What Gualeni & Vella wanted, however, was to understand are these two interpretations possibly reconciled. They suggest the previously introduced double perspectivity – from our standpoint the virtual constitutes a real but not actual, thus our focus shifts likewise (p. 96). I have my doubts, however, if this is to be considered a problem. It seems to me that these two "interpretations" are two modes of a higher class of phenomenon that apply to the world itself, including any subworlds. The notion of reality and actuality as presented in the book can be applied to our shifting of the focus from one dimension of historic reality, for example, paying attention to the migrant crisis in Europe, to forgetting about it altogether six months later we moved away to live in a village in Indonesia; and not to mention that, based on false perception or knowledge we attained, we might be living a completely illusionary life and have a completely false image of the world that is real and actual as long as we are relatively secure from exposure to the difference. It seems to me that the answer lies in the category higher, then, but a more systematic thought should be given to it. I might as well be missing the point here, yet it simply seems to me that the dilemma of interpretation is not really a problem. I see the difference in temporality. The world itself cannot be destroyed, while the perception of the world can only be destroyed by sending all conscious beings into oblivion. In contrast, all subworlds can be destroyed while the world remains, and artificial worlds are the easiest to destroy. Virtual worlds can be destroyed forever and irretrievably with two clicks.

Conclusively, in chapter six, Fink's theory of play is used to return us to the roots of the study – the question of freedom – and the significance of play in our building of the self and the meaning of our life through the exploration of unactualised potentials and possibilities in the creation of playworld in which all containing elements become playthings. The chapter introduces us to one of the classic theories of play. Fink shared the classic view that play has no purpose outside itself, but more interestingly, argues that in playing we reactivate possibilities that are systematically being abandoned as we progress in our life, from birth where the possibilities are somewhat unlimited until late age where only some possibilities remain. While the first element is most likely not true – play does exist for a purpose outside of it – the second element is very instructive and helps to understand the value of virtual worlds and digital existence: they are fruitful ground for "exploring a non-actualised possibility of one's being" (p. 104) and can be understood as "experiential domains where we can adopt a new self and perhaps even create an 'ideal self' (p. 105). Especially useful I find Gualeni & Vella's insight that "it is about the fact that virtuality destabilises the idea of a single self in a single world, and might allow – at least in theory – for a more fluid and multifaced understanding of selfhood, thus blurring the distinction between the actualised self and its potentialities" (p. 105). Briefly said, having a virtual subjectivity opens the possibility to go beyond our "true" but encapsulated world, and from this "departure" we may return with a vision of our "true life" different than before. This, it seems to me, already begins when we take a pencil and start writing about the life we do not have. In a sense, it is an action more open than engagement in digital worlds, since in gameworlds we can be intensely limited by the narrative framework, for example, I cannot be an astronaut in a medieval-based fantasy game, but I can become an astronaut in the very next sentence I will write. I am now an astronaut, where could I go? I am no longer an astronaut, just a philosopher writing a review of a great book. However, the strength of immersion that digital world simulations shine with, emphasised by their relative distancing from us and their ability to, as non-living objects, appear communicative, their own, even while we program them, it seems, opens beautiful possibilities for understanding existing and yet-to-exist humanity.

Stimulative in content and greatly written, Gualeni & Vella's book contributes to this course.

Luka Perušić

Rita Felski

Hooked

Art and Attachment

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Rita Felski's enthusiasm for art and literature has always pervaded her work, and she was never the one to remain quiet in face of artistic excellence. In her new book, *Hooked. Art and Attachment* she explores the very essence of such enthusiasm, asking what does it mean to find ourselves "not just captured

but *captivated*" (viii, emphasis original) by a certain work of art – a feeling she illustrates by analyzing numerous testimonies of people's firsthand experience of getting hooked, from Zadie Smith's unexpected enthusiasm for Joni Mitchell to her own sense of being immediately captured by *The Unconsoled*. Felski considers this feeling in the context of aesthetic experience, taking inspiration from Latour-inspired Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and giving it a humanistic makeover. Within this theory – i.e. this style of thinking – actor stands for a variety of animate and inanimate entities, i.e. it refers to a "distinctiveness of phenomena as they interact in a mutually composed world" (22), creating networks through mutual interaction. The dominant concern of such an approach is to see how actors exist through their relations.

As Felski clarifies in the Preface, her central concern is exploring "how people connect to art and how art connects them to other things" (viii). She does this primarily under the assumption of the aesthetics of "relation rather than separation, attachment rather than autonomy" (viii). Relying on the vast body of research from numerous fields (literary theory, literary studies, analytic philosophy of art, continental philosophy, cultural studies, feminism, pragmatism) Felski navigates through some of the most dominant views on art, art-engagement and art-value, continually questioning the multifaceted aspects of human attachment to (certain works of) art, considering not only trained readers coming from academia, but, more importantly, laymen, i.e. spectators unfamiliar with sophisticated aesthetic/art theories and oblivious to numerous interpretative strategies, who nevertheless feel attached to art and find a variety of messages in it. In line with ANT, Felski rejects the conception of the autonomy of a work of art, as well as Noel Carroll's claim regarding the distinctiveness of aesthetic (as opposed to ethical, political etc.) dimension of an artwork, arguing instead that art is an actor within a wider social context (i.e. network) which cannot stand alone and autonomous: its ethical and political dimensions are entwined with its artistic and aesthetic ones. As Felski sees it, art creation and art engagements always take place in the multi-componential context, with numerous different factors coming together in generating the sense of liking, loving, even adoring, certain works, and disliking or detesting certain others. Going against some of the most dominant theses of literary theory, Felski argues that we cannot talk of art in isolation from who we are and how we come to encounter certain works: we cannot detach ourselves, negate who and how we are, in order to experience art. Rather, we dive into it, and our attachments involve "thought as well as feeling, values and judgments as well as gut response" (ix).

In the first chapter Felski addresses the phenomenon of being attached, and specifies more concretely ANT. Three crucial factors whose interaction she is concerned with include the work, recipient and influences, and her main interest is exploring "how the affordances of artworks hook up to affective dispositions, patterns of perception, ethical or political commitments, repertoires of response" (25). Particularly interesting here is Felski's analysis of the social factors that go into the attachments we develop for works of art, and she offers numerous interesting insights into how such attachments are formed – "Our seeing often depends on the seeing of others" (16), she explains, while also describing manners in which they motivate us to "promote acts of division as well as separation" (25). Stating that our engagements with artworks can be just as emotional, invested and powerful as our engagements with people, she rejects the paradigm of love and of pleasure as two emotions central to aesthetic experience, on the account of their being too simplistic to substitute for an array of emotions that guide our engagements with art, such as curiosity, excitement, rivalry, infatuation, jubilation, enthusiasm, anticipation, consolation, etc. She introduces three main forms of attachment – attunement, identification and interpretation – each of which is the topic of each of the remaining three chapters.

As "a state of affectedness", attunement is "about things resonating, aligning, coming together" (42). Such coming together does not happen without one's "nascent state of readiness" (52), which testifies to the fundamental centrality of the first-person experience. In other words, although we can never come up with an exhaustive list of factors whose union generates the sense of attunement, an active investment of spectator is necessary – "aesthetic experiences are *forged*, rather than *felt*" (130, emphasis original). Sometimes our aesthetic engagements fail to generate a sense of wonder, and sometimes works do nothing for us. As she concludes, "we are left, simply, with the variability of how people become attuned to works of art" (61). Still, such variability does not imply that there is nothing substantial to be said about attunement. Using the example of Zadie Smith's essay on Mitchel, Felski goes on to extract several key aspects of attunement, including its duration and a works' presence as a "force in the world", captured by the powerful phrase of "overwhelming thereness that cannot be bracketed or overlooked" (67). With respect to the former, Felski explores examples where

the attunement takes the form of "sudden attraction arriving out of nowhere" (59), as well as of those arising years after the original exposure with the work, for reasons hard (if not impossible) to understand. In both cases, however, an artwork becomes a force, an agency that does something to the spectators, as spectators become "intermediaries through which [works of art] must pass" (65). Yet, works of art do not act as sole agents, they only impact us when joined with endless other forces, including education, taste, identity, class, culture, social bonds, and numerous others. The coming together of these forces does not "take away from the value of a work but make it possible" (78). Regardless of the fact that attunement is collectively shaped, it is also idiosyncratic, due to the personal memories and experiences of individuals, which is why different works invite different kinds of responses from different spectators.

In the next chapter, Felski defends identification, a notion repeatedly discussed in film/literary theory and contemporary cognitive studies and philosophy of art. As she explains, while the notion of identification got a bad reputation in light of Freudian and Marxist theories, it is a notion that best explains, on her view, "a sense of affinity or shared response" (79). She rejects identification as sameness and defines it as "an affinity that is based on some sense of similarity" (81), where that similarity can extend to any aspect of a character. It is for that reason that we can identify with different characters. Felski here strengthens her view on detachment, rejecting the view according to which identification disables critical thinking and preserves the *status quo*. Quite the opposite, argues Felski, identification enables us to recognize something and learn something about ourselves, to recognize aspects we were unaware of before. "In identifying with characters", she writes, "we connect *through* them to other persons as well as to other things" (91, emphasis original). There are numerous factors that determine our response to a character (such as their motivations and actions, other characters, textual cues etc.), which is why Felski sides with the skeptics regarding the possibility of empirically measuring the impact that any given character, or work, have had on any particular audience member. A central aspect of this chapter concerns Felski's reworking the theory developed by Murray Smith. Rather than debating his reasons for dismissing identification, Felski modifies his forms of engagements with characters (alignment, allegiances, recognition, empathy) seeing these as four different types of identification. She develops her theory against her presumption that art is always social, ethical and political, providing a host of examples to show how different forms of identification gave rise to different social reactions to works of art; from *Thelma and Louise's* impact on various forms of feminism and its rejection, to Hedda Gabler's impact on the suffragette movement.

In the final chapter, Felski continues her discussion of attachment, first in the context of interpretation and then in the context of humanistic education, raising the question of the proper manner in which art courses should be taught in order to explicate the numberless factors that go into an aesthetic experience. Felski is first concerned with defeating theories according to which interpretation should come asunder from emotional ties developed for the work. Arguing against I. A. Richards and J. Guillory, she claims that interpretation itself is a form of attachment:

> "What we choose to decipher, how we decipher it, and to what end – these decisions are driven by what we feel affinity for, what resonates." (128)

She is interested in analyzing the attachment to certain methodologies, primarily those related to the humanities. As she argues, humanities tend to focus either on small units (one work), or very large ones (society), but such an approach misses the interfaces of works and persons which are crucial in clarifying why art is worth attending to. Her own preferred approach is what she calls "midlevel perspective", which "links works to fine-grained analysis – phenomenological and sociological – of aesthetic experience" (144). Situating such an approach within ANT, she sees it as an expansion of the reading methods, from a close reading of certain work to situating any given work within a wider network in which its relation to other factors is explored. Three key elements include analysis of a work, reflections on the making of the response, and engagement with the relevant debates.

As a way of conclusion, Felski leaves us with a set of questions regarding the relation between everyday reading practices and aesthetic engagements, and those of trained experts, asking: how should the humanities address the laymen experiences? Claiming that understanding this relation could be the foundation upon which to build a "stronger public rationales for why the humanities matter" (162), she concludes by claiming that *Hooked*, with the idea of attachment at its core, offers one way in which to address this question. And she is certainly right. Everyone even remotely interested in the art and the humanities will easily recognize the importance of the topics Felski discusses, and the powerful insights she offers. The manner in which she brings together what strikes me as her core three topics – social

aspects of art, forms of engagement and identification with art and the value of art and the humanities – is admirable and inspiring, with the power to speak to those most sceptical of the relevance of each. For all the criticism issued at the liberal arts education model, Felski does not let us forget just how powerful art can be, how deeply personal it feels, and how socially relevant it is. She gives us new ways of understanding why that is, inviting us along the way to reflect on our own engagements and relations to recognize the value of our aesthetic experience. Breaking the complexity of our response to art into smaller fragments, she manages to lead the reader along the maze of different scholars' ideas, crashing some and building upon others, always making sure to stay focused on why we get hooked. Felski's book is complex and multilayered, imbued with powerful and provoking questions and deeply thought-through answers, based on her own artistic engagements, years of her teaching experience, exemplary reflection and immense interest in numerous fields of study. It is an enjoyable read that beautifully describes the very essence of the very best moments of our most cherished artistic enjoyments, which so often seem hard to understand and harder to put to words.[*]

Iris Vidmar Jovanović

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