding categorisations like sex and gender.

The aim of any petrofeminist trajectory is therefore to make visible the current trinity system of man - women - oil and then wreck it by inserting lubrication as a factor of power and enabler of further division. This is done by reinterpreting lubrication into something more complex than sheer responsiveness, to highlight the very vital role it plays in sustaining human continuance by forming the system, upholding the system, caring for the system and adding smoothness or ease to the system. Lubrication binds together all separatist inclinations brought about by hydrophobicity, politics of separation and primordial division – whether that disposition is expressed as a sexual lubricant, lotion for the skin, grease in an engine, resource for production or enabler of a certain structure.



As a critique of phallogocentrism, which tends to proclaim the cock as singular and the cunt as absorbent, petrofeminism points to the lubricating properties of penetration through ejaculation and the penetrative traits of lubrication where vaginal discharge push itself through other oily barriers. Thereby distorting a gendered division through a molecular condition. But politics are not as simple as they can first seem when oily excitement could point to posthumanism, but rather express biological and chemical separation through disgust and aversion. A general lipid capacity of oily division which extends embodiment in time when it crawls somewhat intact and unaltered from body to barrel to pools of discharge and then back again. Performing a quite literal display of a chemical property extending beyond both society, context and anthropocentrism. The question is not whether different species matter but rather what constitutes the foundation of existence. Think of it as a material transcendence, where shapeshifting enables our substance to relate to any tissues or condition everywhere, always.

Lubricating reflexes exceed humanity, it reminds us that we are part of something vaster and smaller, an oily trajectory extending itself backwards and forwards in time through molecular and planetary division. How all bodies are separated entities, defined by their different from other places, bodies, environments and technologies. Our genitals speak of this division and our fragile existence by introducing the porous condition, the constant negotiation of characteristics, in need of lubricated protection. Something which defines an outside and an inside in an intrusive environment; a separating force that constitutes all entities as petrosystems, thus making our bodies of oil not stagnant but separated, wrapped up in some kind of impermeable sac of skin, smeared with grease and sebum. Dangerously submerged in the movement of water, time and trends but forced to fend for ourselves to sustain and create separation.

The Hidden Rainbow

So far we've performed a valorisation of vaginal secretion and a detachment of lubrication from femininity to create a theoretical tension in the slippery subject of politics of separation; where things can exist in proximity and

seemingly repel each other. Any gendered divisions have simply collapsed into the codependency of lubrication and penetration; how they have to rely on each other to occur. And we will take it even further when we get into the shifting materiality of oil and expose its multitude.

Oil shifts consistency, colour, smell and taste based upon the surrounding in which it resides. The minerals and gases within the bedrock affect traits and pureness of the substance, the organisms and matter of which it is composed affect consistency and colouration. In this sense petrofeminism emerges with queer potential, defining gender as a unique embodiment of matter and thought, fixed within confined boundaries. Directly mimicking oil's transformative potential of shapeshifting and phase transitioning. An overloading of individualism performed by this endless separation, the constant possibility to go into more details. In this sense we are sustained by oily regions like our genitalia and nationality but made comprehensible by discursive categorisations into singular embodiments according to the sexual spectrum.

This oily embodiment draws on feminist theories of subjectivity, but parses them through contemporary feminist and petrohuman understandings of object-subject relations, transcorporeality, and queer temporalities. What a singular entity really is, often extends our understanding of structure and function – concepts and words often need further intervention than mere abandonment to dissolve hegemonies and reclaim fetishisation and perversion. In this manner, human hydrophobicity always points to petrophilic tendencies instead of the rejection of water and connectedness.



Crude oil and Cyst

Petrosystems become petrophilic in this sense through the constant struggle between chemical oils and anthropogenic oils in the human body - sometimes enforced and other times sought to regulate, control or distort the levels of tallow, grease or vital fat in the body. Oil can determine singularity in this concrete way by affecting its level of lubrication and oils to trigger biological and chemical reactions. Petrofeminism recognises that some bodies are more often controlled in this way than others; ascribed females have historically become sites for the battle of oils through the beauty industry and plastic surgery. Therefore the levels of oils in our bodies can easily become tools of power and unjust determinations if we don't criticise and monitor any iteration of the politics of separation. One way to counteract this tendency is to acknowledge and refer to the inherent queerness of oils.

To reclaim oil as a queer potentiality we simply need to acknowledge that oil contains the entire colouration of the rainbow when spilled on a wet sidewalk; red oil spurting, orange oil gushing, yellow oil crawling, green oil seeping, blue oil leaking, purple oil dripping, black oil rushing, brown oil bursting and clear oil flowing. Every time oil gathers on a watery surface it exposes this hidden secret within; both as an optical illusion and as a factual circumstance arising from separation. We need to move beyond any obvious attempt of pink-washing and find the potential of containing multitude and indecisiveness without being reduced to fixed categories based on connectedness and community. Instead oil celebrates any inclination to break free from confinement and position ourselves against those who are seemingly closest to us – those small shifts and differences which hurt the most in categorisation. "I'm not him because"; "I've changed." and any other defining moment of identification. If oily separation teaches us anything it is the struggle to understand boundaries, barriers, borders and division when they feel instinctively immoral and repressive but simultaneously indisputable and vital.



Oil on water and Pride flag

To recognise this potential within a substance is to allow time to emerge as a factor for growth and definition. Queer temporalities introduce a rift to linear development for its subjects by making them come out or transition – in the same manner the extraction of oil has enforced shifts and ruptures to the entire planet. Petrofeminism offers a redirection of temporality to acknowledge transition and the "large amount of time when nothing happens" as stages inevitable for separation. As a temporal condition where some things become sedimented and fixed; while others are forced into reactivity and conversation. Heby time emerges as the ultimate property for separation and the most defining feature for either pregnancy, barricaded individualism or oil formation.

Since ancient times humans have used storm oil to calm the waters when a storm arises at sea. Oil absorbs the energy of the waves and prevents the wind from getting traction along the surface. Similarly petrofeminism believes that we can express separation without encouraging fascism and accelerating any bad weather. That separation just as connectedness, is an intuitive urge for self-perseverance and care, a boundary to be respected both between entities and within ourselves. Any gut reaction emerging from the stomach can not be collapsed into an emotion escaping from the heart even though some of the same substances pass through them. If we do not acknowledge separation as a vital force we will never understand injustice, determinism, dichotomies or segregation on the level necessary to evoke change. To simply ignore the oil in our bodies due to linguistic ambiguity is to dismiss an important answer to the question: "Why do we destroy our habitat through combustion?"