Radical Sense
Now Reader Volume 2

Elegy
Aracelis Girmay

What to do with this knowledge that our living is not guaranteed?

Perhaps one day you touch the young branch
of something beautiful. & it grows & grows
despite your birthdays & the death certificate,
& it one day shades the heads of something beautiful
or makes itself useful to the nest. Walk out
of your house, then, believing in this.
Nothing else matters.

All above us is the touching
of strangers & parrots,
some of them human,
some of them not human.

Listen to me. I am telling you
a true thing. This is the only kingdom.
The kingdom of touching;
the touches of the disappearing, things.

We Are All Nonbinary: A Brief History of Accidents

WHAT MIGHT JUDITH BUTLER'S EARLY work on gender offer efforts to think through the contemporary proliferation of queer and trans identities—many of which gather under the new umbrella category of *nonbinary*—in the Anglophone Global North? Despite Butler's own recent nonbinary identification, the answer to this question is by no means straightforward.[1] After all, whereas Butler's early work is animated by the desire to empty out the fictive core of gender, revealing it to be a mere effect of the compulsory repetition of gender norms, contemporary queer and trans culture invests strongly in the notion of gender identity, seeking to solidify new genders far outside of the confines of any "heterosexual matrix."[2] The field of Trans Studies, moreover, has been durably oriented by Jay Prosser's foundational assertion that Butler's early work metaphorizes sex and is therefore unable to account for the transsexual desire to be differently embodied.[3] While such dissonances are significant and important, they do not necessarily mean that Butler's early work has nothing to say to gender today.

In this essay, I return to an early work of Butler's that was crucial to my own effort, in *Disturbing Attachments: Gender, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (2017), to define the type of scholarly idealization to which I find minoritarian fields, including Queer Studies, particularly prone. This passage, from Butler's "Afterword" to *Butch/Femme*, a 1998 volume edited by Sally Munt, reads as follows: "The regulatory operation of heterosexual norms *idealizes heterosexuality* through purifying those desires and practices of their instabilities, crossings, the incoherences of masculine and feminine and the anxieties through which the borders of those categories are lived."[4] While this passage ascribes the idealization of heterosexuality to the silent "regulatory operations" of dominant norms, Butler's broader analysis makes it clear that it is also lesbians themselves who, in their (understandable) effort to counter the claim that butch/femme is merely a poor copy of heterosexuality, end up shoring up heterosexuality's purity. That is to say

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that, in their effort to defend butch/femme, lesbians ended up idealizing not only butch/femme but also heterosexuality itself; for, to avoid the charge of lesbian mimicry, *both categories* had to be defended as mutually unrelated, immune to any contaminating cross-identifications, fantasies, or desires.

In this essay, I return to Butler's "Afterword" less for a workable theory of gender (in its linguistic idealism, Butler's early work cannot offer this) than for a caution against any faith in the purity and distinctness of identity categories. This essay offers a polemical genealogy of the emergence of nonbinary identity, not as a progress narrative in which we move toward an enlightened recognition of the many types of human gender and sexual diversity, but rather as the outcome of a slow avalanche of historical accidents. I turn to Butler's "Afterword" to consider the harms that the coinage and idealization of normative identities—from heterosexuality, to cisgender, to binary—has wrought on ordinary gender-variant people, particularly trans femmes, across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Along with *idealization*, I identify *divergence*, *binarism*, and *autology* as the four logics that have driven the historical production of new categories of gender and sexuality. I conclude with a proposal for how we might throw a wrench in this Western identity machine.

The Divergence of Transgender from Gay

I begin by glossing a tale David Valentine has already told, that of the divergence of transgender from homosexuality in the US. I do so to underscore one engine of this entire history—the triumph of a "divergence" over a "convergence" model of gender-sexuality (a term I prefer to "gender and sexuality," since the two are, in reality, indissociable).[5] The convergence model, which was dominant until roughly the 1990s, held that local forms of raced, classed, gender- and labor-differentiated homosexuality were, nevertheless, *all homosexual*. For instance, the widespread agreement, during the 1960s, that street queens (male-assigned people who dressed in drag full-time), drag queens, "hormone" queens (male-assigned people who took estrogen), effeminate gay men, and butch gay men were all homosexuals might retrospectively be understood as a convergence model, since a range of social types was understood to cohabit a social category together. Cohabitation, however, rarely makes for harmony. A number of scholars have demonstrated how this convergence model of homosexuality produced strife in managing the uneven social stigmas of the "covert" homosexuality of butch gay men, who were capable of functioning in the straight professional world, and the "overt" gender-variant homosexuality of drag

queens and street queens, who were forced to rely on gay and "street" economies.[6]

From the vantage point of the 1960s, the gay liberation politics of "coming out of the closet" amounted to an injunction to the coverts to become overt. Nobody could have predicted that, when they did so, it would be not as the "screaming queens" they were all assumed to harbor deep within, but as *men.* The open declaration of homosexuality by otherwise gender-typical men changed the face of homosexuality during the 1970s—not least for gay men themselves. Meanwhile, the shift from a semisecretive gay subculture to a publicly politicized gay movement brought the resentments and ambivalences that had long bubbled between different gay social types to an open boil. As Valentine has shown, gay politicization during the 1970s led to debates about which homosexuals would have to be left behind so that other, more palatable homosexuals could make a feasible plea for rights to the straight public. Unsurprisingly, gender-typical gay men positioned "screaming queens"—associated with sex work, public gender deviance, poverty, crime, and racialization—as a detriment to the gay movement. In her now famous "Y'all Better Quiet Down" speech at the 1973 Gay Pride rally, Puerto Rican street queen Sylvia Rivera angrily demanded inclusion in the gay movement based on the hardships she bore on behalf of gay liberation. No one argued that queens like Rivera were not gay, only that they were not gay in socially palatable (read white, middle-class) ways. These, in short, were battles fought out within the tensions of the convergence model.

For both gay/lesbian and trans people, the categorical divergence of transgender from homosexuality offered a number of benefits. After gay liberation, the growing visibility and numerical prominence of gender-typical lesbians and gays made it seem like common sense that butches and screaming queens were not the essence of all homosexuality, as had once been thought. In this changed context, embracing what had once been a merely medical distinction between gender and sexuality allowed trans people to explain—to a public that still saw them as a version of homosexual—why they resorted to "extreme" measures that gays and lesbians did not, such as cross-dressing, name and pronoun changes, and, at times, hormonal and/or surgical transition. In terms of political organizing, it had become apparent that the causes of gender deviants would always be a low priority within the gay and lesbian movement. Autonomous transgender organizing, with roots in groups like STAR (Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries) as well as transvestite and transsexual mutual aid, seemed necessary. Finally, embracing the separation of gender and sexuality allowed trans people to openly explore an array of sexualities, not just the homosexuality (that is, the heterosexuality, once a change in gender categories is accounted for) long expected of them. Meanwhile, Valentine convincingly

argues that the category of transgender gave lesbians and gays what they had been seeking for decades—distance from the stigma of gender variance in its association with poverty, illegal sex work, street culture, and race. Divergence seemed like a win for everyone.

The Cis/Trans Binary

Around 2008, the surprisingly rapid uptake of the term *cis* (short for *cisgender*) by educated young trans people and their allies reified the hitherto tacit binary between trans people and everyone else. As A. Finn Enke explains, *cisgender* was coined by biologist Dana Leland Defosse in 1994.[7] The scientific origin of the term accounts for the use of the little-known Latin prefix *cis-* for "that which remains in place." Subsequently, small numbers of trans people took up the technical-sounding term, but nobody expected it to take off—until it did. Some early users of the term *cisgender*, such as Enke, understood it as an analytic of the unseen privilege and power of a set of common assumptions: that gender was visible and obvious, that sex was immutable, and that gender was a natural biological expression of sex. The version of cisgender that was popularized around 2008, however, was neither an analytic of privilege nor a term for regulatory technologies of gender and sex, but rather an identity category for all non-trans people. The use of cis as an identity was intended to mark the otherwise unmarked normalcy of those who did not desire transition. Its effect, however, was to ossify the opposition between trans people and the rest. Quickly, the cis/trans binary was reinterpreted as an ontological truth. Only a discrete category of people named transgender desired transition and exhibited gender variance—the rest, cis people, were perfectly comfortable in their sexed bodies and gendered social roles.

We may generatively extend Butler's questioning of the status of heterosexuality within lesbian theorization in 1998 to the role of cisgender today. "What is the background figure of heterosexuality at work here? When we refer to normative heterosexuality, do we know precisely what we mean?" Butler asks. They continue: "Have we begun to construct heterosexuality as a normative monolith in order to set into relief the variegations of non-heterosexual desire as the unambiguous and uncontaminated forces of sexual opposition?"[8] *What is the background figure of cisgender at work here? When we refer to normative cisgender, do we know precisely what we mean? Have we begun to construct cisgender as a normative monolith in order to set into relief the variegations of trans identity as the unambiguous and uncontaminated forces of gender opposition?* In short, are we idealizing cisgender as uncontaminated by any gender trouble whatsoever, just as we have idealized heterosexuality

as untainted by the slightest homosexual longing? If this is the case, then we might expect cisgender people to be far less straightforwardly cis than the cis/trans binary would lead us to expect. After all, Jane Ward's research has made it clear that homosexual sex between straight-identified people is ubiquitous rather than rare among white men and women in the United States today.[9] Might cisgender as a category be just as impure as heterosexuality? To ask this question is not necessarily to imply that *transgender* and *homosexual* are symmetrical terms. While some degree of homosexual desire is likely so ubiquitous as to be almost universal, I would argue that no more than a tiny sliver of non-trans-identified people harbor the secret desire to change their sex. This basic material asymmetry is distorted, however, by taxonomies and definitions that have been devised for *transgender*, based on the preexisting model of the homosexual/heterosexual divide. To tell the story of cisgender, then, we must back up and explain the historically contingent emergence of heterosexuality.

Heterosexuality's Privileged Unreality

As Jonathan Ned Katz has shown us, heterosexuality emerged belatedly, as a normative ballast against homosexuality. Homosexuality, the abnormal type, was defined first by sexologists beginning in the late nineteenth century and psychiatrists in the twentieth century. If homosexuality came to describe a type of person defined by an abnormal and pathological same-sex desire, one of the many epistemological problems it introduced was that there *was no concept* for a healthy, normal desire for the opposite sex.[10] Heterosexuality was an afterthought to homosexuality, its belatedness a symptom of its purely ideological origins. As fictive as it is idealized, heterosexuality today names an exclusive, normal, and healthy sexual orientation to the opposite sex that hardly exists in practice. The first paradox of heterosexuality is that it defines as "healthy" and "normal" a form of sex and coupledom based on material power asymmetries between men and women and, therefore, on the basic psychosexual interplay of sadism/masochism, desire/disgust, and sex/rape analyzed by feminist scholars such as Catherine MacKinnon. To restore the contexts of patriarchy and sexism to heterosexuality is to reveal it to be a constitutively perverse form of sexual desire, "healthy" only by virtue of its statistical predominance and pervasive idealization. The second paradox of heterosexuality is that there are, I would wager, *no* heterosexuals who have neither experienced nor acted on same-sex erotic desire, even if only in the form of aggression or play. Heterosexuality as an exclusive sexual orientation is and has always been a myth, and much of the history of sexology could be renarrated as an

attempt to rationalize the fact that a great many apparently normal people had sex with someone of the same sex. Butler's insight is that queer thought inadvertently shores up the idealization of a pure and uninterrogated heterosexuality whenever it opposes queer/gay/lesbian to straight. Going further, we might argue that heterosexuality's privileged unreality is precisely what makes it possible for people to claim it despite and even in light of their own homosexual activity and desires. For claiming heterosexuality has always been, first and foremost, a means of aspiring to an idealized normalcy. As Jane Ward powerfully argues, heterosexuality is not a naturally existing sexual orientation but a "culture." Feeling comfortable and "at home" in straight culture is more powerfully predictive of heterosexual identification than is an exclusive desire for the "opposite" sex.

The prehistory of heterosexuality reveals why this is the case. Before heterosexuality, there were the normals, and there were the gender variants—fairies and queens, butches and "he-shes," hermaphrodites and sexual intermediaries. Properly manly men were *by definition* normal (at least when it came to gender-sexuality), even when they were having (manly, insertive) sex with fairies or queens.[11] (Women, who were imagined, in different contexts, to be asexual, polymorphously perverse, or exclusively responsive to the sexual advances of others, have always been more difficult to fit into models of sexual normalcy versus deviance or of sexuality as orientation.) No wonder, then, that many normals were and remain reluctant to recategorize themselves as deviant simply because of their (gender-appropriate) same-sex practices. If the homo/hetero binary can be said to have victims, however, these victims would be not the normals but rather trans women. If, before heterosexuality, any normal man might have desired a fairy without any diminishment (and even with a potential enhancement) of his manhood, now heterosexual men who are attracted to trans women may commit acts of extreme transmisogynist violence to protect their heterosexual masculine status. Extraordinary acts of transmisogynist violence may therefore be one consequence of the homo/hetero divide.

The Losses of Queer History

The emergence of *cisgender* follows a similar pattern to that of heterosexuality. *Transsexuality* was coined first during the 1950s as a medical diagnosis of the strange desire to change sex. *Transgender* followed, about forty years later, as an attempt to forge a politics and sense of community around the demedicalized desire to be differently gendered. Like *heterosexual*, *cisgender* emerged belatedly, its meaning settling from an analytic of cis normativity and privilege to the name assigned to a hypothesized normal

type—the opposite of transgender. The problem is that, in the meantime, the meaning of *transgender* had also shifted, from a politicized umbrella for all manner of gender-bending to the neutral descriptor of a misalignment between someone's gender identity and their assigned gender. This newer definition of *transgender*, moreover, was actually a return to the midcentury sexological and psychiatric theories of gender that were the basis of intersex medical violence.[12] One consequence of this series of coinages and definitional shifts is that the cisgender/transgender binary has a gaping hole in its middle. If, in the past, gender variance—epitomized by the queen—was the definitional center of homosexuality, now, in a historically shocking reversal, homosexuality has become gender-typical by default. Transgender people (initially, anyone differently gendered and now, informally, only those who desire transition) have become the sole gender variants; everyone else is cisgender. So what has happened to all the gender variants who do not desire transition? Put differently, what are the contemporary fates of those who would have been fairies, queens, and butches in the past?

Butches, in fact, remain common, due both to the high value of masculinity in lesbian culture and to the overall ill fit between female-assigned people and the hegemonic history of sexuality. The real question, then, is what has happened to the fairies and queens? No doubt a great many would have either elected to transition or settled into a relatively stigma-free gender-typical homosexuality. Given the erotic and cultural value of masculinity among gay men, feminine gay men who do not desire transition have become something of a paradox. Stereotypically gay, yet rarely considered desirable within gay male culture (the slogan "no fats, no femmes, no Asians" epitomizes the "masc 4 masc" gay culture that is now hegemonic), feminine gay men have "become historical," redolent of homosexualities of yore, yet deprived of even a single affirmative term to identify them, much less articulate a positive desire for them.[13] Tellingly, not a single "tribe" on the gay sex app Grindr names feminine gay men or those who might desire them; "trans," by contrast, is a named tribe. Feminine men have become erotic nonentities, desired, more often than not, *despite* rather than for their femininity. They are fallouts of *both* the cis/trans and the homo/hetero binary: if, during the early twentieth century, any normal man might have desired them, now no heterosexual man is permitted to, and few gay men find themselves so moved.

Enter Nonbinary

Such are the consequences of an ill-conceived taxonomy that sought to, counterfactually and in an affront to the entirety of queer history,

neatly sort people into cisgender versus transgender. That is, until just now. In keeping with the trend toward divergence as a strategy for managing taxonomical tensions, the cis/trans distinction has birthed a third term, *nonbinary*, which, unlike its seldom used predecessor, *genderqueer*, has caught on like wildfire in a few short years. Initially, *nonbinary*—an umbrella term for all those who identify as neither men nor women—offered a much-needed home to all those orphans at the fuzzy edges of the cis/trans binary. But increasingly, nonbinary identity is being claimed by people who look and behave in a manner indistinguishable from ordinary lesbians and gays, or even ordinary heterosexuals. While Miley Cyrus, Courtney Stodden, and Sam Smith have recently made headlines by coming out as nonbinary, this phenomenon is hardly confined to the rich and famous. A 2021 survey by the Trevor Project estimates that 26 percent of LGBTQ youth in the US ages 13–24 now identify as nonbinary—a proportion familiar to those who teach in the queer/trans classroom.[14] How did this come about? If, in the early 2000s, genderqueer was an almost unimaginable category understood to apply to almost no one, how has nonbinary become a ubiquitous category that could seemingly apply to almost anyone?

One precondition for the universalization of nonbinary identity is the trans idealization of cisgender. To paraphrase Butler yet again, *Have we begun to construct cisgender as a normative monolith in order to set into relief the variegations of trans and nonbinary identity as the unambiguous and uncontaminated forces of gender opposition?* The answer can only be a resounding *yes.* Keep in mind that cisgender is not and has never been a social identity. Like heterosexuality, cisgender is an opposite fabricated out of thin air. This is not to say that there are not people who are not transgender, in the sense of *people who do not desire transition.* Indeed, if that were the definition of *cisgender*, all would be well. However, that is only the opposite of the colloquial definition of *transgender*, not of the "official" definition. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *transgender* as designating "a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond to that person's sex at birth, or which does not otherwise conform to conventional notions of sex and gender."[15] In a tidy and logical opposition, *cisgender* is defined as "designating a person whose sense of personal identity corresponds to the sex and gender assigned to him or her at birth (in contrast with transgender)."[16] Similar definitions proliferate on the internet and on social media, *the* major sites of sexual-gender identity formation for young people. Strikingly, *cisgender* (and "officially" *transgender*) is now defined as a matter of "personal identity" alone. But how is a gender-typical person to go about developing a relation to their gender identity? In a context in which most gender-typical people have never had to think about their gender identity, when they look within to find some felt relation to it, they may well draw

a blank. When they do find feelings about manhood and womanhood, these feelings are likely to be extremely ambivalent—how could they not be, since these terms are artifacts of patriarchal gender expectations and racialized civilization distinctions? While they may have heard trans people talk about gender dysphoria, they will search in vain for the feeling that indicates cisness. For there is none. The reason is that cisgender—the notion of an alignment so exact between one's personal sense of identity and the gender role assigned to one that there is no rub, no ambivalence, and no sense of constraint—is and has always been a fantasy. *Nobody has ever felt that way.* We trans people invented the fantasy of cisgender as the opposite to the extreme gendered and sexed discomfort we have experienced. We are the ones responsible for the idealization of cisgender, and it falls partly to us to undo it.

As if cisgender were not bad enough, nonbinary discourse has just invented a new fictive opposite. Just as homosexuality birthed an idealized heterosexuality and transgender birthed an idealized cisgender, nonbinary has birthed an idealized binary identification as its (ironically, binary) opposite. If a nonbinary person identifies as neither man nor woman, a binary person not only *does* identify as a man or woman, but they (by connotation) do so in a "binary" way, that is, without *any* cross-gender feelings or identifications. The problem is that, thus understood, *no one is binary,* neither the "binary trans people" commonly opposed to nonbinary people, nor the "binary cis people," who would never choose this term to describe themselves or their relationship to gender. Indeed, if nonbinary identity is catching on like wildfire, it is no coincidence that binary identity is not. Almost no one, trans or cis, identifies as binary or finds this term a useful descriptor for their experiential relation to gender. Binary, to an even greater extent than cisgender or heterosexual, is an idealized opposite, not a lived state of being.

Nonbinary discourse has also taken gender self-identification far further than trans people ever envisioned. If trans people used the discourse of self-identification to ensure that our choices to transition—medically or socially—were respected, nonbinary discourse has used it to eliminate the necessity of transition altogether. Contemporary nonbinary discourse holds firmly that nonbinary might "look" any number of ways and need not find external expression in choice of dress, hairstyle, pronouns, or any other social marker of gender.[17] This tenet likely emerged as a way to counter the reflexive binary gendering even of visibly gender-variant people, given the difficulty of appearing uncategorizable as either a man or as a woman to those accustomed to classifying everyone in this way. As a response, nonbinary discourse has doubled down on the notion of gender as an internal, psychic identification, adding the corollary that nonbinary identification is

"valid" regardless of outward expression. While many nonbinary people do seek to modify their appearance to counter binary gendered expectations, with the discourse of gender self-identification, more and more do not.

This confluence of events has created a context rife for the production of more and more nonbinary people. For if, according to the law of opposites, one must either be nonbinary or binary, and, in an extension of the popular misreading of *Gender Trouble*, it is radical to be nonbinary and normative to be binary, then more and more people are choosing and will continue to choose nonbinary identity. This is particularly true since nonbinary identity costs very little. All that is required to be nonbinary is to identify as such, and nobody will be attacked, imprisoned, thrown out of their home, or discriminated against merely for identifying as nonbinary. One of the most popular current explanations of nonbinary identity is that it is not, in fact, an additional gender but rather a perspective or a belief— a choice to see gender as a spectrum or as limitless rather than as a binary.[18] Today, a list of people I have encountered who identify as nonbinary would include: a white female-assigned person who has studied Buddhism and decided that, ontologically, gender is not binary; a number of female-assigned feminists who experience discomfort with patriarchal expectations; a number of transitioned trans people who wish to be "out" as trans and avow that their life history has not been within a single gender; a number of brown people who wish to decolonize the "colonial gender binary"; a number of Black people for whom, due to a history of ungendering, blackness precludes cisgender status.[19] According to this logic, all "woke" people should be nonbinary; only the politically retrograde would subscribe to a binary gender identity, much less believe in binary gender at all.

None of these people's beliefs or feelings about gender is uninteresting or wrong. What I question, contra current progressive gender discourse, is whether one's politics, personal feelings, or beliefs about gender should be the basis of gender categorization at all. Like language, gender categories— including trans, cis, nonbinary, and binary—are social and interpersonal, not individual; this is what makes them meaningful in the first place. If they were not, trans and nonbinary people would not feel the need to announce our genders to the world any more than we feel the need to announce our favorite colors. What is socially relevant is *transition*—a shift in social gender categories, whatever they may be—not *identification*—a personal, felt, and thereby highly phantasmic and labile relation to these categories. *Identification is the psychic process that makes the interval between the individual and the social apparent; it is not the site of their suture.* Or, as Butler puts it, "identification is not identity," a distinction that has been forgotten within nonbinary discourse.[20] While gender politics *are* socially relevant, it is only the neoliberal universalization of identity as the basis of all politics that has made it appear

necessary to announce one's gender politics as an identity—*nonbinary*—rather than simply enacting them. What is therefore necessary is to repair the historical wound opened by the cis/trans binary by creating one or more socially legible gender categories—based on presentation and behavior, not self-identification alone—for those who want to transition from men or women to *something else*, something with positive social content rather than something devoid of it, as nonbinary currently is.

A Wrench in the Western Identity Machine

As my brief history of accidents has shown, we have not moved from a rigid and impoverished gender system to a flexible and nuanced one. To the contrary, the Western history of gender-sexuality has been one of the creation, through the method of divergence as a means of managing categorical instability, of increasingly idealized and uninhabitable normative categories, from heterosexual to cisgender to binary. It has been the history of the burial of gender deeper and deeper within the private recesses of the self, where it increasingly disavows any relation to the social. If Butler wrote *Gender Trouble* as a critique of the ascription of an interior core where there was nothing but compelled performances of social ideals of gender, in 2022 the fictive core of gender identity has taken on a life of its own. Gender identity is envisioned not as derivative of but as autonomous from the social, to the extent that it may entirely contradict one's actual gender performances (the popularization of femme AFAB [Assigned Female at Birth] nonbinary identity is one case in point). Today, "gender identity" references a core selfhood that requires no expression, no embodiment, and no commonality—in the case of some of the microidentities spreading on the internet—with genders as they are lived by others in the world. In this sense, contemporary gender identity is the apotheosis of the liberal Western fantasy of self-determining "autological" selfhood, a regulatory ideal that gains meaning only in opposition to the "genealogical" selfhood, overdetermined by social bonds, ascribed to racialized and indigenous peoples.[21] Nonbinary identity is therefore not, as some nonbinary people would have it, a radical refusal of the colonial gender binary. For binary Western thinking has governed every step in the history of Western gender-sexual categories, generating an idealized opposite for each new category coined. The core binary that governs nonbinary thought, however, is less that between binary and nonbinary than that, foundational to Western thought, between the autological sovereign individual and the unchosen genealogical bonds of the social. It is therefore difficult to imagine an identity more provincially Western and less decolonial than contemporary nonbinary identity.

My brief history has also shown, however, that any problems with non-binary identity and discourse are not the fault of nonbinary people alone. In keeping with the lessons of Foucauldian genealogy, they are the consequence of a slow avalanche of historical accidents. In sum, they are the fruit of 1) a turn to divergence as a means of managing the imperfection of identity categories; 2) the use of binary thinking to fabricate fictive opposites (heterosexual, cisgender, binary) whose uninhabitability then spawns further divergent identities, which then spawn new fictive opposites, and so on; 3) the idealization of these identities; and 4) the popularization of the (Western, Cartesian, sexological) thesis that gender is psychic rather than social.

I propose that we throw a wrench in this identity machine. It may be necessary to generate new identities, given that nonbinary is not a true social category but rather a vast umbrella with no positive social content. However, we can abandon Western binary and taxonomic thinking by refusing to create a fictive opposite for each new term. We can drop the notion that gender is purely psychic and work instead toward creating a livable, valued, and legible social category for feminine male-assigned people (given the high cultural and erotic value of masculinity, a space for masculine female-assigned people will likely always exist). Most importantly, we can stop idealizing (and attempting to name) some version of normal gender, and we can refuse to use the misleading terms *binary* and *cisgender* altogether. For just as there has never been a heterosexuality without homosexual desire, there has never been a cis- or binary gender free from cross-identification or gender atypicality. As Butler writes,

The line is supposed to differentiate straight from lesbian, but the line is contaminated by precisely that which it seeks to ward off: it bounds identity through the very same gesture by which it differentiates itself; the gesture by which it differentiates itself becomes the border through which contamination travels, undermining differentiation itself.[22]

Contamination is the companion of categorization. It is all but impossible to feel entirely unambivalent about, entirely described by, a social identity category; this was never the goal of transgender or transsexual politics in the first place. The question, then, is whether we can develop a tolerance for contamination and for the inevitable misfit of identity categories, rather than continually kicking the bucket further down the road, generating ever more terms in pursuit of an impossible dream—that of social categories capable of matching the uniqueness of individual psyches. To accomplish all of this, we must, first and foremost, relinquish the fantasy that gender is a means of self-knowledge, self-expression, and authenticity

rather than a shared, and therefore imperfect, social schema. This means developing a robust trans politics and discourse *without* gender identity.

Notes

1. Jules Gleeson, "Judith Butler: 'We Need to Rethink the Category of Woman,'" *Guardian*, September 7, 2021, https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/sep/07/judith-butler-interview-gender.
2. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990).
3. Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York, 1998), 21–60.
4. Judith Butler, "Afterword," in *Butch/Femme: Inside Lesbian Gender*, ed. Sally Munt (London, 1998), 227, my emphasis.
5. I appropriate the terminology of divergence/convergence from Janet Halley to refer to two opposed strategies for negotiating the variety, fluidity, and differential social stigmas of gender-sexualities. See Janet Halley, *Split Decisions: How and Why to Take a Break from Feminism* (Princeton, 2008).
6. Esther Newton, *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* (Chicago, 1979); Joanne Meyerowitz, *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); David Valentine, *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category* (Durham, NC, 2007). The terminology of "overt" versus "covert" is Newton's.
7. A. Finn Enke, "The Education of Little Cis: Cisgender and the Discipline of Opposing Bodies," in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2*, ed. Aren Aizura and Susan Stryker (New York, 2013), 234–47.
8. Butler, "Afterword," 226.
9. Jane Ward, *Not Gay: Sex between Straight White Men* (New York, 2015).
10. See Jonathan Ned Katz, *The Invention of Heterosexuality* (New York, 1995).
11. George Chauncey, for instance, demonstrates that this was the case among working-class men in New York City from the late nineteenth century through the 1930s. See George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940* (New York, 1994).
12. On medical violence against intersex people, see Hil Malatino, *Queer Embodiment: Monstrosity, Medical Violence, and Intersex Experience* (Lincoln, 2019).
13. Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC, 2017), 127.
14. "National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health 2021," https://www.TheTrevorProject.org/survey-2021/.
15. *OED Online*, s.v. "transgender, adj."
16. *OED Online*, s.v. "cisgender, adj."
17. See, for instance, Meredith Talusan, "This Is What Gender-Nonbinary People Look Like," *them*, November 19, 2017, https://www.them.us/story/this-is-what-gender-nonbinary-people-look-like.
18. Jennalynn Fung, "What It Means to Be Non-Binary," *Teen Vogue*, June 1, 2021, https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-it-means-to-be-non-binary.
19. The relation of Black people to nonbinary identity is undoubtedly the most interesting and warrants further study. At times, Black nonbinary people break

with the autological bent of nonbinary discourse to assert nonbinary identity as the result of antiblack racialization.

20. Butler, "Afterword," 227.
21. Elizabeth Povinelli, *The Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy, and Carnality* (Durham, NC, 2006); Aniruddha Dutta, "Allegories of Gender: Transgender Autology versus Transracialism," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender Culture & Social Justice* 39, no. 2 (2018): 86–98.
22. Butler, "Afterword," 228.

FIXED SHADOW, MOVING WATER

    One friend tells me everything's political,
another says nothing is, we just make it political.
By "we," he means human beings, I assume—
    what's political to a fox curled in sleep,
or a pond, or a sycamore in winter with no leaves left
to stop the snow falling through it? I have loved you
    for less time than I have loved some others,
but none more deeply than you; no one more
absolutely. Which, as if inevitably, amounts
    to a hierarchy of sorts, doesn't it? Value,
then the power that comes with it—soon enough,
the distribution of power, who gets to do the distributing . . .

    But if we make of tenderness a countervailing force, the two of us—

    If we can make, *from* tenderness, a revolution—

(Carl Phillips)

(Dis)Embodying Enclosure

Of Straightened
Muslim Men and
Secular Masculinities

....

Pietro Marubi was an Italian revolutionary who, after the Risorgimento (unification of Italy), sought political exile in the Ottoman Empire and became Pjetër Marubi, the founder of the first photographic studio in Albania. Along with Kel Marubi, his adoptive son, and his grandson, Gegë Marubi, he documented the most significant events in Albanian and Balkan politics, leaving a largely unexplored archive of everyday life in the Balkans from the late Ottoman period to the mid-twentieth century. The image of Haxhi Qamili on trial in 1915 in chapter 3 was taken by Kel Marubi and illustrates, both in terms of significance of the event and the angle from which it is shot, a photographer that is conscious of witnessing the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate amid the Albanian national independence movement. There are seven images from the Marubi archive that I want to draw attention to as a way of introduction into this chapter. In the first one (figure 4.1) Pjetër Marubi himself is seated as sumptuously as a *bejtexhi* (poet) on a divan as if interrupted by the camera while playing the lute.[1] Two *dylbers* (admirers of the poet) posing over his shoulders are meditating in stillness, seemingly taken by his art of

aheng (poetic gathering).[2] The image is meant to emulate what was already becoming a dying art in Albania: a poet and his two lovers indulging in poise through music, *meze*, and *raki*. The dylbers are identified as Emilio Simoni and Oso Faltorija. Faltorija is most likely a sobriquet for a fortune-teller in the feminine form. Men in homoerotic poses but not necessarily in a relationship (see figures 4.2 and 4.3) are the subject matter of several of Marubi's works, through which he seems to have wanted to extend the tradition in the face of the Europeanizing gender and sexual dynamics of late nineteenth-century Ottoman attempts at modernization.

In particular, in figure 4.3 we see one of the men dressed in traditional costume wearing an Ottoman fez, while his partner is outfitted *ala franga*, or in Western-style clothing, mediating the body and geopolitical transformations of the time. The figure of the bejtexhi, like that of the central Asian steppe's *ashik* (singer-poet) immortalized in Sergei Parajanov's *Ashik Kerib* (1988), is a queer one, not only because the bejtexhi's relation with his dylbers was an erotic and poetic one, but also because in the context of late nineteenth-century Albania, when the picture was taken, the bejtexhi tradition was a dying art and was slowly transforming into

FIGURE 4.1. Rapsodi, by Pietro Marubi, 1887.

FIGURE 4.2. Two men with fezzes holding hands, Marubi, year unknown.

FIGURE 4.3. Two men holding hands, Marubi, year unknown.

an Orientalist fantasy. The fourth image (figure 4.4) depicts the encounter of an Albanian *köçek* (cross-dressing or cross-gender dancer) offering a flower to what seems to be the arrival of European clientele, with two men kneeling in attendance with plates as if to contemplate and welcome the arrival of the European admirers into a world still untouched by the hetero-homo regime.

In the fifth image (figure 4.5), we witness two soldiers of the International Control Commission (discussed in the previous chapter) around 1914–1915, seeming to be admiring or acquiring a seated köçek with an Albanian man, possibly posing as his/her lover or pimp, standing and looking at the camera in approval. The last, and perhaps most insightful, staging of the erotic politics of the time (figure 4.6) is two soldiers of the International Control Commission, one pulling an Albanian man by the ear while the other is assaulting his köçek partner with a sword.

In both images, the weapon carried by the militia of the International Control Commission intersects the intimacy of the staging. In figure 4.5, the firearm rests on the köçek's body while in figure 4.6 it is held by the soldier pulling the Albanian man's ear, as if to discipline his desire with

FIGURE 4.4. Mati Kodheli and Giovanni Canale with friends, Marubi, 1860.

the long, tilted weapon. Marubi, who, judging from the amount of homoerotic images one finds in his archive was probably *queer* himself, sought to capture the multilayered civilizing mission of the European International Control Commission in Albania, photographing military and civilian parades, battlefields, the prince and his entourage, and their interactions with natives. All of the images center on bodies that elude categorization and had not yet come under the radar of Ottoman modernization in Istanbul, where the Young Turk Revolution sought

FIGURE 4.5. Italian soldiers of the International Control Comission in Albania stationed in Shkodra, Marubi, 1914.

FIGURE 4.6. Italian soldiers of the International Control Comission in Albania stationed in Shkodra, Marubi, 1914.

to Europeanize the empire. At its edges, this modernizing came with other European and American colonizing objectives, such as US protestant missionaries and the installment of the International Control Commission in Albania or the Habsburg mission discussed in chapter 2. The socialist period in between (if we can call it that) heterohistoricized the histories of post-Ottoman projects of modernization and colonization in the historical-materialist fashion that defined the national historiographies of the socialist world. Their reemergence from archives after socialism—as Haxhi Qamili's ghosts—came to haunt the seemingly finished Euro-Atlanticization of the Muslims in the Balkans, possibly because, as Shawn Michelle Smith argues, photography "is emblematic of the way a past continues to inhabit and punctuate a present" and "encapsulates a temporal oscillation, always signifying in relation to a past and a present, and anticipating a future" (2020, 1, 5).

The encounter of civilian and military members of the International Control Commission with native sexual and gender "deviants," as depicted in the images in this chapter, would come to transform the ways in which Albanians came to imagine their gender and sexual embodiments in their encounters with Western missionaries. The bejtexhi poets, who mainly wrote in Ottoman Albanian using the Arabic, Persian, or Ottoman alphabet, addressed homoerotic themes that were not compatible with the homo-hetero regime emerging in late nineteenth-century Albania. They adopted cross-gendered metaphors for themselves and their lovers while frequently equating their love for their dylbers with their love for Islam.[3] The term *dylber* has been the most common term used in Albanian public discourse today to both discredit and defy genealogies of same-sex desire and nonbinary gender embodiments. Indeed, the bejetexhi poets, their works, and their dylbers became the central repertoire from which Albanian nationalists drew their material for the heterosexualization and Europeanization of Albanian gender and desire in the late-socialist and postsocialist period. I draw on these images and imaginaries of nonnormative Albanian bodies to think of their heteronormalization as a his/torical process, as both body and geo-orienting methods, not only as imagined and enacted under the colonial mission of control in the early twentieth century but whose reverberations are still present today as Albanian aspirations of and orientations toward whiteness traverse through sexual orientations and continue to trouble the seemingly stable whiteness and heterosexuality of Albanians.

In 2018, the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey, a body of the European Union and the Council of Europe, launched the project "Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System in Albania," implemented jointly by the Council of Europe's Education Department, the Council of Europe's office in Tirana, and the Albanian Ministry of Education and Sports. The project was implemented by local Albanian LGBTQI+ organizations that conducted trainings on antibullying and homo/transphobia. A homophobic panic ensued over homosexual "propaganda" in schools, generating a host of conspiracy theories about the "gay agenda" being pushed in an attempt to weaken, destabilize, and eventually destroy the Albanian family. The noted Albanian publicist and curator Artan Lame, who had previously been chastised for his homophobia in Albanian media and who was seeking to somewhat redeem himself, launched an attack by claiming that Albania had been a paradise of homosensuality, illustrated in the numerous bejtexhi songs: "We all sang them until the communist regime did away with them in the [']50s" (BalkanWeb 2015). In Kosovo, the mainstream *Kosovarja* argued that the "songs of the ashiks and dylbers, which we are all familiar with, were not only not hated, they were welcomed" (*Kosovarja* 2018). The Kosovar television station T7 produced a short segment called "Our Rhapsodes Also Sang to Same-Sex Desire." The video includes clips of the last known and widely admired bejtexhi Riza Bllaca (1919–88) singing "Walking the *kaldrma* like a *Shah* / with your coat thrown on one shoulder / o man for the love of God / gift your dandy one sunrise," concluding with, "Don't buy a *qefin* for me / bury me in my *dylber[']s* shirt / in the grave do not submit me / near my *dylber* leave me."[4] Bllaca is heard between songs bursting in joyful laughter and telling his present dylbers, "May I eat your mustache!" (T7 2018). Seeking to protect the bejtexhi tradition from its association with homosexuality, literary critics came out in defense of the bejtexhi poets being projected as "homosexuals," frequently clarifying that the bejetexhi poets were not homosexuals and that most of their poems where they compare their lovers to the face of Imam Ali or the palm of the prophet were actually spiritual metaphors of the time.

In this chapter, I look at how anxieties over the hetero-European orientations of Albanians are at times constructed against the queer Muslim as a renegade of the Ottoman past that continues to haunt the Albanian orientation toward Europe, and at other times, sympathetic narratives toward homosexuality are employed to advance Albanian's European

progress and emancipation. The goal here is not only to expose the ways in which the mobilization of Orientalist categories of sexuality and Islam in the Albanian public are deployed toward the (dis)embodiment of white heteronormative masculinities but to also think about how nonhetero-sexual bodies re-exist outside the mandates of desire bequeathed by colo-niality/modernity. To do this, in the second half of the chapter, I engage with queer interventions that disrupt and negate Euro-gay-oriented sub-ject formation by calling into visibility the violence embedded in such liberatory strategies.

This chapter is situated in a broader critique of the instrumentaliza-tion of gender/sex rights in the in Euro-American colonial and postcolo-nial projects of national modernization in the Muslim world (Mahmood 2004; Najmabadi 2005; Massad 2008; Abdou 2019; Salaymeh 2020; Tho-bani 2020; Mitra 2020) and the ways in which Muslim and migrant pop-ulations in Euro-American spaces have been racialized through sexual rights discourses (Puar 2007; El-Tayeb 2011; Scott 2019; Haritaworn 2015). While my work has been deeply influenced by this scholarship, Mus-lims in the Balkans are generally an anomaly in literature in that they are neither located in the former first or former third worlds. Situated in a trajectory of "unconventional imperial-colonial histories," I think through the intersections of Islam and sexuality in this chapter through the decolonial option, as the "decolonial option does not accentuate the historical description of (neo)colonialist strategies but rather the long-lasting ontological, epistemic, and axiological traces left after any colo-nialism seems to be a matter of the past" (Tlostanova 2019b, 165). In this sense, I problematize the sex/gender binaries, imaginaries, and embodi-ments not as derivatives of colonial/capitalism but as structurally cocon-stitutive parts of coloniality/modernity based on one single Eurocentric conceptualization of humanity (Lugones, 2008, 2010; Miñoso, Correal, and Muñoz 2014; Tlostanova, 2013; Kancler 2016). This allows me to at-tend to what Rahul Rao calls the "messy critical task of determining how responsibility for ongoing oppressions must be apportioned between co-lonial and postcolonial regimes . . . including those that enable formerly colonised states to become colonial in their own right" (2020, 9). In this sense, the legacies of colonially imposed models of sexuality and subjec-tivization that were instrumental in the ongoing attempts of the Alba-nian man to meet the expectations of European orientation—be it the demand to become straight in the post-Ottoman moment or queer in

the postsocialist one. While I argue here that these are not just discursive practices but also embodied realities, where sexuality legitimizes the racialized mappings of space and time along the Euro-Atlantic enclosure as measures of masculinity and modernity, I also wonder how sexual moments and movements can gesture and generate new social and spatial relations.

THE INTRICATE WEB OF "ISLAMIC SEXUALITIES"

In an interview in 2009, Ismail Kadare, who had just received the Prince of Asturias Award, speaking from his position as a dissident writer in communist Albania, argued that "what excited suspicion [by the Albanian communist regime] was, 'why does the western bourgeoisie hold a writer from a Stalinist country in high esteem'?" (Flood 2009). Yet the communist regime not only allowed the Albanian writer to travel to France—a rare privilege reserved only for those close to the regime—but engaged in promoting his rise to prominence in European literary circles. For the communist regime, Kadare crafted historical fiction that, as Peter Morgan argues, "represented Albanian identity as something native and authentic against Ottoman, Soviet or, later, Maoist, influences," mirroring the regime's desire to situate Albania not only as a constitutive part of Europe but as a guardian of the frontier between Europe and its eastern Others (2011, 18). For the Europeans, Kadare presented an opportunity to gaze inside what was considered one of the most isolated communist regimes, providing semifictionalized Orientalist narratives of oppression and violence that Albanians endured under the Ottoman Empire, which he later argued was a metaphor for communism.

First published in 1986, *Viti i Mbrapshtë* (A vicious year) is considered one of the most accomplished novels by Ismail Kadare (2009). Set in 1913 Albania, a year after partition from the Ottoman Empire, the novel fictionalizes the installment of the International Commission for Control to guarantee the reign of German-born Prince Wilhelm zu Wied. In the background, a Muslim uprising seeks to overthrow the foreign Christian prince in favor of an Ottoman Muslim one. The Muslim uprising is led by one of the main characters, Kuz Baba, a fictionalized representation of Haxhi Qamili, presented as a ruthless, uncontrolled, hypersexualized Muslim who, in fighting to preserve Islam in Albania, is actually fighting to preserve his privilege to have access to beautiful men. In the midst

of a war that will decide the faith and future of Albania, Kuz Baba can't be bothered with politics but is instead consumed by grief for his murdered lover and a fresh desire for the Dutch soldiers of the new German prince: "So taken he is by thinking about boys that since he seeing the Dutch, he is obsessed with fetching one as a slave" (Kadare 2009, 469). Kuz Baba's violent, vulgar, irrational, and uncontrolled sexuality throughout the novel is constructed against the backdrop of a character named Shestan, a beautiful, rational, heterosexual, naïve soldier who, along with his friends, decides to fight in favor of the German prince and therefore for the European future of Albania. Shestan's early lack of determination matures when he reads his first newspaper in Albanian and comes across a picture of Albania depicted as a "girl or a young woman laying on a hospital bed, surrounded by masked surgeons with knives and scissors in their hands" (Kadare 2009, 476). Amid chaos and ambivalence, Shestan's deepfelt sympathy toward the representation of Albania as a fragile woman under threat by masked surgeons representing both the encroachments of neighboring states makes him the ideal male citizen. Kadare projects the chaos of an infantile state with the infantile Shestan who then matures through his rejection of Kuz Baba's advancements. For Shestan's sexuality to mature, Kuz Baba's unsublimated and unsacrificial sexuality cannot be oriented toward the advancement of the nation and, as such, cannot represent the future, but only a failed past. Shestan's coming of age is employed to imply and register Albania's coming of age into modernity and Euro-hetero order, equated with returning to, or rediscovering, Europe.

In order to establish a semblance of order in an ambivalent time and space, Kadare has to work against multiple sexual subjectivities that don't always align with the Euro-homo-hetero binaries that he wants to introduce as a hetero ordering device. Kuz Baba is not simply a homosexual but represents an entire homoerotic culture modeled after the bejtexhi tradition that escapes homo-hetero binaries as well as the gendered male-female order. In this context, Kadare's depiction of the queerness of bejtexhi homoerotics is not reductive, albeit he does mock its sentimentalities. For instance, Kuz Baba claims that he was told by a certain dervish that "dylbers must be covered in hijabs as women to avoid scenes, wherever it appears, the knife is not far" (Kadare 2009, 436). Kadare discrediting the bejtexhi tradition in the production of homo-hetero binaries is manifold. While Kadare exploits the bejtexhi tradition to legitimize his historical fiction, he uses irony to banalize its homoerotic aesthetics.

This is not accidental, as it appears at a critical juncture of orientation, both sexual and geopolitical. In *The European Identity of Albanians* (2006), for instance, Kadare explicitly states that the bejtexhi poetry had "a hidden agenda to unman and morally weaken" the Albanian man, as "it needed no more than a few 'boys' and 'fags' of that sort for not freedom, but the very idea of freedom to disappear forever" (2006, 6). Albanian anxieties around these queer sexualities, which Kadare frequently places in various Islamic settings such as a Bektashi Tekke or a dervish, are not specific only to his writings. Contemporary Albanian literary works have frequently engaged with Islamic sexualities to construct the hetero-male character as a way of saving him from potential queer and Islamic orientations by valorizing his ability to overcome such temptations and re-orient himself toward Europe.

The contemporary, cursory employment of Islamic sexualities in different modalities to locate the ideal Albanian heterosexual in relation to Europe emerges at a time when old anxieties around fractured and unfinished European orientations became subsumed in debates about contemporary European expansion. These debates, reflected in the literary taste for "belonging to Europe," expose old and new contradictions of historical narratives in Albanian literature. For example, in *Otello, Arapi i Vlorës* (Otello, the moor of Vlora) Ben Blushi (2009), one of the most popular authors in Albania in the last two decades, employs the queer "foreign" Muslim to reinforce a narrative of heteronormative European masculinity to tell the story of Albania before the arrival of the Ottomans. Set between 1300 and 1400, in pre-Ottoman Albania, *Otello, Arapi i Vlorës* recounts the fall of Vlora to the Ottomans through the personal story of Otello. Otello, an African slave, ends up in Albania after he is purchased by a Venetian family whose patriarch takes him on a trip to Vlora to visit his relatives. The family ties between a Venetian family and the ruling family of Vlora reinforce Albania's historical relations with Europe before the Ottoman invasion. In Vlora, coming under suspicion for murder, Otello ends up in prison where he meets Hamit, a sly Muslim queer who seduces Otello and introduces him to homoerotic love. When Otello tries to seduce Andrea, a new Albanian prisoner, Andrea resists engaging in anything more than just touching and pretending to be sleeping while Otello admires his body. Sexuality here is attributed to both the racial and religious other. While both Otello and Hamit are presented as feeble men who fall prey to their uncontrolled desires,

Andrea resists this urge by deciding to join the army and save Vlora from the arriving Ottoman armies, which is equated with sacrifice and resistance to sexually deviant behaviors and the preservation of heterosexual integrity. In the end, the Ottomans defeat the Albanians. Hamit, who has now joined the Ottoman forces, takes Andrea hostage and out of resentment for Otello's love toward Andrea cuts Andrea's head off and paints it in oils and perfumes. This corporal disfigurement of Andrea's head serves to remind the reader of failed Albanian heterosexuality in the face of Ottoman conquest and that only through the disintegration of his body could Hamit subdue Andrea's heterosexual masculinity. The fall of Albania to Ottomans registered in the disembodiment of Andrea's body suggests that Albania's temporary misalignment from Europe during the Ottoman Empire did not and could not convert Albanians into Ottomans, as this could have only been attained through death.

Similarly, in 2008's, *Të Jetosh ne Ishull* (To live on an island), the character of Ali Tepelena, a semirealistic depiction of Ali Pasha of Tepelena (an Ottoman Albanian ruler from 1740 to 1822), is styled as a queer despot who seduces young Christian men for his harem. His homoerotic sexuality is equated with Islam, a foreign infliction in the body of the nation that cannot be purged but only assimilated. The main character, Arianit Komneni, reflects on how "Islam has been pushed onto our beds, our homes and our souls," and "now we can't kill this foreign beast as we will hurt ourselves . . . if we want to live in peace with it, we have to tame the wildness of the beast, feeding it with our Christian body and soul" (Blushi 2008, 403). The foundational narrative of Albanian identity here emerges as a diluted, damaged, and compromised hybrid of wild Islam penetrating loving Christianity. Blushi, while destabilizing the boundaries of "us" and "them," employs Christian ethics of victimhood and sacrifice to suggest that, as Christ carries the burden of sin in being reborn free, the Albanian man in being reborn as European must tame and bring under control Islam. While Blushi operates through Christianity to establish the Europeanness of Albanians, Kadare uses northern Albanian Catholicism and classical Greek mythology as an orienting device toward the Balkans and Europe. In his works of both literature and literary criticism, the catholic Albanian North represents a space not fully contaminated by the Ottoman Empire and is fanatically engaged in preserving "Albanianness" in the ancient Greek tradition that is therefore proto-European.

It is important to note here that the dialectical tensions around Islam, sexuality, whiteness, and belonging to Europe are not framed in opposition to homosexuality, per se, but specifically Islamic "queer" sexualities. In Kadare's *Konkurs Bukurie për Burrat në Bjeshkët e Namuna* (Beauty pageant for men in the Accursed Mountains, 1999), unlike Islamic sexualities, the Catholic Albanian homosexual is ontologized through ancient Greek mythology and rendered a victim-hero rather than a villain. This desire to save the Catholic, and by extension ancient Greek and European Albanian homosexuality, from the Queer Muslim one is to introduce homohetero binaries as protection from uncategorizable abjection. Situating the narrative in northern Catholic Albania, the hero of the novel, Gaspër Cara, is portrayed as a kind, emancipated citizen from the capital who suffers his homosexuality in silence. Cara's love for Prenk Curri, a confident highlander and suffering-in-silence desired heterosexual, is committed, stable, and exclusive. In contrast to Kadare's licentious queer Muslim characters who have multiple lovers and frequently abuse them, Cara's love for Curri, while homosexual and tragic, is still depicted as an acceptable love within the realm of possibility. It is also interesting to note that the construction of Carra as a modern European homosexual is enacted through his state-of-the art dress and as a reader of Oscar Wilde's *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The civilized look and behavior enables him to engage with the rest of the local Europeanized intelligentsia who not only understand him but sympathize with his predicament (Kadare 1999, 117–55). The difference in the portrayal of Muslim and northern Albanian Catholic sexualities is therefore related to European belonging. The latter is not projected as a threat, as his European homosexuality keeps heterosexuality intact and stable. Muslim sexualities on the other hand are projected as destabilizing and impossible failures.

Indeed, in an interview after his reception of the Man Booker International Prize (now the International Booker Prize), when asked what he made of Lord Byron's account of "Greek love" among Albanians in the court of Ali Pasha of Tepelena, Kadare replied that "what Byron saw had nothing to do with Ancient Greece, . . . It came with the Ottoman occupation and was pedophile, little boys" (Fallowell 2006). The desire to pathologize and discredit Ottoman Albania, and by extension Islamic sexualities as failed and perverse, serves as a reminder of the continued Albanian anxiety around the desired integrity of their European orientation. On the other hand, the introduction of the Catholic homosexual as

a victim, at a time when certain homosexual bodies are integrated into European citizenship, suggests that while Islamic sexualities cannot be fully expelled they can be stabilized and assimilated into homo-hetero binaries. Europe then presents the possibility of redemption and escape of past failed sexualities, straightening and administering their permission as a testament to tolerance and diversity. This coincides with European integration discourses built around "returning to Europe" as an escape from violent non-European pasts.

HOMOEMANCIPATION
AND THE QUEER POLITICS OF TIME

In an interview given for *Stigma* (European Union External Action 2014), a documentary funded by the EU project "Challenging Homophobia in Kosovo," the European Parliament rapporteur for Kosovo, Ulrike Lunacek, appears at a press conference and explains to Kosovar viewers that homosexuality is not a disease. In another segment, Lunacek suggests that she is "sure that there are artists in this country who are quite popular who are also lesbian and gay, but are afraid to say so," stressing the importance that some of these people "show their faces," closing her remarks with, "I have said here in Kosovo that I am a lesbian myself, [it] is part of my life, so what?" The documentary renders the queer community in Kosovo almost entirely invisible. Kosovar society is pathologized as pervasively patriarchal and ignorant with an almost irreconcilable difference between queers and the rest of their communities. These statements are not just located in mediated discourses; they also advance EU-funded projects geared toward saving the LGBTQI+ community in Kosovo from homophobia and transphobia through the promotion of normative LGBTQI+ rights that rely on Western and white homoemancipation concepts of coming out, visibility, and top-down institutional approaches devoid of other factors of marginalization.

The debate around in/visibility is an important one to question as it registers those subjects whose sexuality can be understood in Euro-American sexual politics. As Jasbir Puar reminds us, "Coming out as a normative queer (secular) practice is thus scripted as religious confession, which accrues the force of what Foucault terms 'the speaker's benefit'— those who can speak about sex are thus seen as free, having transgressed its (religious) confinement" (2017, 235). Thus when Lunacek argues that

there is no visibility, she not only ignores the visibility of queer individuals and formations in Kosovo who do not identify with the dominant LGBTQI+ discourse but also fails to acknowledge those who reject visibility as a categorical need to label and classify their sexuality through specific categories and arbitrary markers over more complex subjectivities and realities that can't always fit the neatly defined Euro-American politics of LGBTQI+ rights. Moreover, problematizing coming-out as a Western and cisgender narrative, Saffo Papantonopoulou, for instance, asks, "[What] does it mean for a transgender person to *not* be 'out'[?]" (2014, 283). In other words, the projects that invest in "saving" the LG BTQI+ community in the Balkans not only seek to project the EU as the defender of these communities, even in instances when these communities reject its patronage, but also legitimize Euro-American coloniality through homoemancipation.

In a promotional video made by the US Embassy in Kosovo called "Judge Ted Weathers and Family Discuss LGBTQI+ Issues in Kosovo," we are introduced to the honorable Theodore Weathers, his husband, Terry McEachern, and their daughter, Elizabeth. McEachern, a financier from San Diego, reminds the viewers that "gay people have been born into every culture and every religion since the beginning of the world" (US Embassy Pristina Kosovo 2014). During a series of images of the US ambassador surrounded by LGBTQI+ activists during Pristina Pride, the video features Weathers commending Kosovo for its new constitution, drafted primarily by USAID lawyers, that protects LGBTQI+ rights. In another interview given for the magazine and media outlet *Kosovo 2.0*, Weathers argues, "The folks here and the LGBT community, they are fearful. They are not out to their families or co-workers. It reminds me of where we were 30 years ago, personally and also in the USA, when it was a much more fearful thing to be openly gay. . . . Things have changed so much in the last 20–30 years in the USA, and I suspect, and I hope that it will be the same in Kosovo" (Marí 2014).

Neda Atanasoski points out that since the 1990s, one crucial task of US liberal multiculturalism was to distinguish normative modes of inhabiting and representing diversity from aberrant ones, which could lead to "tribalism" and separatism of the kind witnessed in former Yugoslavia, Chechnya, and Rwanda (Atanasoski 2013, 34). While projecting post–Cold War Balkan countries as premodern societies stuck in ethnic and religious hatred and rooted in the failures of the socialist experiment,

multiculturalism emerged as an emblem of national unity and liberal democracy and as a sign of the end of racial and racist history in the West. Alongside this portrait of integration, "ethno-religious national-ism and conflict in post-socialist Eastern Europe portrayed the region as an anachronistic reflection of a pre–civil rights era U.S. racist past" (36). This myth of US racial progress, argues Atanasoski, which had, since the 1950s, been narrated as *domestic* racial advancement, was resignified fol-lowing the demise of state socialism as an *evolutionary model* for the for-mer Eastern Bloc nations (36).

Visiting Albania on a homoemancipation tour to attend the first of-ficial US-sponsored conference held outside the country, prominent gay US author Kevin Sessums wrote, "As I look out at so many young people in the audience today who have come to Tirana from all over Eastern Eu-rope and the Balkans for this conference on LGBT rights, I am reminded of those brave young people half a century ago who came to Mississippi during Freedom Summer, at great risk to themselves, in order to orga-nize and demonstrate and strategize not only for the advancement of the rights of African Americans but, in so doing, the advancement of soci-ety as a whole" (2016). He proceeds to situate the civil rights struggle in the postracial registry by comparing the number of Mississippi's white residents back then to the number of the residents of Eastern Europe and the Balkans now, deeply resenting any attempt by young activists to change their society.

Echoing the "it gets better" narrative that was popularized in the United States to address LGBTQI+ bullying and suicide, Sessums here projects the United States as a postracial society no longer haunted by racism yet still animated by anxiety over which racist past gets permission to be visible in the struggle for LGBTQI+ communities in the postsocialist and culturally backward Balkans. Rahul Rao points out how the inter-nationalization of "it gets better" narratives "evoke central tropes of ho-monationalism, deploying queer tolerance to reproduce extant geopoliti-cal hierarchies" (2020, 144). Moreover, such narratives not only reinforce the myth of postsocialist, (neo)liberal capitalist progress in Eastern Europe but, more importantly, they entirely ignore the structural violence, crim-inalization, poverty, incarceration, and death regularly administered on Black and brown transgender and queer bodies in the United States. As Bassichis and Spade write:

The fantasy of life "getting better" imagines violence as individual acts that bad people do to good people who need protection and retribution from state protectors . . . rather than situating bodily terror as an everyday aspect of a larger regime of structural racialized and gendered violence congealed within practices of criminalization, immigration enforcement, poverty, and medicalization targeted at black people at the *population* level—from before birth until after death—and most frequently exercised by government employees. (Bassichis and Spade 2014, 196)

The time and timing of humanitarian, and now queer, interventions in the Balkans have continued to be read in the registry of the United States coming to the aid of societies stuck in time and in socialist projects gone awry. If the early 1990s politics of assertive humanitarianism were defined by missions to save Muslims in the Balkans, today similar saving projects target LGBTQI+ populations to save them from radical Muslims. These narratives converge with histories of post-Ottoman coloniality of secular states and subjectivities and are braided through the invention of the post-Ottoman Muslim citizen at the borderlands of Europe, discussed in chapter 2 and 3, at both the end of the Ottoman Empire and their revitalized lives after socialism. If Europe in the twentieth century, a secular and socialist nation-state coloniality, has constituted itself against fictitious *Islamic sexualities* in the Balkans, today LGBTQI+ politics are employed in the service of Euro-American enclosures.[5] The intersection of sexuality and Islam as orientation points to the construction of European identity for the Muslims in the Balkans, guided by a desire to whitewash them from their Islamic pasts in favor of histories that support totalizing narratives of Europeanness. In this context, the confluence of sexual orientation and European orientation in Albanian and Bosnian literature and film have been complex, contradictory, and corrective. By corrective I mean that the destabilizing subjectivities and lived experiences that fail to conform to European-oriented politics of local elites are, at times, rendered invisible or attacked as Oriental renegades of Ottomanism and Islam.

As questions around Muslim integration inside the EU are framed around *coexistence*, in Bosnia and Kosovo they have been framed in terms of *orientations* toward Europe, both concepts suggesting incompatibility,

distance, failure, and perhaps impossibility. While coexistence suggests that Muslims are "external to the essence of Europe" so that "'coexistence' can be envisaged between 'us' and 'them'" (Asad 2003, 165), orientation toward the EU raises the question of alternative orientations. Reinforcing the idea of a European orientation suggests that there is an alternative, a possibility, a desire among these populations against which European orientation is enforced. In other words, against which other futures are the Muslims in the Balkans being directed toward the EUropean future? While the Euro-Atlantic enclosure presents itself as an unmarked category, as the self-evident and only possible orientation for the Balkans, the queer Muslim is employed to stabilize Balkan anxieties about belonging to Europe and discipline its disoriented bodies. Islamic sexualities are not only traded in the postcolonial marketplace, always in need for new others that can be co-opted and incorporated; they also allegorize the anxieties of the Islamic self as an unfinished queer self that fails to follow Euro-American orientations.

I want to return to the question of visibility and Lunacek's assumption that there are no queer artists in Kosovo who "show their faces." This is an important discourse that needs to be exposed, for it not only hides the important work that queer artists and activists in Kosovo have engaged in in the last decade but also legitimizes as permissible the EU discourse on LGBTQI+ rights denying queer Kosovars the ability to tell their stories by controlling their narratives. Looking at queer Kosovar artist Astrit Ismaili's work, however, may provide some insights as to why certain queer artists in Kosovo are made invisible to the EU.

In the performance piece *Trashformations* (Ismaili 2014), the Kosovar queer artist Astrit Ismaili appears with a swimming cap, swimsuit, and one shoe on, with what seems to be a garbage bag over his shoulder. Resembling both a swimmer and a body washed offshore, Ismaili opens the garbage bag asking those present to throw whatever trash they have with them in the bag. Leaving the bag aside, he then proceeds to question the limits of defined and codified subjects and rights by opening the possibility of trashforming those rights in the context and circumstances in which subjectivity is situated and where bodies can take different shapes and forms. To illustrate the limits of confined rights, he wraps himself in adhesive tape, symbolizing the restricting nature of codified rights, their impossibility, and the borders they create between bodies, communities,

genders, classes, and temporalities. The taping of his body to the walls of the studio also suggests the binding nature of these rights to certain material and discursive realities that limit our ability to physically move, see, and be beyond them. He points out during his performance that one needs a visa to pass through these borders and "if you don't have one, you go to jail," further illustrating how these borders also sustain the biopolitics of who lives and dies, who passes and doesn't. He then starts to throw money at the audience, as a way of bringing attention to the various economies that sustain and profit from drawing and maintaining borders. Reminding the audience that he does not want to be a victim and that he is not one, he questions the "war is over" discourse in Kosovo, suggesting it is fictitious since his war is still ongoing. Finally, pulling out an EU flag as a symbol of the ultimate blinding and binding ideology that the EU has come to represent in postwar Kosovo, Ismaili remarks that while looking at the EU flag, he doesn't see the stars and the sky. Questioning the promise and premise of what the EU is, he shoves the EU flag in his mouth as a way of using things we don't like to simply get by. Throwing up the EU flag into the garbage bag, he symbolically thrashes it in a hope of trashforming EU borders and the violence that sustains them that had started to emerge in the Balkans in the early 2010s. Like Pajtim Statovci in *Crossings* (2019), Ismaili tries to convey both the privilege of Albanians' position to pass—not just with gender and race but across borders—all the while acknowledging the alienation it takes to get there, because while their skin may not betray them, their walking, their staring, and their desires may.

Ismaili became a much-talked-about figure in the Albanian queer scene. In 2016, he produced Era Istrefi's video for "E dehun jam" (2014). In the video, Istrefi appears in a traditional Albanian gold-plated *jelek* with her face painted in temporary tattoo lines after the Gorani women of southern Kosovo. The opening traditional Albanian aesthetics and styles—which have defined Kosovar popular-culture defiance to Serbia—are a prelude to a shifting scene of queer punk youth dancing in the new Serbian Orthodox cathedral of Pristina built by the Serbian regime on the university grounds as a way of marking the territory as "sacred Serbian land." In the background, Nexhmije Pagarusha, the icon of Kosovo music, is heard singing, "I am drunk / my feet no longer hold," with Era adding, "Shots of tequila and beer work / to remove the pain / a little bit

of Bob Marley too / so when I roll / I no longer stop at the patrol . . . and even if there isn't love there is always enough raki / Doesn't matter what you gonna say about me / Doesn't matter what you gonna say about me / Doesn't matter what you gonna say about me / Doesn't matter what you gonna say about me" (Istrefi 2014). But despite the carried-away carelessness that has come to dominate Albanian Kosovar postwar pop and publics, Albanians, argues the Kosovo Roma Artist Bajram Kafu Kinolli, "not only care how the West sees them but is central to all their cultural productions," so much so that the rejection of *tallava* has to do with Albanian racist anxieties over their whiteness given its Romani roots (Kika 2018). And yet, "all their bellies start to vibrate," agues Kinolla, once tallava is on, activating stored sensibilities that betray their performances of modernity. With his band *Gipsy Groove*, Kafu, as he is known in the Kosovo music scene, has made significant antiracist interventions by building solidarity that has gravitated toward communal repair, but he also takes Albanian and Balkan artists and audiences to task about the striking appropriation of Roma culture, which most of the Albanian music scene is entrenched in today. He believes that what Albanians find threatening about tallava, just like what Bulgarians find threatening about challaga, is not only the Islamic Roma roots of the music but also its perceived femininity as mournful music in a time when Albanian heteronormality is increasingly seeking to replicate the Euro-hetero model.

Questions of gender and sexuality are mobilized in postsocialist societies, both by states and NGOs (nongovernmental organizations), to mediate projects and ideals of sexual rights aligned with recognizable Euro-American models of sexuality. The deployment of LGBTQI+ issues in the service of Euro-Atlantic integration propels new forms of (homo)nationalist activism dominated by wealthy, urban, cisgender success stories of postsocialist neoliberal reforms, generally disconnected and depoliticized from broader questions of social and economic justice. The politics of visibility, marriage, and pride has erased racialized, disabled, and impoverished queer and trans folks and fails to address the intricacies and assemblages of sexuality in postsocialist contexts. This body- and geopolitical bordering through queerness results in racialized desires and dreams that establish distinction between bodies designated for desirability and the destabilized, debilitated, and damaged others. It is in this context that postsocialist queers are called to rehabilitate the ailing, misaligned, postsocialist patient and deliver it toward progress. In this Eurocentric

worldview, the road to the EU and NATO is mapped out through the affirmation of queer bodies, with resistance to such a road leading to political itineraries that violate queers. In postsocialist geographies, queer bodies thus become the battleground of geopolitical realignment of Cold War 2.0. With that in mind, the following chapter looks at the intersections of Roma and Muslim racism in Bulgaria and the ways in which *queer* responses have sought to destabilize its seemingly inevitable straightening of bodies and sealing of borders.

Turning Back
By Joan Naviyuk Kane

I wished to be closer to my mother
to think of displacement in a different way.

To part the bright green new growth
of a plant she has asked me to gather.

We never imagined so many years apart.
I have no way to make amends.

Set adrift, I wanted to stay near the shore
of something familiar but instead I trace

the shape of tuqaayuk, sea lovage, wild
celery, with something other than my tongue.

I wish for my family to be its own refuge,
for the sorrow to become something islandic.

Someplace we can travel back to together
if we have to, if we make it through these days.

A Coalitional Approach to Theorizing Decolonial Communication

GABRIELA VERONELLI

This article begins by examining the importance that critical intercultural dialogues have within the Modernity/Coloniality Research Program toward reaching an alternative geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge, in order to raise the question whether the colonial difference creates conditions for dialogical situations that bring together critiques of coloniality emerging from different experiences of coloniality. The answer it offers is twofold. On the one hand, if one imagines such situations to be communicative exchanges à la Bakhtin that put logos at the center, given what is termed the coloniality of language and speech, *the possibility of such exchanges is feasible only as an abstract gesture. On the other hand, when one faces the complications of the erasure of dialogue produced by coloniality, the kind of decolonial communicative relations that seem possible among people thinking and acting from the* colonial difference *are less conscious or agential than emotive. By articulating the relations between coalitional methodologies (María Lugones) and a global sense of connection (Édouard Glissant) the article proposes a* nondialogical *theory of decolonial communication: a way of orienting ourselves with a sense of permeability and recognition of being on the same side that doesn't need to be politically motivated but is always active.*

Decoloniality today is used in many frames. As I embrace the understanding articulated in the past twenty years by the Modernity/Coloniality Research Program (MC henceforth), I see that the project of *decoloniality* is twofold: it seeks a relocation and re-embodiment of knowledge to unmask the Eurocentric and provincial horizons of modern reason and its links to the coloniality of power, knowledge, gender, and being, and it calls for plurality and intercultural dialogue in the building of decolonial futures. It is this call and its connections to the project of *decoloniality* that I wish to examine here. I wish to do so from the pragmatic intervention of the *decolonial turn*.

Shifting the geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge includes attention to questions and problems that didn't exist before: questions and problems that emerge in the efforts to liberate ourselves from the confines of modernity and the set-ups of the

modern/colonial matrix of power. Decolonial futures don't have words yet; they don't have a "how": How would these networks of exchange of people thinking and living against coloniality be formed? What are the conditions of possibility of this *pluriversal* movement? Would it be necessary to establish conditions for these dialogues? Among whom would they be? Would they include the oppressor? What languages would be spoken? How would nonverbalized knowledge be recognized? The call for plurality and critical intercultural dialogue is there; the idea of *pluriversality* is there.[1] It is a nice idea. The question is how to go about it. Is it necessary to decolonize dialogue itself?

Here I propose a theory of decolonial communication that articulates decolonial feminist María Lugones's praxical exploration of the communicative requirements to forge *deep coalitions* among peoples who are differently oppressed at the many intersections of gender, race, class, and sexuality, and Édouard Glissant's way of reconceiving intercultural relations. First I will review the importance given to the question of plurality and critical intercultural dialogue within the MC, and building on this, I will further elaborate the problem by examining how coloniality conditions such dialogue.

THE DECOLONIAL TURN AND THE CALL FOR CRITICAL INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

Epistemically, MC stands on the premise that Eurocentrism is basically a question of a long-term imperial project in which the emancipatory potential of modern reason (as practiced by Christianity, Enlightenment thinking, positivism, developmentalism, and neoliberalism) hides and disguises the logic of coloniality, a logic that justifies domination and brutal exploitation of bodies and nature in the name of emancipation (Escobar 2002, 5).

Given this premise, MC theorists argue that there is no way out of coloniality from within modern categories of thought. Thus, to reveal the logic of coloniality embedded in the geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge is a necessary step toward undoing the modern/colonial matrix of power, but it is not sufficient (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2011). What is needed is a *decolonial turn*: a term that first came to light in 2005 to refer to a spatial fracture in the geographical horizons of knowledge-production that shifts the loci of reason and inquiry toward the legacies of critical responses by colonized subjects and others since the inception of modernity and coloniality (Maldonado-Torres 2011, 5).[2]

It is key that this deep epistemic shift toward *decoloniality* involves a list of possibilities and, most fundamentally, the materiality of creating, expressing, and carrying out alternatives emerging from the perspectives and lived experiences of a politically enriched exteriority (Escobar 2002, 4). In this way those who advance the *decolonial turn* don't aim to provide a counter-hegemonic alternative to the project of modernity, and are indeed skeptical about such attitudes. Rather, the project of *decoloniality*, at least the MC version of it, involves a horizontal global projection of decolonial options in and toward which critical intercultural dialogues and local-to-local

connections are imperative. By "critical intercultural dialogues" (or, later on, "decolonial dialogues"), I mean conversations that bring together critiques, responses, or resistances to coloniality that emerge from different geopolitical, body-political, and social positions marked by the histories of colonization, patriarchy, and racism. It is this horizontal and dialogical intervention and its connections to the project of *decoloniality* that I examine here.

Resistance through dialogue is central to many of the authors who work on liberation and the destruction of the *coloniality of power* (Quijano 2000). From the MC standpoint, an important relation between dialogue and the project of *decoloniality* appears in Enrique Dussel's concept of *transmodernity*:

> Transmodernity refers to a new horizon where the ethical question of giving to the poor and the ethical modality of listening to those who have been oppressed become an integral part of epistemic positions and productions . . . . Transmodernity can also be seen as a proposal for intercultural dialogue from a decolonial perspective . . . . While modernity takes emancipation at the center and elevates reason to an abstract universal and global design, transmodernity offers the possibility of thinking commonality diversely (a conception of commonality that includes the fact of diversity and discerns basic abstract but also material ethical principles: We are equal in that we are different). (Dussel 1995, 138–39)

Dussel's concept of *transmodernity* expresses both the horizon of a possible decolonized world and a decolonial attitude with regard to modernity (Maldonado-Torres 2011, 7). As the concept invites imagining a world where many different worlds can coexist without an imposed assimilation ethos into a dominant culture, it works out new kinds of interrelationships that involve plurality, dialogue, and the creation of symmetrical power/knowledge relations. Whereas modernity, as a system and epistemic attitude, is monological because it is premised on colonizing ideas, institutions, and practices, *transmodernity* is dialogical because it recognizes that the world can be known in many languages with unique and rich meanings and conceptual bases. The intercultural dialogue that *transmodernity* proposes appears, then, to include modern reason while seeking to decolonize it. That is what the prefix "trans" conveys: a transgression and transcendence of modernity that strips it of its colonizing elements, including its colonizing relation with the "Other" (7). In giving further substance to the intercultural dialogue that the idea of *transmodernity* inspires, Dussel tells us about an ethical disposition toward those who had been silenced and ignored in/by the history of modernity's colonial enterprises. By radicalizing the Levinasian notion of "other," in Dussel's vision of *transmodernity* the "other" is sought out as the location of an epistemic irreducible difference, who, in order to be listened to, needs to be recognized in her exteriority.

Walter Mignolo is another important figure within the MC who writes about the relation between dialogue and the project of *decoloniality* as he sees manifestations of critical dialogical actions already in practice:

Afro-Andeans are in the process of reactivating their own principles of knowledge and memory. By creating a series of theoretical concepts that allow them to conceptualize themselves … they enter into critical dialogue with the unavoidable Western categories of thought that were implanted in their souls by the Spanish language they have to learn … instead of "alienating" themselves by thinking from conceptual frameworks that do not belong to their experience …. It is an energy and a conceptual matrix of "appropriation," enrichment, and empowerment that liberates by decolonizing and works towards a possible future that will no longer be dictated by the church, the capitalist states, or the private sector ….

Some Latins in the South confront these struggles and are threatened while others are joining forces with Latino/as, Afros, and Indigenous peoples and working in solidarity on common projects. Thus an "*intra*cultural dialogue," to use an expression learned from Afro-Colombian activist Libia Grueso, is taking place among political projects originating in diverse but parallel experiences of the colonial wound. Intracultural dialogue among subaltern projects and communities generates intercultural struggles with the state and institutions managing the spheres of the social. (Mignolo 2005, 112–33, 160)

Here Mignolo exhibits how by thinking from the personal and historical experience of coloniality in confrontational dialogue with Western historiographical categories that negate them as people with history, Afro-Andean communities engage in an alternative geography of reason in which the West is relocalized. I add that the same dialogical move by which the West is displaced from the center of enunciation allows Afro-Andean conceptual resistance to transcend the confinement of the duality "center–periphery" and travel to other subaltern locations. The confrontational dialogue seems to encourage a kind of solidarity among political projects that colonization and the logic of coloniality have denied. This solidarity is manifested in *intracultural dialogues*. Although the use of the prefix "intra" seems odd as it conveys that the dialogue is situated and carried on *within* a culture, group, or community, my understanding is that it is employed to emphasize the fact that the political projects in conversation have a shared knowledge of coloniality. Coloniality understood as a global process has local manifestations that depend on particular colonial histories, geographies, cultures, forms of colonization and racialization, and negotiations with and resistances to imperial power. As such there are homologies between, as Mignolo puts it, "diverse but parallel experiences of the colonial wound" (160). In this case, he remarks how some Latin Americans, Latino/as, Afros, and indigenous people are coherent in that way. Theirs are homologous communities and projects standing together on the same side of an intercultural struggle with modern institutions with which they coexist.

As I position myself within the *decolonial turn* and begin to examine the central role critical intercultural dialogues have in reaching deeply into an alternative geopolitics and body-politics of knowledge, I come to see a tendency in MC thinkers.

They focus on people enacting something at the level of ideas, of epistemic and political projects, and they often don't enter the lived experience, the subjectivity of and intersubjectivity among *real people* thinking and acting. I believe this tendency crosses the quotes I examined above. I am not saying that Dussel's *transmodernity* and Mignolo's *intracultural dialogue* are proposing the same thing. The former invites critical and creative appropriations of selected modern ideas along with multiple other conceptual frameworks that can contribute to destroying the *coloniality of power* and forge less oppressive futures (Maldonado-Torres 2011, 7). The latter describes at the structural level a set of decolonial political projects that are critical of or resistant to coloniality, and finds a commonality that brings together different local histories of coloniality in Latin America. Nonetheless, in both dialogical proposals, because the focus of attention is on ideas and projects, the problem of how the communicative conditions created by coloniality restrict building such connections and creating decolonial meaning together tends to be left under-theorized.

Granted that decolonial dialogues are at the heart of the project of *decoloniality*, here I will raise two questions. The first one is about the barriers to such intersubjective communicative relations put in place by coloniality. The second is about how to imagine decolonial communication differently given these barriers.

THE COLONIALITY OF LANGUAGE AND SPEECH AND THE COLONIAL DIFFERENCE AS LOCUS OF ENUNCIATION

To take up the *coloniality of language and speech* in terms of language theory and dialogism is to introduce an MC perspective that provides a critical understanding of the processes by which communication has been intertwined, articulated, organized, and ranked within the modern/colonial matrix of power (Veronelli 2012, 40).

The concept of *coloniality of language and speech* refers to the process of racialization of colonized populations as communicative agents and its contemporary legacy. It centers on the reduction of the colonized peoples of the Americas to the status of nonhuman and the concomitant dismissal of their languages and ways of knowing as the simple expressions of their "nature" as "inferior beings." In this sense, the *coloniality of language and speech* represents more than the colonization of languages as systems of meaning. It is the *coloniality of power* in its linguistic form: a process of dehumanization through racialization at the level of communication. As colonized men and women are conceived as nonhuman, and thus without gender and human relations, the coloniality of language and speech obscures oppression discursively.[3] In promoting an imaginary that denies colonized people the communicative ability of the colonizers, coloniality closes the possibility of dialogue and dialogical creations of meaning between colonizers and colonized (Veronelli 2012, 26–90).

My conception of dialogue here is inspired by Mikhail Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, the sine qua non for dialogue is that the speaker presupposes in her speech some understanding of how she will be heard or, at minimum, that she will be heard (Bakhtin 1981, 281–82). I am arguing here that this presupposition of being

understood/heard is precisely what is not happening under coloniality, and cannot happen because there is no communicative disposition on the colonizer's part. Bringing Bakhtin into the analytics of MC allows me to argue that inasmuch as his view on dialogue points to something that should have happened in the colonial situation but did not, *its not happening was part of the process of producing coloniality*.

The *coloniality of language and speech* constitutes a sophisticated apparatus of legal, religious, civil, and educational agents, institutions, and practices that have naturalized colonial domination discursively. Naturalizing is a making, a process of manufacturing an intersubjective understanding of the experience of coloniality. To say "it is natural" means here that it is produced, and part of that production involves the creation of natural barriers to intelligibility by turning colonized beings into beings constructed as "incapable" of rational expressivity.

Another way of thinking about this process of naturalizing is in terms of the *colonial difference*, the colonial prescription of superiority and inferiority that turns differences between people, knowledges, expressivities, or languages into values. Hidden by modern/colonial epistemology "as the place of no-thinking, the place of the barbarians, the inferior, the primitives who had to learn to think by studying Greek and Latin and modern European imperial languages" (Mignolo 2006, 7), the *colonial difference* is invisible. It is the history of "the people without history." At the same time, to think in terms of the *colonial difference* has the advantage—for my argument about how coloniality conditions decolonial dialogues—that it provides tools to access *real people* thinking and acting. This is because the *colonial difference* is thought of as a space: "[T]he space where coloniality of power is enacted, [and at the same time] the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging" (Mignolo 2000, xxv). Making the *colonial differen*ce a space (both physical and imaginary) provides a way to enter the intersubjectivity in a very different register so the focus is not on something structural or institutional (though these certainly enter the dynamics), but on interactions among *real people* who live under particular forms of oppression at particular times in particular places. Also, as a space the *colonial difference* is conceptualized by Mignolo as having the double quality of a tense space, which enables us to shift to decolonial thinking/acting by creating a sense of standing in a dual reality (Lugones 2003). At the *colonial difference* colonized people see their reality in their own ways and in the colonizers' way. To see in both ways creates a mixture, thus leading to an understanding of their reality in hybrid ways. This mixture is neither a homogeneous mixture nor a synthesis. These two realities cannot mix, as they are incompatible. So, cycles of coercion/negotiation between these two realities become the heart of the process and condition of inhabiting the *colonial difference*. Thus understood, the *colonial difference* enables addressing the fact that coloniality is not completely successful. Indeed, people who have been marked by racial, colonial oppression have rejected and contested domination at many different levels and with diverse logics.

Given this spatial understanding of the *colonial difference*, I want, first, to discuss people at the *colonial difference* as speakers. And then I want to pose a problem that I believe Dussel and Mignolo aren't considering enough: Thought of as a space, does

the *colonial difference* create the conditions for decolonial dialogues among people with "diverse but parallel experiences of the colonial wound"?

In respect to thinking about people at the *colonial difference* as speakers, Mignolo tells us:

> The colonial difference creates the conditions for dialogic situations in which the fractured enunciation is enacted from the subaltern perspective as a response to the hegemonic discourse and perspective. (Mignolo 2000, xxvi)

Necessarily at the *colonial difference*, people aren't made anew, but are people who are fractured. People who are expressing themselves linguistically express a *fractured* (*locus of*) *enunciation*, in Mignolo's phrase. Those whose speech acts are embedded as dominant in the social organization of the racial split don't language from a *fractured locus*; colonized, oppressed people do. Although they have been denied having rational expressivity, they do certainly speak and communicate, and they do so in ways that reject the understanding of language and speech as enunciated by modernity. However, I disagree with Mignolo about the possibility that a *fractured enunciation* can be understood as a *response* where resistance is in place or, more generally, that there can be critical dialogues between subaltern and dominant speakers. The very conceptual and political nature of the *coloniality of language and speech* negates these possibilities. The fact that the subaltern speaker enunciates something that is *fractured* doesn't mean that the dominant, Eurocentered speaker will understand the enunciation as a response from the *colonial difference*. For that to be the case, the *colonial difference* has to be visible to the dominant speaker, and it is not—that is the oppressive logic of coloniality. But, is it visible to other subaltern speakers with "diverse but parallel experiences of the colonial wound"? Is the *colonial difference* a space for oppressed people to share the experience of coloniality with other oppressed people who come from different experiences of coloniality?

These questions lead to the problem I am exploring. Concretely, I am looking at the possibility of decolonial dialogues, of oppressed people who are *not* of the same group or local history, and who are in a situation in which they want to think or act critically about coloniality *in conversation with one another*. I will argue that such a possibility cannot be taken for granted. Doing so would imply that people throughout the *colonial difference* could see, hear, *and* make sense to one another in respect to critiques of coloniality. But the conditions for such dialogical encounters are not there. And they aren't there precisely because of the communicative arrangements defined and set up by coloniality. The *coloniality of language and speech* isolates each group within a tight, impermeable fiction in such a way that their interests are not connected, they are against each other; everything that happens is through the relation with the colonizer, and the only possibility they have of communicating with one another is through the colonial language.

Perhaps the possibility of decolonial dialogues could be granted at the abstract level of putting ideas or political projects in conversation. I believe this is what Dussel's and Mignolo's *dialogues* are in fact claiming. We can read their dialogical

proposals as either describing a direction to be struggled for or an accomplishment. But in neither case do we get enough sense of *real people* who have been communicatively racialized interacting with one another, or of how such dialogues are initiated, or about the tensions between participants and between *fractured loci of enunciation*, or where the decolonial intellectual is standing in relation to those people (is s/he in the exteriority as well, or is s/he a mediator?).

In arguing that given the logic of coloniality, the possibility of dialogues across decolonial resistances is too difficult and may fail, my claim is not that such dialogues are not desirable. But, if decolonial dialogues are not an outcome but the engine of *decoloniality*, then we need a way of imagining dialogical exchanges that doesn't play in the terms of the *coloniality of language and speech*.

Given its particular spatialities and historicities, the *colonial difference* is not easily seen by subaltern speakers who are differently located, though side-by-side. To hear a response as intelligible is, therefore, too difficult to achieve. In what follows I will argue for the possibility of *nondialogical communication* across experiences of coloniality. *Nondialogical* because making clear from a particular *fractured locus* to another particular *fractured locus* that what one is enacting is a resistant response to coloniality is *more* feasible through emotional tonalities than through the cognitive. It is important to note that my point in this article concerns a decentralization of logos because colonial language and speech pretend to be purely rational, and hence are unable to recognize emotional elements. In saying that *nondialogical communication* is more recognizable from the emotional than the cognitive side, I am not engaging in a reason/emotion split. I neither want to reproduce the assumption that we can be clear about the demarcation between cognitive and affective, nor to make any claims about this distinction. I am aware that saying that resistant manifestations are solely affective is to give too much to colonization (Hoagland 2014). Instead, I am pointing to worlds of meaning that are quite rational, just not being met by modern/colonial communication.

TOWARD A NONDIALOGICAL THEORY OF DECOLONIAL COMMUNICATION

In this section I begin to flesh out a theory of decolonial communication. I want to examine whether the *colonial difference* opens possibilities of communication that are critical of coloniality across experiences of coloniality. Notice that I say "communication" and not "dialogue." This is an important part of my argument. Dialogue is indeed a heavy-duty word; maybe at some point we will need to drop it, maybe it is too loaded with colonization and racialization. The idea of *plurilogue* is going around, and I don't deny the difference that shifting from "dia" to "pluri" makes, but I am arguing that *decoloniality* calls for a decentralization of logos because the reverberations throughout the *colonial difference* are less cognitive than emotive.

In what follows I unpack my theoretical framework to think about communication differently. First, I present the way in which Lugones examines the communicative aspects of theorizing coalition against multiple oppressions. Her "perspective is in the

midst of people mindful to the tensions, desires, closures, cracks, and openings that make up the social" (Lugones 2003, 5). This close-up view offers a methodology that adds to the *pluriversal* conceptual move (of Dussel and Mignolo), a praxical awareness of the spatialities and historicities of peoples at the *colonial difference* and their enactments of *fractured enunciations*. And second, I will look at Glissant's mode of conceiving of the world as *Relation*. I want to bring Glissant into the MC analytics because I find that his *Poetics of Relation* (1997) is, in a way, responding to the call for *pluriversality* with a concrete politics. His approach to global, intercultural relations can be read as an invitation to resituate ourselves in the sense of not just being differently connected in a complex world, but of being able to express and hear that complexity in terms of echoes.

Lugones's way of theorizing and moving coalition against multiple oppressions offers us a deep sense of relations of oppression and relations of resistance. In her view, oppressions are multiple and intermeshed. The logic of domination is exercised by abstraction (categorization leading to fragmentation), whereas the logic of resistance has diversified concreteness. Moreover, agency, though active, doesn't have a conscious intentionality (that is, actions are always voluntary but not always done with explicit or conscious political motivation) (Lugones 2003, 1–8).

Importantly, Lugones also points to the barriers to the possibility of coalitions-of-understanding-across-resistances, one of the main ones being the logic of *narrow* resistant identity. In "On Complex Communication" she takes up the communicative aspects of this matter:

> The limen is at the edge of hardened structures, a place where transgression of the reigning order is possible. As such, it both offers communicative openings and presents communicative impasses to liminal beings. For the limen to be a coalitional space, complex communication is required. This requires praxical awareness of one's own multiplicity and a recognition of the other's opacity that does not attempt to assimilate it into one's own familiar meanings. Refusing the assumption of transparency and operating with relational identities, the complex communication that occurs in the limen—often invisible to dominant groups—can enable genuine coalition and effective resistance to domination. (Lugones 2006, 74)

A key point in this quotation is that Lugones thinks of the oppressed as permeable, so it is possible to address different interactions and interlocutions. According to Lugones an utterance is cognitively charged *as well as* emotively charged. Some don't grasp the cognitive content of the utterance but do grasp its different affective contents and manifestations. Another important element is that being at the *limen* is, in a way, methodologically similar to inhabiting the *colonial difference* or enacting a *fractured locus of enunciation*. *Liminality* simultaneously realizes both the nonexhaustiveness of the oppressive reality and the local and historical materiality of the freeing reality. This is why the *limen* offers both communicative openings and communicative impasses. In the abstract, at the structural macro-level, there is commonality, something that puts people who are oppressed on the same side. However, the ways

in which communicative efforts have been transformed as people have been racialized through legal, political, educational, labor, and civil institutions, and the diverse levels and logic with which those transformations have been contested, necessarily lead to different *journeys* to the *limen*, *journeys* that Lugones stresses are not and cannot be that easily accessible to one another (76–77). This communicative difficulty calls for exercising *complex communication*: reading interlocutions, words, and gestures differently, away from attempting to grasp the conscious, agential content of what is expressed and toward recognizing one another "as occupying liminal sites" (79), which requires a disposition to enter one another's worlds of meaning.

Public-sphere communication as it is theorized by Jürgen Habermas presupposes that people, given the opportunity to speak and be listened to, will understand one another and that their meaning is accessible to one another (Habermas 1985), but that is to presuppose intelligibility where there is none. It is to presuppose that what coloniality expresses in meaning made-through-power can be used by the colonized to express their experiences of oppression, their resistances, and their critiques of master sense. That is, it presupposes transparency. Lugones's way of thinking refuses the presupposition as well as the goal of transparency since that goal requires assimilation, or in some way being successful in thinking and expressing oneself in the master tongue with the master's meaning. *Complex communication* is definitively not about Habermasian communication. Being public-sphere communicators is a condition denied to the nondominant speakers in the sense that they don't have the larger structures of power or its institutions backing up their meaning-making. This lack of legitimacy of nondominant speakers in the public sphere is consistent with my claim that the *coloniality of language and speech* makes it too difficult for the oppressed to enter dialogues that are critical with respect to coloniality. What Lugones's view allows me to add is that dialogue is not necessary for communication of a certain sort, communication that is resistant, liberatory, insurgent, or critical in a decolonial vein. This is key to the possibility of *nondialogical communication*.

According to Lugones, nondominant communicative techniques may not have a decolonial logic, in the sense of pointedly addressing institutions, practices, or agents that structure the coloniality of power, but still be transgressive acts that take in a situation that is oppressive and develop a *complex* response. Despite the nondominant speaker being communicatively racialized as inferior, she has the possibility of making those who despise her feel the resistance, feel the insurgence, thus making the oppressive situation less successful. These are not dialogical situations, in the sense of the oppressed being recognized as a person with whom the oppressor can communicate as an equal. Nonetheless, there is a transgression of communicative normalcy. Since the emotional reaction requires that the oppressor hear the oppressed, we can say, with Lugones, that "the utterance moves the social; it moves the linguistic terrain; it transforms it" (Lugones 2012).

Beyond being transgressive utterances that disrupt the oppressive reality, *complex communication* can become something that the speaker does with a Du Boisian *double consciousness* (Du Bois 2005) in the sense that she understands herself in two realities, both as nothing (dominant meaning) and not-nothing (resistant meaning created

within her "rather narrow" circle of resistance) (Lugones 2006, 78). At the same time, *complex communication* goes further than *double consciousness* and responds to it creatively in a way that crosses expressive communities. It is in this possibility of going further than *double consciousness* that I read the distinction that Lugones makes between *deep coalition* or coalition against multiple oppressions, and *narrow coalition* or coalitions based on coincidence of interest. This distinction is particularly signifi-cant here because, in a way, the kind of solidarity and commonality that Mignolo sees among political projects in *intracultural dialogue* seems of the *narrow* type. *Narrow coalitions* close themselves in a sameness that is based on being semiotically transpar-ent to one another and standing together in opposition to oppression as it affects that particular group. In these coalitions there is a shared vocabulary, a shared wisdom that marks the belonging (75, 78), whereas *deep coalitions* thrive on a disposition to understand one another's way of living in resistance in its opaque particularities.

Deep coalition requires *complex communication* in the sense that it asks not to speak the same resisting code, not to have a metanarrative of resistance, and thus is not necessarily based on being able to hear one another in a coherent manner (Lugones 2006, 83–84) (all of which, I think, Mignolo's *intracultural dialogue* does require). Nevertheless, the *complex* utterance might be identifiable as responding to a sign that the other is someone who is taking up a situation of dehumanization. Although there is no full recognition in *complex communication*, there is a sense of reading both ways and understanding what is read in such a way that keeps the focus on resistance. In this sense *complex communication* is both a transgression and a methodology that enables reading reality as multiple. In this way, as a tool to think about decolonial communication, *complex communication* enacts the *fractured locus* in ways that enable the speaker to communicate very differently, away and even against dehumanizing meanings made through the coloniality of power, language, and speech.

It is with the Antillean diasporic experience in mind that Glissant analyzes the possibility of reconceiving intercultural connections and the world as *Relation* (both in the sense of connections and narrations). *Relation* speaks of a new mode in which the logic of the One, of the single-central root is no longer applicable. *Relation* abol-ishes delimitations and trajectories, and makes the world up in terms of an intricate interweaving of communities, an infinite movement across cultures and languages, where each particular patterns an activity implicated in the activity of every other particular. I read *Poetics of Relation* as presenting to us a territorial, cultural, historical, literary, and linguistic chaos and inviting us to imagine ourselves in it (Glissant 1997). I am particularly interested in gathering attitudes that Glissant suggests about being in *Relation*. Although he doesn't really write about people, the chaos of cul-tures, literatures, and languages meeting one another interculturally that he portrays makes room for reflection about intersubjective relations and ways of knowing and relating to one another that stand in opposition to the longing for the virtues of cer-tainty and transparency characteristic of modern/colonial dialogical imagination.

Images of movement, of breaking free from confinement, of departure from the petrifying conditions of the colonial imaginary, of *marronage*, of openness are central to Glissant's thinking and vocabulary. *Relation* is centered on the displacement of

communities, on experiences of relocation, and on people driven across languages, frontiers, and cultures. For Glissant it is pointless and fictitious to look for remote origins, to fix reality by establishing hierarchies of great and small civilizations. Diasporic experiences make evident that the world can no longer be fixed and shaped into a system, and, therefore, that History is a fantasy peculiar to the Western imagination. The world's dynamics demystifies the desperate attempts to impose order, structure, and stability. "Too many Others and too many elsewheres disturb the flattened surface in order for systematic fixations to catch on in the *really livable world*" (Glissant 1997, 33).

This decentered and desystematized world—one could even say decolonized world—that Glissant's *Relation* recreates has three identities: *Totalité-monde*, *Chaos-monde*, and *Échos-monde*. I am interested in the third one and in the intercultural communicative attitude it suggests: a way of engaging communication across differences that decenters cognition understood as of the universal, transparent, rational, logocentric, and split from emotion and thus communicable under the assumption of universality.

The *Échos-monde* doesn't attempt to pull together in some sort of qualitative absolute all the manifestations coming from those "many Others and elsewheres." It isn't reaching an agreement or common ground about what matters but about the intertwining processes of dynamics and rhythms that show themselves in the concurrences of expressions that form the *Échos-monde*. What echoes is by no means an exact reproduction, "for the interval that separates it from the original is also what reduces it to mere fraction of the latter, constituting a rather different sound" (Guha 1996/2001, 40).

The repetition of manifestations coming from those "many Others and elsewheres" doesn't clarify their expression. On the contrary, this repetition leads to perpetual concealment; it compels adopting a permanent vigilance against the temptation of certainty and transparency because disguising is their act of resistance (Glissant 1997, 173–74). In this respect, Glissant demands "the right to opacity" (189) and coins a new term, *donner avec*, to express a cognitive attitude that ensures this right. *Donner avec* (translated into English as *to give-on-and-with*) constitutes the form of knowing and understanding upon which a non-Eurocentric world would be based. Glissant contrasts this form of understanding to that of *comprendre* ("to comprehend," formed on the basis of the Latin "comprehendere" which means "to seize"): an appropriative and almost rapacious form of knowledge and understanding. In contrast, "to give" is meant as a generosity of perception, and it also constitutes a notion of yielding ("to give on"); and "to give with" both reflects back on "comprehend" and defines the underlying principle of the non-Eurocentric world (xii, 212).

As I reflect about speakers-listeners in the *Échos-monde*, I think first of the territorial, historical, and linguistic chaos in peoples' mouths. Speaking-listening within the *Échos-monde* cannot be representing, clarifying, or translating. All these are colonial monological practices aimed at comprehending diversity and culminating in a coherent monologue. All of these practices center on the rational level of the enunciation, on a logos that would make sense as if these were expressions informed by a modern subjectivity. These logocentric practices necessarily mute the *Échos-monde* by imposing a monolithic and monolingual order. Then, the communicative attitude to have

within the *Échos-monde* has to first and foremost desire the *Échos-monde*'s defamiliariz-ing force, never predicting or culminating in some universal sense or narrative. It is an attitude that strives to ask what voices emerge in the chaotic roar of everything one can hear, and how one can hear them. Such an attitude would allow one to challenge the totalitarianism of a universal sense, and to plunge into a *Relational* sense. Communicatively the demand for resisting colonial comprehension and *giving-on-and-with* is about having an openness and disposition to learn each Other's mean-ings that validate the opacities, contradictions, tensions, and uncertainties that emerge in intercultural communication, particularly critical intercultural communica-tion. So, the communicative, intersubjective relation that being in *Relation* inspires is not about making rational sense but *giving-on-and-with* the chaos of sense (understood both as meaning, sensory and affective perception, and direction). The interlocutor in *Relation* (who is no longer traveler, tourist, discoverer, or conqueror) plunges her-self into its opacities and strives to voice her reality, and then she *gives-on-and-with* the disorder, defamiliarizing forces, discontinuities, confusions of indicators, multiple levels of articulation, and secretive manifestations that, with or without words, esoter-ically or coherently work to express something without (necessarily) making rational sense to each Other.

I will now bring Glissant's and Lugones's ideas together as they privilege the com-municative understanding of women of color, indigenous, diasporic, and border-dwell-ing populations, and their complex expressive creations. In doing so I am not comparing them. Rather, I want to focus on what the combination allows for in terms of a theory of communication that would enable connections and decolonial meaning-making across experiences of coloniality: a way of communicating whose main attribute is not destined to be clarity or accessibility.

I propose reimagining *transmodernity* in the way Glissant conceives the world as *Relation*, and in doing so I want to think that its identity as *Échos-monde* allows immersing ourselves in the possibility of *complex communication* across *fractured loci of enunciation*. The echo moves and transforms these *complex communications* while maintaining their multiplicity, so the *coloniality of language and speech* becomes less audible as the fragmentation is being challenged.

Given that everybody is in *Relation* (Glissant 2002, 292–93), I want to propose that the act of resisting communicatively, as Lugones thinks of it, can be understood as if it were going places. The places where the resistant utterance goes signify differ-ent relations between the nondominant speaker and oppression/racial domination, on the one hand, and possibilities that are resistant, liberatory, or decolonial, on the other. One can think of this as an echo. The utterance doesn't bounce into nothing. When it goes through the person it does it in an active way. In this way, we can think of the *fractured enunciation* as having these different resonances that are sensed more emotionally than cognitively. One never has a complete sense of where it is going to go. The *fractured enunciation* echoes; it bounces into and passes through dif-ferent people in a society linguistically and communicatively racialized, and in doing so it alters their relation with respect to oppression at the many intersections of race, gender, class, nation, and sexuality.

To exemplify the connection I am drawing between Glissant's and Lugones's views and a theory of decolonial communication, I want to think of a situation like the one Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) presents, where the modern/colonial requirement not to recognize him enables the invisible man to have certain ways of contesting the oppressor. These responses are *complex communicative* productions that build a *fractured locus* that might be very minimal because it is constituted by a communicative rejection, but still is the site of creativity and communicating otherwise.

From the modern/colonial perspective, the invisible man doesn't exist. The agents, institutions, and practices that structure the *coloniality of language and speech* have thrown him out of the public space. In opposition, from a decolonial perspective the invisible man does communicate. He does so in a way that is nonassimilatory and that is often unintelligible to dominant speakers *as well as* to other racialized groups. With respect to the dominant speaker, though he denies all rational content coming out of the invisible man's mouth and comprehends nothing, he does sense some things about the enunciation. One of things he senses is that it comes from someone who is subhuman. The dominant speaker may be threatened, scared, or full of contempt, all of which signals that the invisible man's *fractured enunciation* has troubled and moved him. With respect to other people with "diverse but parallel experiences of the colonial wound," the invisible man's *fractured enunciation* is not clear in meaning. Yet, although it is cognitively opaque, the utterance might be identifiable as friendly or inspiring. Neither in the case of those who receive it nor in the invisible man's case is it necessary that the enactment and direction of the *fractured enunciation* be done intentionally. It passes through the person in such a way that if read it would be recognized as enunciation from the *colonial difference*. This recognition is a response to the invisible man's utterance not in the Bakhtinian sense of *reply* but in a less consequential and attenuated sense, merely as something that is improper, that lacks the mark of acceptability of the modern/colonial public space.

In the example, echoing is something that can happen in both cases. The echo communicates the multiplicity of worlds of meaning by tracking down the secretive and multiple manifestations of diversity that confront the ideal of cognitive transparency imposed by Western models and the *coloniality of language and speech*. What repeats itself is not the same voice created in expressing suffering, anguish, fear, anger, or impatience but, rather, a movement that emerges gradually in barely perceptible traces. In the case of the dominant speaker, he may think of the invisible man with contempt but, nevertheless, how he takes that emotionally can be thought of as an echo. The decolonial speaker hears something that she doesn't understand but that she acknowledges as coming from a *fractured locus* and is against coloniality. Such recognition can also be thought of as an echo.

There is no need to think here of willfulness or resistant consciousness. The possibility that the *Échos-monde* opens to engaging *complex communications* is neither a linear nor agential sense of communication, but, rather, an uncertain one. Opacities need to be preserved and one is never sure of understanding them. One has to *give-on-and-with* because one's self-assertions are inevitably linked to a sensuous physical presence, to an active body. So what is important is not the circulation of ideas or

political projects but how they resonate in the body—the body as a sort of acoustic box—so that one doesn't claim possession of a purer piece of truth but also doesn't erase the factors of time and place that coalesce as they do in the body and are informed by the immediacy and urgency of the political, linguistic, and social conditions.

So … Is It Necessary to Decolonize Dialogue?

One can feel all the way, all the time how modernity is reproducing coloniality "in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects we breathe coloniality all the time and everyday" (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243). One can imagine, as Mignolo does, that:

> If coloniality is constitutive of modernity since the salvationist rhetoric of modernity presupposes the oppressive and condemnatory logic of coloniality, then this oppressive logic produces an energy of discontent, of distrust, of release within those who react against imperial violence. This energy is translated into de-colonial projects that, as a last resort, are also constitutive of modernity. (Mignolo 2011, 45–46)

Inasmuch as I agree with Mignolo about this "energy of discontent, of distrust, of release," I don't agree that it "is *translated* into de-colonial projects." I think that a translation doesn't follow because to translate is an act that takes place mostly and primarily at a cognitive level, at the representational (signifying, conceptualizing, discursive) function of language; and what comes out of this "irreducible energy of humiliated, vilified, forgotten, or marginalized human beings" (4) are not necessarily conscious at that level but rather, discontinuously, marginally, and unpredictably organized. The thinking of people putting themselves together against the grain of coloniality, I am arguing, is not easily renderable into articulated projects aimed at changing established structures of power. Being at the *colonial difference* is a way for people who have "diverse but parallel experiences of the colonial wound" to put themselves together against coloniality and its fragmenting institutions (including language and speech). But this is when one is conscious about it, and it is not always like that.

I began this article suggesting that the project of *decoloniality* strives to ask whether it is necessary to decolonize dialogue. As I delved further into the MC decolonial argument, the question became whether the *colonial difference* creates the conditions for dialogical situations that bring together critiques or resistances to coloniality emerging from different experiences of coloniality. Building on my own understanding of the *coloniality of language and speech* as well as on Lugones's and Glissant's views, I gave a twofold answer. On the one hand, I argued that if one imagines such situations to be a communicative exchange à la Bakhtin that puts logos at the center,

their possibility is then feasible only as an abstract, conceptual gesture. On the other hand, I argued that when one faces the complications of the erasure of dialogue that coloniality has produced, the kind of decolonial communicative relations that seem possible among *real people* thinking and acting from the *colonial difference* are less reflective, conscious, or agential than emotive. In this respect, by articulating the relations between coalitional methodologies and a global sense of connection, I proposed a *nondialogical* theory of decolonial communication: a way of orienting oneself with a sense of permeability, *Relation*ality, and recognition of being on the same side of things that doesn't need to be politically motivated but is always active.

NOTES

1. MC authors speak of "pluriversality" to characterize an attempt to make visible and viable a multiplicity of knowledges and ways of living that stand in opposition to global and totalitarian designs created in the name of universality and for the sake of capitalist accumulation.

2. Importantly, the MC project and epistemic location materialized as a critical response from the local history of "Latin America," and the legacies of Spanish and Portuguese colonialism and the conquest/invention of the Americas.

3. My argument on the *coloniality of language* speaks to what Lugones calls the "coloniality of gender" (Lugones 2007). In her understanding of the intersection of gender and race under conditions of coloniality, both male and female colonized people in the Americas underwent dehumanization. This process included considering them as lacking rational expressivity. I am thankful to the anonymous reader for suggesting that I further this echo with Lugones's argument and consider that one of the Eurocentric concepts that undermines discourse is the universalized use of "woman." I cannot do so here, but I intend to in a future paper on the politics of decolonial intercultural dialogues between white women and women of color.

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The End and the Beginning
By Wisława Szymborska
Translated by Joanna Trzeciak

After every war
someone has to clean up.
Things won't
straighten themselves up, after all.

Someone has to push the rubble
to the side of the road,
so the corpse-filled wagons
can pass.

Someone has to get mired
in scum and ashes,
sofa springs,
splintered glass,
and bloody rags.

Someone has to drag in a girder
to prop up a wall.
Someone has to glaze a window,
rehang a door.

Photogenic it's not,
and takes years.
All the cameras have left
for another war.

We'll need the bridges back,
and new railway stations.
Sleeves will go ragged
from rolling them up.

Someone, broom in hand,
still recalls the way it was.
Someone else listens
and nods with unsevered head.
But already there are those nearby
starting to mill about
who will find it dull.

From out of the bushes
sometimes someone still unearths
rusted-out arguments
and carries them to the garbage pile.

Those who knew
what was going on here
must make way for
those who know little.
And less than little.
And finally as little as nothing.

In the grass that has overgrown
causes and effects,
someone must be stretched out
blade of grass in his mouth
gazing at the clouds.

1

Woman in the City
(January 1945)

The first essay in the series of essays written by Paulette Nardal between 1945 and 1951, "Woman in the City" is perhaps the most important as it announces not only Martinican women's ascension to the status of citizen with the ratification of the vote for women in 1944, but their entry into public life via the Women's Assembly and its journalistic organ *La Femme dans la Cité*. With these claims to full citizenship come certain duties, particularly as they relate to the public good. Nardal is careful to map out gendered spheres of influence. Women and men excel in different areas by virtue of biology and psychology. When one thinks of these two spheres of science in the 1940s and theories about their relationship to women, one cannot help but think immediately of Nardal's hexagonal French feminist counterpart Simone de Beauvoir.

Simone de Beauvoir and Paulette Nardal would have certainly found themselves circling about and through various cafes and seminars at the Sorbonne in the late 1920s. But unfortunately, an encounter seems not to have taken place. Beauvoir was a very young woman of twenty-one years old in 1929, having just received her *agrégation* in philosophy at the Sorbonne. She would certainly not have been at that juncture the feminist pioneer that would go on to write *The Second Sex*. Indeed, she did not write it until 1943. Moreover, there would have been in all likelihood philosophical disagreements between the two women along the lines of religion,

gender, race, and sexual propriety. Nardal's gender politics were informed by the social conservatism of a specifically black Antillean bourgeois household and her staunch Catholicism, which would have been distinctly at odds with Beauvoir's bohemian lifestyle and professed atheism. Nardal had more in common in terms of ideas about respectability and sexual propriety with upper-class African American women despite her Frenchness.

But whatever their differences, racial, social, religious, there are certain resonances in their work that are worthy of brief exploration. Beauvoir's famous line from *The Second Sex*, "One is not born a woman, but becomes one," would at first glance appear to run counter to Nardal's assumptions about women's nature and character articulated in various articles in *Woman in the City.* Psychology and biology are wholly linked in Nardal's expositions about women's natural predispositions. Beauvoir was a materialist feminist and existentialist who believed that Existence preceded Essence. And yet both women recognized womanhood as a process of acculturation, adaptation, and, in Nardal's case, assimilation. Nardal and Beauvoir concur that women indeed become women, though Nardal embraces the idea of a "feminine essence" as long as it does not impinge upon women's rights or enact gendered hierarchies.

If for Beauvoir, woman has always been cast as man's "Other," and *The Second Sex* endeavors to uncover just what that "Otherness" means for woman, Nardal takes this "Otherness" as an affirmation of feminine difference. Nardal's is a question of ontology, of being. Woman simply *is* or *does*. Where such "otherness" does not correspond to Nardal's ideas about women's equality, in effect, where she deems feminine characteristics as male-manufactured, she is quick to dispense with them.

For her, women's veritable otherness cannot be defined by men for the benefit of men. Given her religious fervor, such differences, where they exist, are ordained by God. She is, as the reader will note in the progression of her arguments articulated in the

various articles in this volume, quite surefooted in her navigation of the line between what is natural and what is cultural.

The social sphere then is women's natural sphere of influence like men. Women, like men, are wholly tied to social duty, the obligation to foster and nurture human progress:

> Now, the social is the aspect of life that interests woman first and foremost. Regarding social duty, she is man's equal. As an individual, she is also intelligent and free. But as a social being, her services are bound to human-kind. Like man, she must contribute to the progress of humanity. . . . In fulfilling, this social obligation, she remains true to her feminine vocation.

And women who are indifferent to this duty, who resist entering the City and taking up what should be a natural predisposition as a social being, as part of a greater humanity, are for Nardal, not "worthy of the name woman."

Woman in the City

Must we deplore the Martinican woman's ascension to the status of citizen? Only time will tell. But one thing is certain: a revolution of the mind and spirit is now in progress.

A call was issued to which a certain number of intelligent, dynamic women responded. We deeply regret not having been able to reach before now the masses of our fellow women citizens, for among them are certainly to be found some interesting personalities, temperaments, and women who relish action.

A host of ideas has been presented to our female population in the form of a program that voluntarily confines itself to social undertakings. Now, the social is the aspect of life that interests woman first and foremost. Regarding social duty, she is man's equal. As an individual, she is also intelligent and free. But as a social being, her services are bound to humankind. Like man, she must contribute to the progress of humanity. But this service, owing to the physical and psychological differences that exist between man and woman, will be of a different kind, though not necessarily of lesser value because of its difference. In fulfilling this social obligation, she remains true to her feminine vocation.

What does this social duty entail? First, we must free ourselves from old prejudices, from lazy routines, in order to become familiar with social environments different from our own. The women of Martinique will therefore have to study problems concerning the family, the professions, the city . . . It is thus to social education work that they are summoned.

Following men, women have entered the city. But in order to navigate the city, women need their insight. And it is at this time that we thank all those who wanted to join our Information Network Committee in order to provide us with lectures, discussions, and even to give us simple advice.

However, we do not need complicated studies to know the particular concerns that daily occupy woman's attention, such as the household staff. This is why, combining action with word, we have established a course on Domestic Instruction for domestic workers, which will soon open, and an Association of Ladies of the House. In order to obviate the lack of preparation of our less privileged fellow women citizens, we have created the Layette Effort; and since we want most of all to educate the masses and raise their social status, we have decided to transform ourselves into social servants.[1]

The women of Martinique have thus been awakened to our social realities. They have understood that the realization of their duty requires the best preparation for the political role that they will be called to play. This is why they join, in greater numbers each day, the Women's Assembly, a group for Information, and for civil and social Action.

The Women's Assembly? A social service enlivened by a great spirit of solidarity.

Its means of action? This publication intends to integrate lectures and course materials with practical results from our social investigations and work undertaken in study circles.

The Martinican woman has entered the City of Men.

Note

1. Despite Nardal's genuine concerns about poor and working-class Martinican women evidenced in her contributions to the journal, her own class position and the organization's primarily middle-class constituency inform an oftentimes paternalistic top down elitism.

2

Setting the Record Straight
(February 1945)

Despite her best efforts to quell men's resistance to women's acqui-
ring the vote and the organization's overwrought claims to doing
only social work, the Women's Assembly has been charged with
having political ambitions. The accusations are not without merit,
for 1945 is an election year in Martinique. In "Setting the Record
Straight," Nardal is emphatic about the neutrality of the organiza-
tion and journal, politically and religiously as well as its mission
to "do good" for the entire Martinican population. That the social
education and uplift of women would seem to be antithetical to
the social welfare of all Martinicans is explicitly challenged by Nar-
dal. Women too have as much claim to the word *humanity* and
its progress as men. Nardal shushes cynics and critics by asking
them to move beyond their hesitations, to believe in the goodwill
of the human spirit.

Setting the Record Straight

"Wait a bit," some know-it-alls say, "and you will see that, when the time comes, they will drive all the women to the ballot box, like Panurge's[1] sheep following each other off a cliff."

Thus, they go about insinuating that the Women's Assembly is mere camouflage for a political party.

One has only to wait, in fact, and the propagators of this falsehood will in due time be put to shame.

In our defense, however, the Association's positions were still in working form, hence it was not possible for us to publish them in their entirety. The public would have been unaware therefore that the association intends to require of its members a strict political and religious neutrality during the course of its meetings. (Art. 3). Our goal is the social education of women with a focus on pressing initiatives. The good that we aim to do applies to the whole population, without any regard to political or denominational affiliation.

Those who carefully reread our objectives will see that it can be adapted, in its purely social and constructive element, to the platform of any political party present in the Antilles, for the work it advocates is essentially of public interest. Furthermore, it is based on sentiments and needs that will last as long as humanity: solidarity, support of the interests of mother and child, human dignity, healthcare, etc. . . . A consensus of opinion should be reached about such a social program. We would not, therefore, have any interest at all in indenturing ourselves to any political party. On the contrary, our members are free to affiliate themselves as individuals with any party they choose. Moreover, the recent creation of different parties, that are at once political and Christian, should be sufficient to clarify the debate.

But it is equally clear that, because of its social and therefore inevitably conciliatory spirit, our agenda would seem to oppose

itself to certain ideologies. We can do nothing about this, since, we repeat, our work pertains to all Martinicans.

It is perhaps within this apparent antinomy that one must peer behind such hesitations. We are equally mindful of how the disillusionment that much of the population of Martinique has endured leaves them distrustful of all innovation. As for those unrepentant skeptics, we refuse to believe that it is impossible for them to conceive of anything beautiful and heartfelt.

Now, we repeat, hatred is not a constructive feeling. So let us move forward without preoccupying ourselves with knowing if the child or the woman whose health we are trying to protect belongs to such or such political milieu, because all that is human is ours.

And let us work in joy.

Whatever hurdles fall in our way, may our joy abound; this profound, inherent joy that the certainty of good that is being realized secures, and the conviction that all of us, able or infirm, exiled or not from active existence, can still be useful in our work.

And no one will deprive you of this joy.

Note

1. A reference to *Gargantua and Pantagruel* by François Rabelais. Panurge is a character from *Pantagruel*. Panurge encourages a sheep to jump off a cliff only to have the rest of the herd follow.

4

Poverty Does Not Wait
(May 1945)

"Poverty Does Not Wait," Nardal's fourth essay, implores her readers to take up social work—social action—to combat poverty on the island. Because of its higher concentration of *békés* (whites) and the reputation of Saint Pierre as the "Little Paris" in the French Antilles until the volcanic eruption of Mont Pelée in 1902, Martinique was generally the more economically favored island of the French old colonies. In 1945, having just been liberated from the racially, socially, and economically oppressive Vichy regime, Martinique continued to deal with the fallout of widespread poverty and high illiteracy rates.

Nardal maintains that in the face of such debilitating poverty, charity, social justice in the form of social work, and action are *categorical imperatives*. Nardal's religious-based prescriptions, namely Catholicism, are interestingly consonant with Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, specifically found in the philosopher's *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Metaphysics of Morals*. The "categorical imperative" that both speak of are explicitly tied to the concept of duty. As principles, categorical imperatives are unconditional obligations that are *good* and must be followed if we are to be considered at once moral and rational beings. Nardal effectively argues that Martinican women *must* act, *must* perform charity as a commitment to social action and justice, as a function of fulfilling their duties as both women and citizens, as rational and moral beings. "No woman," writes Nardal, "worthy of the name 'woman' should remain indifferent to it."

Poverty Does Not Wait

"Charity?" This humiliating form of solidarity must be banished from the modern world.

"Social work?" Like charity, it is nothing more than a help-mate to poverty. And they are thus the accomplices of a system characterized by the exploitation of man by man. No social work. Justice. This is all we demand.

Those who have actually come in contact with poverty, hideous poverty, who live with it every day, and for whom life is nothing but a constant battle against this Hydra with ever-recurring heads, don't know if they should laugh or rail against such declarations.

Divine charity does not need to be defended. Its countless deeds speak for themselves.

No social work. Then what? Must we allow children to be born into deplorable hygienic conditions? Must we deprive them of clothing; shut our eyes in the face of urgent social wrongs while waiting for the establishment of an era of social justice in Martinique?

The most fiery declarations bring nothing more than palliatives, and have never transformed sordid rags into decent clothing.

The charity that is a form of social justice was perfectly adapted to the preindustrial age.

The progress of industrialization and the birth of capitalism have demonstrated the importance of a broader and no longer individual form of solidarity and of charity: social assistance and action. Everyone agrees on this point.

But the prerogatives of divine charity are not therefore lost. It will have to guide the activities of the State social worker, so that this social undertaking is actually effective. Social justice delivered with the indifference of an automatic vending machine would be

truly incomplete. Besides, even if we concede that material poverty is disappearing from the face of the earth, charity would still have work to do on moral poverty.

Social action, and its admirable accomplishments, is the modern form of charity and one of the faces of social justice. They constitute a categorical imperative for all. No woman worthy of the name *woman* should remain indifferent to it.

Our era did not invent social justice, but material and technological progress imposes constantly new obligations upon it. For each age of humanity there is therefore a corresponding new form of justice, which is translated by charity, social action, or structural reforms.

As distant from a selfishness that is impervious to social pity, as from demagogy—which is, incidentally, a hypocritical form of selfishness—we transpose into immediate action the ardent desire for social justice that drives us. Similarly, we pursue our social education in order to prepare ourselves to better serve this justice in the legislative order.

It is easy to choose between loud, empty statements and the critical feats of those who have humbly put themselves to the task.

Because poverty does not wait.

WHAT WE WANT:

To create a new frame of mind
Favorable to the rapprochement of classes and races
And to social progress;
To undertake pressing social projects;
To do civilizing work.

9

Facing History
(October 1946)

In this essay, Nardal again strikes a jeremiad pose, where she exhorts women again to take notice of the rapidly evolving world before them and to assert their place in it via the ballot box. Woman's duty is to help shape that world. She poses a rhetorical question, "Are they [women] not therefore aware of their eminent dignity as humans, of the possibility that they have been given to change the face of the world?" only to conclude optimistically: "If this were true, I would give up hope for the women of my country."

Facing History

The world is transforming before our eyes. More gripping than an episodic film, the film of current events unfolds in front of us. Through suffering and deprivation, in surprise, disappointment, and joy, we are witnessing the birth of a new world. We have learned that we must not content ourselves with ready-made formulas because reality has inflicted difficult lessons upon us. We have learned that true progress can only be obtained through suffering, freely offered sacrifice, by continually moving beyond ourselves. We have learned that despite a certain historical determinism, the will of mankind could prevail over matter. And we are witnessing a return to the primacy of these spiritual values so long disparaged in spite of those even who wished to reduce man to the level of animals.

This is why we are not surprised that Peace is so difficult to win and to maintain, that the establishment of true justice still encounters so many obstacles, that the world today has the appearance of true chaos.

We have to guide us through this maze a few clear ideas and an indestructible hope. The astonishing diversity of individuals, parties, nations, and races affirms more and more the profound unity of human nature which is conveyed by a common concern for the dignity of the human individual.

Can it be that the women of Martinique remain indifferent to this passionate development? Is it true that educated women do not listen to the news on the radio, do not read the newspapers? Can it be that they do not understand that their duty as citizens is to follow the world's social and political realities and to explain it to their less-enlightened but equally sensible sisters? Is it true that tens of thousands of women refuse to go drop a ballot in the ballot box on election day, refuse to "remake the world," to create History? Are they not therefore aware of their eminent dignity as

humans, of the possibility that they have been given to change the face of the world?

If this were true, I would give up hope for the women of my county.

13

On Intellectual Laziness (November 1948)

In this essay, Paulette Nardal takes aim at the educational system on the island as well as the lack of intellectual curiosity among students fostered by the current system. Martinique has adopted certain curricula from the metropole. While Nardal finds the curricula superior to those offered on the island, the students have not been encouraged to develop critical thinking skills. Indeed, she argues that the students' ideas are ill-formed and ill-informed, offering as an example their understanding of the U.N. Charter as an arm of U.S. imperialism.

Nardal is especially fretful over the development of young girls' minds so that they may come to imagine themselves as citizens of the world and not just of their island nation and France. They are indeed part of a greater humanity. Working and nonworking women have an obligation to be informed so that they may assist this younger generation. But Nardal too sees these women, potential role models, as criminally neglectful of this generation by not fulfilling primarily their duty as voters. For Nardal, politics, education, and religion are seamlessly connected in women's lives; and the path to improving the lives of women and girls, maximizing their potential to succeed, is the vote.

On Intellectual Laziness

One should know better than to congratulate ourselves too much for the recent implementation of new metropolitan programs in island schools and the indispensable information that they will bring our students concerning current events. Notwithstanding the old curriculum, our children took little or no interest in questions of general interest, in the great problems the entire world today seeks to solve. This gap will be filled since the new programs in question incorporate lectures on the Bank of France, atomic energy, new international institutions, etc., in addition to courses on civic education and moral development. One can hope that a well-planned curriculum will endow our students with not only the intellectual curiosity and critical thinking that characterize the metropolitan student, but also the moral foundation of a true culture, a discerning mind, and who knows?—the habits of upright objectives and intellectual integrity . . . Such an undertaking of perversion works at this moment on the minds of our youth that it happens to be absolutely necessary to place in front of them the simple facts that will allow them to form an impartial opinion. In so doing, we will keep our girls from committing lamentable errors, of fostering preconceived ideas, which lead some girls to misinterpret, for example, the significance of a lecture on the United Nations (which they confuse with the United States) and to see in the exposition of photographic documents about the United Nations Charter "an enterprise of propaganda to benefit American imperialism." If I again seem a naive and demagogical orator by using such stories, one must concede that in this disquieting scenario, the part played by some girls and their female instructors offers nothing encouraging for the future of the Martinican intelligentsia.

The responsibility of keeping oneself informed does not impose itself uniquely on our girls. How many women remain indifferent to social issues! Certainly, they have many excuses:

financial concerns, jobs, and then the hot and humid West Indian climate that so easily drains one's energy. But what say nonworking women, those who fill their numerous leisure hours with trivialities, and also those who, whether from indifference or nonchalance, neglect to exercise their rights as citizens on election days? A criminal indifference with regard to their children, whom they will not know how to guide toward the path of good; toward their country, and the world that so requires peace and of which they are also citizens, alas uninformed. Let us hope that the new method of instruction will give us generations of enlightened and thoughtful women.

ONE SINGLE SEASON

Eyes Voice

Torches confess to the black colored
pond of night
Our liquid hands, our mood, earthy and depraved,
our eyes illuminated like burning straw!
Seas, across you my silence patiently
awakens
Beyond you are edges beyond you lie mud
And the convergence of frost and defrost.

The past the past
Ah! stony memory rise up amid the stalks of cane.
Each bush of memory conceals a sniper.

Pounding a mill upon our heads
Fires cough in our nights
Whatever man does, the cry takes root.

CHAPTER 12

THE UNBEARABLE HEAVINESS OF REMEMBERING

> Our bodies are the texts that carry the memories and therefore remembering is no less than reincarnation.
>
> **—Katie Cannon**

Scientific interest in trauma has fluctuated wildly during the past 150 years. Charcot's death in 1893 and Freud's shift in emphasis to inner conflicts, defenses, and instincts at the root of mental suffering were just part of mainstream medicine's overall loss of interest in the subject. Psychoanalysis rapidly gained in popularity. In 1911 the Boston psychiatrist Morton Prince, who had studied with William James and Pierre Janet, complained that those interested in the effects of trauma were like "clams swamped by the rising tide in Boston Harbor."

This neglect lasted for only a few years, though, because the outbreak of World War in 1914 once again confronted medicine and psychology with hundreds of thousands of men with bizarre psychological symptoms, unexplained medical conditions, and memory loss. The new technology of motion pictures made it possible to film these soldiers, and today on YouTube we can observe their bizarre physical postures, strange verbal utterances, terrified facial expressions, and tics—the physical, embodied expression of trauma: "a memory that is inscribed simultaneously in the mind, as interior images and words, and on the body."[1]

Early in the war the British created the diagnosis of "shell shock," which entitled combat veterans to treatment and a disability pension. The alternative, similar, diagnosis was "neurasthenia," for which they received neither treatment nor a pension. It was up to the orientation of the treating physician which diagnosis a soldier received.[2]

More than a million British soldiers served on the Western Front at any one time. In the first few hours of July 1, 1916 alone, in the Battle of the Somme, the British army suffered 57,470 casualties, including 19,240 dead, the bloodiest day in its history. The historian John Keegan says of their commander, Field Marshal Douglas Haig, whose statue today dominates Whitehall in London, once the center of the British Empire: "In his public manner and private diaries no concern for human suffering was or is discernible." At the Somme "he had sent the flower of British youth to death or mutilation."[3]

As the war wore on, shell shock increasingly compromised the efficiency of the fighting forces. Caught between taking the suffering of their soldiers seriously and pursuing victory over the Germans, the British General Staff issued General Routine Order Number 2384 in June of 1917, which stated, "In no circumstances whatever will the expression 'shell shock' be used verbally or be recorded in any regimental or other casualty report, or any hospital or other medical document." All soldiers with psychiatric problems were to be given a single diagnosis of "NYDN" (Not Yet Diagnosed, Nervous).[4] In November 1917 the General Staff denied Charles Samuel Myers, who ran four field hospitals for wounded soldiers, permission to submit a paper on shell shock to the *British Medical Journal*. The Germans were even more punitive and treated shell shock as a character defect, which they managed with a variety of painful treatments, including electroshock.

In 1922 the British government issued the Southborough Report, whose goal was to prevent the diagnosis of shell shock in any future wars and to undermine any more claims for compensation. It suggested the elimination of shell shock from all official nomenclature and insisted that these cases should no more be classified "as a battle casualty than sickness or disease is so regarded."[5] The official view was that well-trained troops, properly led, would not suffer from shell shock and that the servicemen who had

succumbed to the disorder were undisciplined and unwilling soldiers. While the political storm about the legitimacy of shell shock continued to rage for several more years, reports on how to best treat these cases disappeared from the scientific literature.[6]

In the United States the fate of veterans was also fraught with problems. In 1918, when they returned home from the battlefields of France and Flanders, they had been welcomed as national heroes, just as the soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are today. In 1924 Congress voted to award them a bonus of $1.25 for each day they had served overseas, but disbursement was postponed until 1945.

By 1932 the nation was in the middle of the Great Depression, and in May of that year about fifteen thousand unemployed and penniless veterans camped on the Mall in Washington DC to petition for immediate payment of their bonuses. The Senate defeated the bill to move up disbursement by a vote of sixty-two to eighteen. A month later President Hoover ordered the army to clear out the veterans' encampment. Army chief of staff General Douglas MacArthur commanded the troops, supported by six tanks. Major Dwight D. Eisenhower was the liaison with the Washington police, and Major George Patton was in charge of the cavalry. Soldiers with fixed bayonets charged, hurling tear gas into the crowd of veterans. The next morning the Mall was deserted and the camp was in flames.[7] The veterans never received their pensions.

While politics and medicine turned their backs on the returning soldiers, the horrors of the war were memorialized in literature and art. In *All Quiet on the Western Front,*[8] a novel about the war experiences of frontline soldiers by the German writer Erich Maria Remarque, the book's protagonist, Paul Bäumer, spoke for an entire generation: "I am aware that I, without realizing it, have lost my feelings—I don't belong here anymore, I live in an alien world. I prefer to be left alone, not disturbed by anybody. They talk too much—I can't relate to them—they are only busy with superficial things."[9] Published in 1929, the novel instantly became an international best seller, with translations in twenty-five languages. The 1930 Hollywood film version won the Academy Award for Best Picture.

But when Hitler came to power a few years later, *All Quiet on the Western Front* was one of the first "degenerate" books the Nazis burned in

the public square in front of Humboldt University in Berlin.[10] Apparently awareness of the devastating effects of war on soldiers' minds would have constituted a threat to the Nazis' plunge into another round of insanity.

Denial of the consequences of trauma can wreak havoc with the social fabric of society. The refusal to face the damage caused by the war and the intolerance of "weakness" played an important role in the rise of fascism and militarism around the world in the 1930s. The extortionate war reparations of the Treaty of Versailles further humiliated an already disgraced Germany. German society, in turn, dealt ruthlessly with its own traumatized war veterans, who were treated as inferior creatures. This cascade of humiliations of the powerless set the stage for the ultimate debasement of human rights under the Nazi regime: the moral justification for the strong to vanquish the inferior—the rationale for the ensuing war.

THE NEW FACE OF TRAUMA

The outbreak of World War II prompted Charles Samuel Myers and the American psychiatrist Abram Kardiner to publish the accounts of their work with World War I soldiers and veterans. *Shell Shock in France 1914–1918* (1940)[11] and *The Traumatic Neuroses of War* (1941)[12] served as the principal guides for psychiatrists who were treating soldiers in the new conflict who had "war neuroses." The U.S. war effort was prodigious, and the advances in frontline psychiatry reflected that commitment. Again, YouTube offers a direct window on the past: Hollywood director John Huston's documentary *Let There Be Light* (1946) shows the predominant treatment for war neuroses at that time: hypnosis.[13]

In Huston's film, made while he was serving in the Army Signal Corps, the doctors are still patriarchal and the patients are still terrified young men. But they manifest their trauma differently: While the World War I soldiers flail, have facial tics, and collapse with paralyzed bodies, the following generation talks and cringes. Their bodies still keep the score: Their stomachs are upset, their hearts race, and they are overwhelmed by panic. But the trauma did not just affect their bodies. The trance state induced by hypnosis allowed them to find words for the things they had been too afraid to remember: their terror, their survivor's guilt, and their conflicting

loyalties. It also struck me that these soldiers seemed to keep a much tighter lid on their anger and hostility than the younger veterans I'd worked with. Culture shapes the expression of traumatic stress.

The feminist theorist Germaine Greer wrote about the treatment of her father's PTSD after World War II: "When [the medical officers] examined men exhibiting severe disturbances they almost invariably found the root cause in pre-war experience: the sick men were not first-grade fighting material. . . . The military proposition is [that it is] not war which makes men sick, but that sick men can not fight wars."[14] It seems unlikely the doctors did her father any good, but Greer's efforts to come to grips with his suffering undoubtedly helped fuel her exploration of sexual domination in all its ugly manifestations of rape, incest, and domestic violence.

When I worked at the VA, I was puzzled that the vast majority of the patients we saw on the psychiatry service were young, recently discharged Vietnam veterans, while the corridors and elevators that led to the medical departments were filled by old men. Curious about this disparity, I conducted a survey of the World War II veterans in the medical clinics in 1983. The vast majority of them scored positive for PTSD on the rating scales that I administered, but their treatment focused on medical rather than psychiatric complaints. These vets communicated their distress via stomach cramps and chest pains rather than with nightmares and rage, from which, my research showed, they also suffered. Doctors shape how their patients communicate their distress: When a patient complains about terrifying nightmares and his doctor orders a chest X-ray, the patient realizes that he'll get better care if he focuses on his physical problems. Like my relatives who fought in or were captured during World War II, most of these men were extremely reluctant to share their experiences. My sense was that neither the doctors nor their patients wanted to revisit the war.

However, military and civilian leaders came away from World War II with important lessons that the previous generation had failed to grasp. After the defeat of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan, the United States helped rebuild Europe by means of the Marshall Plan, which formed the economic foundation of the next fifty years of relative peace. At home, the GI Bill provided millions of veterans with educations and home mortgages,

which promoted general economic well-being and created a broad-based, well-educated middle class. The armed forces led the nation in racial integration and opportunity. The Veterans Administration built facilities nationwide to help combat veterans with their health care. Still, with all this thoughtful attention to the returning veterans, the psychological scars of war went unrecognized, and traumatic neuroses disappeared entirely from official psychiatric nomenclature. The last scientific writing on combat trauma after World War II appeared in 1947.[15]

TRAUMA REDISCOVERED

As I noted earlier, when I started to work with Vietnam veterans, there was not a single book on war trauma in the library of the VA, but the Vietnam War inspired numerous studies, the formation of scholarly organizations, and the inclusion of a trauma diagnosis, PTSD, in the professional literature. At the same time, interest in trauma was exploding in the general public.

In 1974 Freedman and Kaplan's *Comprehensive Textbook of Psychiatry* stated that "incest is extremely rare, and does not occur in more than 1 out of 1.1 million people."[16] As we have seen in chapter 2 this authoritative textbook then went on to extol the possible benefits of incest: "Such incestuous activity diminishes the subject's chance of psychosis and allows for a better adjustment to the external world. . . . The vast majority of them were none the worse for the experience."

How misguided those statements were became obvious when the ascendant feminist movement, combined with awareness of trauma in returning combat veterans, emboldened tens of thousands of survivors of childhood sexual abuse, domestic abuse, and rape to come forward. Consciousness-raising groups and survivor groups were formed, and numerous popular books, including *The Courage to Heal* (1988), a best-selling self-help book for survivors of incest, and Judith Herman's book *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), discussed the stages of treatment and recovery in great detail.

Cautioned by history, I began to wonder if we were headed toward another backlash like those of 1895, 1917, and 1947 against acknowledging

the reality of trauma. That proved to be the case, for by the early 1990s articles had started to appear in many leading newspapers and magazines in United States and in Europe about a so-called False Memory Syndrome in which psychiatric patients supposedly manufactured elaborate false memories of sexual abuse, which they then claimed had lain dormant for many years before being recovered.

What was striking about these articles was the certainty with which they stated that there was no evidence that people remember trauma any differently than they do ordinary events. I vividly recall a phone call from a well-known newsweekly in London, telling me that they planned to publish an article about traumatic memory in their next issue and asking me whether I had any comments on the subject. I was quite enthusiastic about their question and told them that memory loss for traumatic events had first been studied in England well over a century earlier. I mentioned John Eric Erichsen and Frederic Myers's work on railway accidents in the 1860s and 1870s and Charles Samuel Myers's and W. H. R. Rivers's extensive studies of memory problems in combat soldiers of World War I. I also suggested they look at an article published in *The Lancet* in 1944, which described the aftermath of the rescue of the entire British army from the beaches of Dunkirk in 1940. More than 10 percent of the soldiers who were studied had suffered from major memory loss after the evacuation.[17] The following week, the magazine told its readers that there was no evidence whatsoever that people sometimes lose some or all memory for traumatic events.

The issue of delayed recall of trauma was not particularly controversial when Myers and Kardiner first described this phenomenon in their books on combat neuroses in World War I; when major memory loss was observed after the evacuation from Dunkirk; or when I wrote about Vietnam veterans and the survivor of the Cocoanut Grove nightclub fire. However, during the 1980s and early 1990s, as similar memory problems began to be documented in women and children in the context of domestic abuse, the efforts of abuse victims to seek justice against their alleged perpetrators moved the issue from science into politics and law. This, in turn, became the context for the pedophile scandals in the Catholic Church, in which memory experts were pitted against one another in courtrooms across the United States and later in Europe and Australia.

Experts testifying on behalf of the Church claimed that memories of childhood sexual abuse were unreliable at best and that the claims being made by alleged victims more likely resulted from false memories implanted in their minds by therapists who were oversympathetic, credulous, or driven by their own agendas. During this period I examined more than fifty adults who, like Julian, remembered having been abused by priests. Their claims were denied in about half the cases.

THE SCIENCE OF REPRESSED MEMORY

There have in fact been hundreds of scientific publications spanning well over a century documenting how the memory of trauma can be repressed, only to resurface years or decades later.[18] Memory loss has been reported in people who have experienced natural disasters, accidents, war trauma, kidnapping, torture, concentration camps, and physical and sexual abuse. Total memory loss is most common in childhood sexual abuse, with incidence ranging from 19 percent to 38 percent.[19] This issue is not particularly controversial: As early as 1980 the DSM-III recognized the existence of memory loss for traumatic events in the diagnostic criteria for dissociative amnesia: "an inability to recall important personal information, usually of a traumatic or stressful nature, that is too extensive to be explained by normal forgetfulness." Memory loss has been part of the criteria for PTSD since that diagnosis was first introduced.

One of the most interesting studies of repressed memory was conducted by Dr. Linda Meyer Williams, which began when she was a graduate student in sociology at the University of Pennsylvania in the early 1970s. Williams interviewed 206 girls between the ages of ten and twelve who had been admitted to a hospital emergency room following sexual abuse. Their laboratory tests, as well as the interviews with the children and their parents, were kept in the hospital's medical records. Seventeen years later Williams was able to track down 136 of the children, now adults, with whom she conducted extensive follow-up interviews.[20] More than a third of the women (38 percent) did not recall the abuse that was documented in their medical records, while only fifteen women (12 percent) said that they had never been abused as children. More than two-thirds (68 percent)

reported other incidents of childhood sexual abuse. Women who were younger at the time of the incident and those who were molested by someone they knew were more likely to have forgotten their abuse.

This study also examined the reliability of recovered memories. One in ten women (16 percent of those who recalled the abuse) reported that they had forgotten it at some time in the past but later remembered that it had happened. In comparison with the women who had always remembered their molestation, those with a prior period of forgetting were younger at the time of their abuse and were less likely to have received support from their mothers. Williams also determined that the recovered memories were approximately as accurate as those that had never been lost: All the women's memories were accurate for the central facts of the incident, but none of their stories precisely matched every detail documented in their charts.[21]

Williams's findings are supported by recent neuroscience research that shows that memories that are retrieved tend to return to the memory bank with modifications.[22] As long as a memory is inaccessible, the mind is unable to change it. But as soon as a story starts being told, particularly if it is told repeatedly, it changes—the act of telling itself changes the tale. The mind cannot help but make meaning out of what it knows, and the meaning we make of our lives changes how and what we remember.

Given the wealth of evidence that trauma can be forgotten and resurface years later, why did nearly one hundred reputable memory scientists from several different countries throw the weight of their reputations behind the appeal to overturn Father Shanley's conviction, claiming that "repressed memories" were based on "junk science"? Because memory loss and delayed recall of traumatic experiences had never been documented in the laboratory, some cognitive scientists adamantly denied that these phenomena existed[23] or that retrieved traumatic memories could be accurate.[24] However, what doctors encounter in emergency rooms, on psychiatric wards, and on the battlefield is necessarily quite different from what scientists observe in their safe and well-organized laboratories.

Consider what is known as the "lost in the mall" experiment, for example. Academic researchers have shown that it is relatively easy to implant memories of events that never took place, such as having been lost

in a shopping mall as a child.[25] About 25 percent of subjects in these studies later "recall" that they were frightened and even fill in missing details. But such recollections involve none of the visceral terror that a lost child would actually experience.

Another line of research documented the unreliability of eyewitness testimony. Subjects might be shown a video of a car driving down a street and asked afterward if they saw a stop sign or a traffic light; children might be asked to recall what a male visitor to their classroom had been wearing. Other eyewitness experiments demonstrated that the questions witnesses were asked could alter what they claimed to remember. These studies were valuable in bringing many police and courtroom practices into question, but they have little relevance to traumatic memory.

The fundamental problem is this: Events that take place in the laboratory cannot be considered equivalent to the conditions under which traumatic memories are created. The terror and helplessness associated with PTSD simply can't be induced *de novo* in such a setting. We can study the effects of existing traumas in the lab, as in our script-driven imaging studies of flashbacks, but the original imprint of trauma cannot be laid down there. Dr. Roger Pitman conducted a study at Harvard in which he showed college students a film called *Faces of Death,* which contained newsreel footage of violent deaths and executions. This movie, now widely banned, is as extreme as any institutional review board would allow, but it did not cause Pitman's normal volunteers to develop symptoms of PTSD. If you want to study traumatic memory, you have to study the memories of people who have actually been traumatized.

Interestingly, once the excitement and profitability of courtroom testimony diminished, the "scientific" controversy disappeared as well, and clinicians were left to deal with the wreckage of traumatic memory.

NORMAL VERSUS TRAUMATIC MEMORY

In 1994 I and my colleagues at Massachusetts General Hospital decided to undertake a systematic study comparing how people recall benign experiences and horrific ones. We placed advertisements in local newspapers, in laundromats, and on student union bulletin boards that said:

other vital details (the first person who arrived to help, whether an ambulance or a police car took them to the hospital).

We also asked the participants how they recalled their trauma at three points in time: right after it happened; when they were most troubled by their symptoms; and during the week before the study. All of our traumatized participants said that they had not been able to tell anybody precisely what had happened immediately following the event. (This will not surprise anyone who has worked in an emergency room or ambulance service: People brought in after a car accident in which a child or a friend has been killed sit in stunned silence, dumbfounded by terror.) Almost all had repeated flashbacks: They felt overwhelmed by images, sounds, sensations, and emotions. As time went on, even more sensory details and feelings were activated, but most participants also started to be able to make some sense out of them. They began to "know" what had happened and to be able to tell the story to other people, a story that we call "the memory of the trauma."

Gradually the images and flashbacks decreased in frequency, but the greatest improvement was in the participants' ability to piece together the details and sequence of the event. By the time of our study, 85 percent of them were able to tell a coherent story, with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Only a few were missing significant details. We noted that the five who said they had been abused as children had the most fragmented narratives—their memories still arrived as images, physical sensations, and intense emotions.

In essence, our study confirmed the dual memory system that Janet and his colleagues at the Salpêtrière had described more than a hundred years earlier: Traumatic memories are fundamentally different from the stories we tell about the past. They are dissociated: The different sensations that entered the brain at the time of the trauma are not properly assembled into a story, a piece of autobiography.

Perhaps the most important finding in our study was that remembering the trauma with all its associated affects, does not, as Breuer and Freud claimed back in 1893, necessarily resolve it. Our research did not support the idea that language can substitute for action. Most of our study participants could tell a coherent story and also experience the pain associated with those stories, but they kept being haunted by unbearable

images and physical sensations. Research in contemporary exposure treatment, a staple of cognitive behavioral therapy, has similarly disappointing results: The majority of patients treated with that method continue to have serious PTSD symptoms three months after the end of treatment.[27] As we will see, finding words to describe what has happened to you can be transformative, but it does not always abolish flashbacks or improve concentration, stimulate vital involvement in your life or reduce hypersensitivity to disappointments and perceived injuries.

LISTENING TO SURVIVORS

Nobody wants to remember trauma. In that regard society is no different from the victims themselves. We all want to live in a world that is safe, manageable, and predictable, and victims remind us that this is not always the case. In order to understand trauma, we have to overcome our natural reluctance to confront that reality and cultivate the courage to listen to the testimonies of survivors.

In his book *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory* (1991), Lawrence Langer writes about his work in the Fortunoff Video Archive at Yale University: "Listening to accounts of Holocaust experience, we unearth a mosaic of evidence that constantly vanishes into bottomless layers of incompletion.[28] We wrestle with the beginnings of a permanently unfinished tale, full of incomplete intervals, faced by the spectacle of a faltering witness often reduced to a distressed silence by the overwhelming solicitations of deep memory." As one of his witnesses says: "If you were not there, it's difficult to describe and say how it was. How men function under such stress is one thing, and then how you communicate and express that to somebody who never knew that such a degree of brutality exists seems like a fantasy."

Another survivor, Charlotte Delbo, describes her dual existence after Auschwitz: "[T]he 'self' who was in the camp isn't me, isn't the person who is here, opposite you. No, it's too unbelievable. And everything that happened to this other 'self,' the one from Auschwitz, doesn't touch me now, *me,* doesn't concern me, so distinct are deep memory and common memory. . . . Without this split, I wouldn't have been able to come back to

life."[29] She comments that even words have a dual meaning: "Otherwise, someone [in the camps] who has been tormented by thirst for weeks would never again be able to say: 'I'm thirsty. Let's make a cup of tea.' Thirst [after the war] has once more become a currently used term. On the other hand, if I dream of the thirst I felt in Birkenau [the extermination facilities in Auschwitz], I see myself as I was then, haggard, bereft of reason, tottering."[30]

Langer hauntingly concludes, "Who can find a proper grave for such damaged mosaics of the mind, where they may rest in pieces? Life goes on, but in two temporal directions at once, the future unable to escape the grip of a memory laden with grief."[31]

The essence of trauma is that it is overwhelming, unbelievable, and unbearable. Each patient demands that we suspend our sense of what is normal and accept that we are dealing with a dual reality: the reality of a relatively secure and predictable present that lives side by side with a ruinous, ever-present past.

NANCY'S STORY

Few patients have put that duality into words as vividly as Nancy, the director of nursing in a Midwestern hospital who came to Boston several times to consult with me. Shortly after the birth of her third child, Nancy underwent what is usually routine outpatient surgery, a laparoscopic tubal ligation in which the fallopian tubes are cauterized to prevent future pregnancies. However, because she was given insufficient anesthesia, she awakened after the operation began and remained aware nearly to the end, at times falling into what she called "a light sleep" or "dream," at times experiencing the full horror of her situation. She was unable to alert the OR team by moving or crying out because she had been given a standard muscle relaxant to prevent muscle contractions during surgery.

Some degree of "anesthesia awareness" is now estimated to occur in approximately thirty thousand surgical patients in the United States every year,[32] and I had previously testified on behalf of several people who were traumatized by the experience. Nancy, however, did not want to sue her surgeon or anesthetist. Her entire focus was on bringing the reality of her

trauma to consciousness so that she could free herself from its intrusions into her everyday life. I'd like to end this chapter by sharing several passages from a remarkable series of e-mails in which she described her grueling journey to recovery.

Initially Nancy did not know what had happened to her. "When we went home I was still in a daze, doing the typical things of running a household, yet not really feeling that I was alive or that I was real. I had trouble sleeping that night. For days, I remained in my own little disconnected world. I could not use a hair dryer, toaster, stove or anything that warmed up. I could not concentrate on what people were doing or telling me. I just didn't care. I was increasingly anxious. I slept less and less. I knew I was behaving strangely and kept trying to understand what was frightening me so.

"On the fourth night after the surgery, around 3 AM, I started to realize that the dream I had been living all this time related to conversations I had heard in the operating room. I was suddenly transported back into the OR and could feel my paralyzed body being burned. I was engulfed in a world of terror and horror." From then on, Nancy says, memories and flashbacks erupted into her life.

"It was as if the door was pushed open slightly, allowing the intrusion. There was a mixture of curiosity and avoidance. I continued to have irrational fears. I was deathly afraid of sleep; I experienced a sense of terror when seeing the color blue. My husband, unfortunately, was bearing the brunt of my illness. I would lash out at him when I truly did not intend to. I was sleeping at most 2 to 3 hours, and my daytime was filled with hours of flashbacks. I remained chronically hyperalert, feeling threatened by my own thoughts and wanting to escape them. I lost 23 pounds in 3 weeks. People kept commenting on how great I looked.

"I began to think about dying. I developed a very distorted view of my life in which all my successes diminished and old failures were amplified. I was hurting my husband and found that I could not protect my children from my rage.

"Three weeks after the surgery I went back to work at the hospital. The first time I saw somebody in a surgical scrubsuit was in the elevator. I wanted to get out immediately, but of course I could not. I then had this irrational urge to clobber him, which I contained with considerable effort.

This episode triggered increasing flashbacks, terror and dissociation. I cried all the way home from work. After that, I became adept at avoidance. I never set foot in an elevator, I never went to the cafeteria, I avoided the surgical floors."

Gradually Nancy was able to piece together her flashbacks and create an understandable, if horrifying, memory of her surgery. She recalled the reassurances of the OR nurses and a brief period of sleep after the anesthesia was started. Then she remembered how she began to awaken.

"The entire team was laughing about an affair one of the nurses was having. This coincided with the first surgical incision. I felt the stab of the scalpel, then the cutting, then the warm blood flowing over my skin. I tried desperately to move, to speak, but my body didn't work. I couldn't understand this. I felt a deeper pain as the layers of muscle pulled apart under their own tension. I knew I wasn't supposed to feel this."

Nancy next recalls someone "rummaging around" in her belly and identified this as the laparoscopic instruments being placed. She felt her left tube being clamped. "Then suddenly there was an intense searing, burning pain. I tried to escape, but the cautery tip pursued me, relentlessly burning through. There simply are no words to describe the terror of this experience. This pain was not in the same realm as other pain I had known and conquered, like a broken bone or natural childbirth. It begins as extreme pain, then continues relentlessly as it slowly burns through the tube. The pain of being cut with the scalpel pales beside this giant."

"Then, abruptly, the right tube felt the initial impact of the burning tip. When I heard them laugh, I briefly lost track of where I was. I believed I was in a torture chamber, and I could not understand why they were torturing me without even asking for information. . . . My world narrowed to a small sphere around the operating table. There was no sense of time, no past, and no future. There was only pain, terror, and horror. I felt isolated from all humanity, profoundly alone in spite of the people surrounding me. The sphere was closing in on me.

"In my agony, I must have made some movement. I heard the nurse anesthetist tell the anesthesiologist that I was 'light.' He ordered more meds and then quietly said, 'There is no need to put any of this in the chart.' That is the last memory I recalled."

In her later e-mails to me, Nancy struggled to capture the existential reality of trauma.

"I want to tell you what a flashback is like. It is as if time is folded or warped, so that the past and present merge, as if I were physically transported into the past. Symbols related to the original trauma, however benign in reality, are thoroughly contaminated and so become objects to be hated, feared, destroyed if possible, avoided if not. For example, an iron in any form—a toy, a clothes iron, a curling iron, came to be seen as an instrument of torture. Each encounter with a scrub suit left me disassociated, confused, physically ill and at times consciously angry.

"My marriage is slowly falling apart—my husband came to represent the heartless laughing people [the surgical team] who hurt me. I exist in a dual state. A pervasive numbness covers me with a blanket; and yet the touch of a small child pulls me back to the world. For a moment, I am present and a part of life, not just an observer.

"Interestingly, I function very well at work, and I am constantly given positive feedback. Life proceeds with its own sense of falsity.

"There is a strangeness, bizarreness to this dual existence. I tire of it. Yet I cannot give up on life, and I cannot delude myself into believing that if I ignore the beast it will go away. I've thought many times that I had recalled all the events around the surgery, only to find a new one.

"There are so many pieces of that 45 minutes of my life that remain unknown. My memories are still incomplete and fragmented, but I no longer think that I need to know everything in order to understand what happened.

"When the fear subsides I realize I can handle it, but a part of me doubts that I can. The pull to the past is strong; it is the dark side of my life; and I must dwell there from time to time. The struggle may also be a way to know that I survive—a re-playing of the fight to survive—which apparently I won, but cannot own."

An early sign of recovery came when Nancy needed another, more extensive operation. She chose a Boston hospital for the surgery, asked for a preoperative meeting with the surgeons and the anesthesiologist specifically to discuss her prior experience, and requested that I be allowed to join them in the operating room. For the first time in many years I put on a surgical

scrub suit and accompanied her into the OR while the anesthesia was induced. This time she woke up to a feeling of safety.

Two years later I wrote Nancy asking her permission to use her account of anesthesia awareness in this chapter. In her reply she updated me on the progress of her recovery: "I wish I could say that the surgery to which you were so kind to accompany me ended my suffering. That sadly was not the case. After about six more months I made two choices that proved provident. I left my CBT therapist to work with a psychodynamic psychiatrist and I joined a Pilates class.

"In our last month of therapy, I asked my psychiatrist why he did not try to fix me as all other therapists had attempted, yet had failed. He told me that he assumed, given what I had be able to accomplish with my children and career, that I had sufficient resiliency to heal myself, if he created a holding environment for me to do so. This was an hour each week that became a refuge where I could unravel the mystery of how I had become so damaged and then re-construct a sense of myself that was whole, not fragmented, peaceful, not tormented. Through Pilates, I found a stronger physical core, as well as a community of women who willingly gave acceptance and social support that had been distant in my life since the trauma. This combination of core strengthening—psychological, social, and physical—created a sense of personal safety and mastery, relegating my memories to the distant past, allowing the present and future to emerge."

An Attempt at Genealogy
Valzhyna Mort

1

Where am I from?

In black basilicas
dragged incessantly
down a cross
is a man
who here resembles
a dress
          snatched from a hanger,
there: thick clouds of muscles —
                    an overcast body —
embodied weather
of one hardly-known country.

(A country where I am from?)

Dragging him,
they stick their hands under his armpits.
How cozy their hands are
                    in such a warm place!

Through a cut in his chest
Eve watches
with her one bloody eye.

Of a cut in the chest — a red eyelash!

But
where am I from?

2

Yes, a man
resembles
a dress
          snatched from a hanger.

Inside black
                    alphabet
dragged incessantly down
each letter
is a man.

3

To a telephone in a long hallway
as if to a well for water.
(Well, where am I from?)

(Neither mama's
nor papa's,
my round face
takes after
a rotary phone.)

A rotary phone is my gene pool.
My body rings as it runs
to put my head
on the strong shoulder of the receiver.

Blood is talking! Blood connection is
weak.
Inside the receiver I hear crackle
as if fire were calling.
Who is this?

It's me, fire receiver.

But where am I from?

4

Days of merciless snow behind the kitch-
en window —
snow got deposited like fat under our
skin.

How large we've grown on those days!
So much time spent at the kitchen table
trying to decide where to put commas
in sentences about made-up lives,

yet no one bothered to tell us
that words, uttered once,
crowd in the brain like in a hospital lobby.

That time is supposed to heal
only because once

it was seen with a scalpel in its hands.

You've made a mistake, you'd say mys-
teriously,
pointing at lines written by a child. Think

of another word with the same root.
As if words can have roots.

As if words didn't come from darkness,
cat-in-the-bag words,
as if our human roots were already

known to us.

Here's *Grammar*, here's *Orthography*,
here's a paper rag "bread, milk, butter."
What roots? What morphology? What
rules

of subjugation? How is it even possible

to make a mistake? Here's *Phys-
ics*, *Chemistry*,
Geometry with its atlas, now,

where are Vaclav's letters,

1946?

What to do about the etymology of us?
                Our etymology?

1946 crowds my hospital lobby.

The face of a rotary phone,
the face of a clock,
the face of a radio on the wall—
these are my
round-faced
progenitors.
But Vaclav's face—

where?

(Again a man
resembles
a dress snatched from a hanger.)

And where are the letters? One
per week, in his best Sunday

handwriting?

Inside the receiver—fire.
(How cozy are my ears in such a warm
place!)
But where am I from?

5

A postwar city, barracks—
                    the joy of a first apartment—
a coat, a jacket, a leather purse
fat with pills, but where are
the where-letters
from the where-face?

Evacuated face,
de-evacuated face,
sick not sick, stuck through face,
vacuum face,
lab rat face.

This country was tested on Vaclav's face.
Now we can live in peace.

So,
where am I from?

A postwar city, barracks—
                    the joy
                        of a deactivated face,
vacated face.

A face snatched from a hanger.
Absence as an inner organ.

6

In a village known for a large puddle
where all children fall between the two
categories

of those who hurt the living things
and those who hurt the nonliving things,

in a village known
for being unknown
(where am I from?),
a graveyard around an old church,
the frightening alphabet
around the village,

an alphabet on gravestones,
marble letters under the moth-eaten
snow.
Under the moth-eaten snow
my motherland has good bones.

7

My motherland rattles its bone-keys.
A bone is a key to my motherland.

8

My motherland rattles its bone-keys.
Eve watches with her one red eyelash.

Under the moth-eaten snow
my motherland has good bones.

In my motherland people kneel before wells.
In my motherland people pray to the
crosses of flying birds.

A bone is a key to my people.

Among my people, only the dead
have human faces.

Still,
where am I from?

9

Women saints in berets of golden
threads,
who are they by your feet, seated like
pets?

An angel with wings of a peacock,
an angel with a human face.
But
          who are they by your feet,
                    seated like pets?

Now, if you wear such golden berets,
if you tame children and angels,
if your white boneless fingers leaf
through a book
while I gnaw
               on this wooden verse,
would you, holy women who wear golden
berets,
put the hairs on my tongue

                              into a pigtail?

10

A mouse-tail of a word for a word-loving
rodent!

Inside my alphabet
dragged incessantly down
each frightening letter
is a man.

My frightening alphabet in his best Sun-
day
                              handwriting.

A letter addressed to lost letters,
phone-face, clock-face, radio-face—
                    face as an inner organ.

Where are Vaclav's letters
          as an inner organ.

On the borderlines of my motherland
     —wet laundry claps in the wind like
gunfire.

Have you heard of my motherland?

My motherland is a raw yolk inside a
Fabergé egg.
This yolk is what gives gold its color.

This face is a fire-receiver.
This face is an inner organ.
A bone as a key to my people.

Where am I from?

11

The golden bones of my motherland are
ringing!

THE NEEDS OF THE SOUL

The notion of obligations comes before that of rights, which is subordinate and relative to the former. A right is not effectual by itself, but only in relation to the obligation to which it corresponds, the effective exercise of a right springing not from the individual who possesses it, but from other men who consider themselves as being under a certain obligation towards him. Recognition of an obligation makes it effectual. An obligation which goes unrecognized by anybody loses none of the full force of its existence. A right which goes unrecognized by anybody is not worth very much.

It makes nonsense to say that men have, on the one hand, rights, and on the other hand, obligations. Such words only express differences in point of view. The actual relationship between the two is as between object and subject. A man, considered in isolation, only has duties, amongst which are certain duties towards himself. Other men, seen from his point of view, only have rights. He, in his turn, has rights, when seen from the point of view of other men, who recognize that they have obligations towards him. A man left alone in the universe would have no rights whatever, but he would have obligations.

The notion of rights, being of an objective order, is inseparable from the notions of existence and reality. This becomes apparent when the obligation descends to the

realm of fact; consequently, it always involves to a certain extent the taking into account of actual given states and particular situations. Rights are always found to be related to certain conditions. Obligations alone remain independent of conditions. They belong to a realm situated above all conditions, because it is situated above this world.

The men of 1789 did not recognize the existence of such a realm. All they recognized was the one on the human plane. That is why they started off with the idea of rights. But at the same time they wanted to postulate absolute principles. This contradiction caused them to tumble into a confusion of language and ideas which is largely responsible for the present political and social confusion. The realm of what is eternal, universal, unconditioned is other than the one conditioned by facts, and different ideas hold sway there, ones which are related to the most secret recesses of the human soul.

Obligations are only binding on human beings. There are no obligations for collectivities, as such. But they exist for all human beings who constitute, serve, command or represent a collectivity, in that part of their existence which is related to the collectivity as in that part which is independent of it.

All human beings are bound by identical obligations, although these are performed in different ways according to particular circumstances. No human being, whoever he may be, under whatever circumstances, can escape them without being guilty of crime; save where there are two genuine obligations which are in fact incompatible, and a man is forced to sacrifice one of them.

The imperfections of a social order can be measured by the number of situations of this kind it harbours within itself.

But even in such a case, a crime is committed if the obligation so sacrificed is not merely sacrificed in fact, but its existence denied into the bargain.

The object of any obligation, in the realm of human affairs, is always the human being as such. There exists an obligation towards every human being for the sole reason that he or she is a human being, without any other condition requiring to be fulfilled, and even without any recognition of such obligation on the part of the individual concerned.

This obligation is not based upon any de facto situation, nor upon jurisprudence, customs, social structure, relative state of forces, historical heritage, or presumed historical orientation; for no de facto situation is able to create an obligation.

This obligation is not based upon any convention; for all conventions are liable to be modified according to the wishes of the contracting parties, whereas in this case no change in the mind and will of Man can modify anything whatsoever.

This obligation is an eternal one. It is coextensive with the eternal destiny of human beings. Only human beings have an eternal destiny. Human collectivities have not got one. Nor are there, in regard to the latter, any direct obligations of an eternal nature. Duty towards the human being as such—that alone is eternal.

This obligation is an unconditional one. If it is founded on something, that something, whatever it is, does not form part of our world. In our world, it is not founded on anything at all. It is the one and only obligation in connexion with human affairs that is not subject to any condition.

This obligation has no foundation, but only a verification in the common consent accorded by the universal conscience. It finds expression in some of the oldest written texts which have come down to us. It is recognized by everybody without exception in every single case where it is not attacked as a result of interest or passion. And it is in relation to it that we measure our progress.

The recognition of this obligation is expressed in a confused and imperfect form, that is, more or less imperfect according to the particular case, by what are called positive rights. To the extent to which positive rights are in contradiction with it, to that precise extent is their origin an illegitimate one.

Although this eternal obligation is coextensive with the eternal destiny of the human being, this destiny is not its direct motive. A human being's eternal destiny cannot be the motive of any obligation, for it is not subordinate to external actions.

The fact that a human being possesses an eternal destiny imposes only one obligation: respect. The obligation is only performed if the respect is effectively expressed in a real, not a fictitious, way; and this can only be done through the medium of Man's earthly needs.

On this point, the human conscience has never varied. Thousands of years ago, the Egyptians believed that no soul could justify itself after death unless it could say: 'I have never let any one suffer from hunger.' All Christians know they are liable to hear Christ himself say to them one day: 'I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat.' Every one looks on progress as being, in the first place, a transition to a state of human society in which people will not suffer from hunger. To no matter whom the question may be put in general terms, nobody is of the opinion that any man is innocent if, possessing food himself in abundance and finding some one on his doorstep three parts dead from hunger, he brushes past without giving him anything.

So it is an eternal obligation towards the human being not to let him suffer from hunger when one has the chance of coming to his assistance. This obligation being the most obvious of all, it can serve as a model on which to draw up the list of eternal duties towards each human being. In order to be absolutely correctly made out, this list ought to proceed from the example just given by way of analogy.

Consequently, the list of obligations towards the human being should correspond to the list of such human needs as are vital, analogous to hunger.

Among such needs, there are some which are physical, like hunger itself. They are fairly easy to enumerate. They are concerned with protection against violence, housing, clothing, heating, hygiene and medical attention in case of illness. There are others which have no connexion with the physical side of life, but are concerned with its moral side. Like the former, however, they are earthly, and are not directly related, so far as our intelligence is able to perceive, to the eternal destiny of Man. They form, like our physical needs, a necessary condition of our life on this earth. Which means to say that if they are not satisfied, we fall little by little into a state more or less resembling death, more or less akin to a purely vegetative existence.

They are much more difficult to recognize and to enumerate than are the needs of the body. But every one recognizes that they exist. All the different forms of cruelty which a conqueror can exercise over a subject population, such as massacre, mutilation, organized famine, enslavement or large-scale deportation, are generally considered to be measures of a like description, even though a man's liberty or his native land are not physical necessities. Every one knows that there are forms of cruelty which can injure a man's life without injuring his body. They are such as deprive him of a certain form of food necessary to the life of the soul.

Obligations, whether unconditional or relative, eternal or changing, direct or indirect with regard to human affairs, all stem, without exception, from the vital needs of the human being. Those which do not directly concern this, that or the other specific human being all exist to serve requirements which, with respect to Man, play a rôle analogous to food.

We owe a cornfield respect, not because of itself, but because it is food for mankind.

In the same way, we owe our respect to a collectivity, of whatever kind—country, family or any other—not for itself, but because it is food for a certain number of human souls.

Actually, this obligation makes different attitudes, actions necessary according to different situations. But, taken by itself, it is absolutely identical for everybody. More particularly is this so for all those outside such a collectivity.

The degree of respect owing to human collectivities is a very high one, for several reasons.

To start with, each is unique, and, if destroyed, cannot be replaced. One sack of corn can always be substituted for another sack of corn. The food which a collectivity supplies for the souls of those who form part of it has no equivalent in the entire universe.

Secondly, because of its continuity, a collectivity is already moving forward into the future. It contains food, not only for the souls of the living, but also for the souls of beings yet unborn which are to come into the world during the immediately succeeding centuries.

Lastly, due to this same continuity, a collectivity has its roots in the past. It constitutes the sole agency for preserving the spiritual treasures accumulated by the dead, the sole transmitting agency by means of which the dead can speak to the living. And the sole earthly reality which is directly connected with the eternal destiny of Man is the irradiating light of those who have managed to become fully conscious of this destiny, transmitted from generation to generation.

Because of all this, it may happen that the obligation towards a collectivity which is in danger reaches the point of entailing a total sacrifice. But it does not follow from this that collectivities are superior to human beings. It sometimes happens, too, that the obligation to go to the help of a human being in distress makes a total sacrifice necessary, without that implying any superiority on the part of the individual so helped.

A peasant may, under certain circumstances, be under the necessity, in order to cultivate his land, of risking exhaustion, illness or even death. But all the time he will be conscious of the fact that it is solely a matter of bread.

Similarly, even when a total sacrifice is required, no more is owed to any collectivity whatever than a respect analogous to the one owed to food.

It very often happens that the rôles are reversed. There are collectivities which, instead of serving as food, do just the opposite: they devour souls. In such cases, the social body is diseased, and the first duty is to attempt a cure; in certain circumstances, it may be necessary to have recourse to surgical methods.

With regard to this matter, too, the obligation for those inside as for those outside the collectivity is an identical one.

It also happens that a collectivity supplies insufficient food for the souls of those forming part of it. In that case, it has to be improved.

Finally, there are dead collectivities which, without devouring souls, don't nourish them either. If it is absolutely certain that they are well and truly dead, that it isn't just a question of a temporary lethargy, then and only then should they be destroyed.

The first thing to be investigated is what are those needs which are for the life of the soul what the needs in the way of food, sleep and warmth are for the life of the body. We must try to enumerate and define them.

They must never be confused with desires, whims, fancies and vices. We must also distinguish between what is fundamental and what is fortuitous. Man requires, not rice or potatoes, but food; not wood or coal, but heating. In the same way, for the needs of the soul, we must recognize the different, but equivalent, sorts of satisfaction which cater for the same requirements. We must also distinguish between the soul's foods and poisons which, for a time, can give the impression of occupying the place of the former.

The lack of any such investigation forces governments, even when their intentions are honest, to act sporadically and at random.

Below are offered a few indications.

ORDER

The first of the soul's needs, the one which touches most nearly its eternal destiny, is order; that is to say, a texture of social relationships such that no one is compelled to violate imperative obligations in order to carry out other ones. It is only where this, in fact, occurs that external circumstances have any power to inflict spiritual violence on the soul. For he for whom the threat of death or suffering is the one thing standing in the way of the performance of an obligation, can overcome this disability, and will only suffer in his body. But he who finds that circumstances, in fact, render the various acts necessitated by a series of strict obligations incompatible with one another is, without being able to offer any resistance thereto, made to suffer in his love of good.

At the present time, a very considerable amount of confusion and incompatibility exists between obligations.

Whoever acts in such a way as to increase this incompatibility is a trouble-maker. Whoever acts in such a way as to diminish it is an agent of order. Whoever, so as to simplify problems, denies the existence of certain obligations has, in his heart, made a compact with crime.

Unfortunately, we possess no method for diminishing this incompatibility. We cannot even be sure that the idea of an order in which all obligations would be compatible with one another isn't itself a fiction. When duty descends to the level of facts, so many independent relationships are brought into play that incompatibility seems far more likely than compatibility.

Nevertheless, we have every day before us the example of a universe in which an infinite number of independent mechanical actions concur so as to produce an order that,

in the midst of variations, remains fixed. Furthermore, we love the beauty of the world, because we sense behind it the presence of something akin to that wisdom we should like to possess to slake our thirst for good.

In a minor degree, really beautiful works of art are examples of ensembles in which independent factors concur, in a manner impossible to understand, so as to form a unique thing of beauty.

Finally, a consciousness of the various obligations always proceeds from a desire for good which is unique, unchanging and identical with itself for every man, from the cradle to the grave. This desire, perpetually stirring in the depths of our being, makes it impossible for us ever to resign ourselves to situations in which obligations are incompatible with one another. Either we have recourse to lying in order to forget their existence, or we struggle blindly to extricate ourselves from them.

The contemplation of veritable works of art, and much more still that of the beauty of the world, and again much more that of the unrealized good to which we aspire, can sustain us in our efforts to think continually about that human order which should be the subject uppermost in our minds.

The great instigators of violence have encouraged themselves with the thought of how blind, mechanical force is sovereign throughout the whole universe.

By looking at the world with keener senses than theirs, we shall find a more powerful encouragement in the thought of how these innumerable blind forces are limited, made to balance one against the other, brought to form a united whole by something which we do not understand, but which we call beauty.

If we keep ever-present in our minds the idea of a veritable human order, if we think of it as of something to which a total sacrifice is due should the need arise, we shall be in a similar position to that of a man travelling, without a guide, through the night, but continually

thinking of the direction he wishes to follow. Such a traveller's way is lit by a great hope.

Order is the first need of all; it even stands above all needs properly so-called. To be able to conceive it, we must know what the other needs are.

The first characteristic which distinguishes needs from desires, fancies or vices, and foods from gluttonous repasts or poisons, is that needs are limited, in exactly the same way as are the foods corresponding to them. A miser never has enough gold, but the time comes when any man provided with an unlimited supply of bread finds he has had enough. Food brings satiety. The same applies to the soul's foods.

The second characteristic, closely connected with the first, is that needs are arranged in antithetical pairs and have to combine together to form a balance. Man requires food, but also an interval between his meals; he requires warmth and coolness, rest and exercise. Likewise in the case of the soul's needs.

What is called the golden mean actually consists in satisfying neither the one nor the other of two contrary needs. It is a caricature of the genuinely balanced state in which contrary needs are each fully satisfied in turn.

LIBERTY

One of the indispensable foods of the human soul is liberty. Liberty, taking the word in its concrete sense, consists in the ability to choose. We must understand by that, of course, a real ability. Wherever men are living in community, rules imposed in the common interest must necessarily limit the possibilities of choice.

But a greater or lesser degree of liberty does not depend on whether the limits set are wider or narrower. Liberty attains its plenitude under conditions which are less easily gauged.

Rules should be sufficiently sensible and sufficiently straightforward so that any one who so desires and is

blessed with average powers of application may be able to understand, on the one hand the useful ends they serve, and on the other hand the actual necessities which have brought about their institution. They should emanate from a source of authority which is not looked upon as strange or hostile, but loved as something belonging to those placed under its direction. They should be sufficiendy stable, general and limited in number for the mind to be able to grasp them once and for all, and not find itself brought up against them every time a decision has to be made.

Under these conditions, the liberty of men of goodwill, though limited in the sphere of action, is complete in that of conscience. For, having incorporated the rules into their own being, the prohibited possibilities no longer present themselves to the mind, and have not to be rejected. Just as the habit, formed by education, of not eating disgusting or dangerous things is not felt by the normal man to be any limitation of his liberty in the domain of food. Only a child feels such a limitation.

Those who are lacking in goodwill or who remain adolescent are never free under any form of society.

When the possibilities of choice are so wide as to injure the commonweal, men cease to enjoy liberty. For they must either seek refuge in irresponsibility, puerility and indifference—a refuge where the most they can find is boredom—or feel themselves weighed down by responsibility at all times for fear of causing harm to others. Under such circumstances, men, believing, wrongly, that they are in possession of liberty, and feeling that they get no enjoyment out of it, end up by thinking that liberty is not a good thing.

OBEDIENCE

Obedience is a vital need of the human soul. It is of two kinds: obedience to established rules and obedience to human beings looked upon as leaders. It presupposes

consent, not in regard to every single order received, but the kind of consent that is given once and for all, with the sole reservation, in case of need, that the demands of conscience be satisfied.

It requires to be generally recognized, and above all by leaders themselves, that consent and not fear of punishment or hope of reward constitutes, in fact, the mainspring of obedience, so that submission may never be mistaken for servility. It should also be realized that those who command, obey in their turn, and the whole hierarchy should have its face set in the direction of a goal whose importance and even grandeur can be felt by all, from the highest to the lowest.

Obedience being a necessary food of the soul, whoever is definitely deprived of it is ill. Thus, any body politic governed by a sovereign ruler accountable to nobody is in the hands of a sick man.

That is why wherever a man is placed for life at the head of the social organism, he ought to be a symbol and not a ruler, as is the case with the king of England; etiquette ought also to restrict his freedom more narrowly than that of any single man of the people. In this way, the effective rulers, rulers though they be, have somebody over them; on the other hand, they are able to replace each other in unbroken continuity, and consequently to receive, each in his turn, that indispensable amount of obedience due to him.

Those who keep masses of men in subjection by exercising force and cruelty deprive them at once of two vital foods, liberty and obedience; for it is no longer within the power of such masses to accord their inner consent to the authority to which they are subjected. Those who encourage a state of things in which the hope of gain is the principal motive take away from men their obedience, for consent which is its essence is not something which can be sold.

There are any number of signs showing that the men of our age have now for a long time been starved of

obedience. But advantage has been taken of the fact to give them slavery.

RESPONSIBILITY

Initiative and responsibility, to feel one is useful and even indispensable, are vital needs of the human soul.

Complete privation from this point of view is the case of the unemployed person, even if he receives assistance to the extent of being able to feed, clothe and house himself. For he represents nothing at all in the economic life of his country, and the voting paper which represents his share in its political life doesn't hold any meaning for him.

The manual labourer is in a scarcely better position.

For this need to be satisfied it is necessary that a man should often have to take decisions in matters great or small affecting interests that are distinct from his own, but in regard to which he feels a personal concern. He also requires to be continually called upon to supply fresh efforts. Finally, he requires to be able to encompass in thought the entire range of activity of the social organism to which he belongs, including branches in connexion with which he has never to take a decision or offer any advice. For that, he must be made acquainted with it, be asked to interest himself in it, be brought to feel its value, its utility and, where necessary, its greatness, and be made fully aware of the part he plays in it.

Every social organism, of whatever kind it may be, which does not provide its members with these satisfactions, is diseased and must be restored to health.

In the case of every person of fairly strong character, the need to show initiative goes so far as the need to take command. A flourishing local and regional life, a host of educational activities and youth movements, ought to furnish whoever is able to take advantage of it with the opportunity to command at certain periods of his life.

EQUALITY

Equality is a vital need of the human soul. It consists in a recognition, at once public, general, effective and genuinely expressed in institutions and customs, that the same amount of respect and consideration is due to every human being because this respect is due to the human being as such and is not a matter of degree.

It follows that the inevitable differences among men ought never to imply any difference in the degree of respect. And so that these differences may not be felt to bear such an implication,- a certain balance is necessary between equality and inequality.

A certain combination of equality and inequality is formed by equality of opportunity. If no matter who can attain the social rank corresponding to the function he is capable of filling, and if education is sufficiently generalized so that no one is prevented from developing any capacity simply on account of his birth, the prospects are the same for every child. In this way, the prospects for each man are the same as for any other man, both as regards himself when young, and as regards his children later on.

But when such a combination acts alone, and not as one factor amongst other factors, it ceases to constitute a balance and contains great dangers.

To begin with, for a man who occupies an inferior position and suffers from it to know that his position is a result of his incapacity and that everybody is aware of the fact is not any consolation, but an additional motive of bitterness; according to the individual character, some men can thereby be thrown into a state of depression, while others can be encouraged to commit crime.

Then, in social life, a sort of aspirator towards the top is inevitably created. If a descending movement does not come to balance this ascending movement, the social body becomes sick. To the extent to which it is really possible for the son of a farm labourer to become one day a

minister, to the same extent should it really be possible for the son of a minister to become one day a farm labourer. This second possibility could never assume any noticeable proportions without a very dangerous degree of social constraint.

This sort of equality, if allowed full play by itself, can make social life fluid to the point of decomposing it.

There are less clumsy methods of combining equality with differentiation. The first is by using proportion. Proportion can be defined as the combination of equality with inequality, and everywhere throughout the universe it is the sole factor making for balance.

Applied to the maintenance of social equilibrium, it would impose on each man burdens corresponding to the power and well-being he enjoys, and corresponding risks in cases of incapacity or neglect. For instance, an employer who is incapable or guilty of an offence against his workmen ought to be made to suffer far more, both in the spirit and in the flesh, than a workman who is incapable or guilty of an offence against his employer. Furthermore, all workmen ought to know that this is so. It would imply, on the one hand, a certain rearrangement with regard to risks, on the other hand, in criminal law, a conception of punishment in which social rank, as an aggravating circumstance, would necessarily play an important part in deciding what the penalty was to be. All the more reason, therefore, why the exercise of important public functions should carry with it serious personal risks.

Another way of rendering equality compatible with differen tiation would be to take away as far as possible all quantitative character from differences. Where there is only a difference in kind, not in degree, there is no inequality at all.

By making money the sole, or almost the sole, motive of all actions, the sole, or almost the sole, measure of all things, the poison of inequality has been introduced everywhere. It is true that this inequality is mobile; it is

not attached to persons, for money is made and lost; it is none the less real.

There are two sorts of inequality, each with its corresponding stimulant. A more or less stable inequality, like that of ancient France, produces an idolizing of superiors—not without a mixture of repressed hatred— and a submission to their commands. A mobile, fluid inequality produces a desire to better oneself. It is no nearer to equality than is stable inequality, and is every bit as unwholesome. The Revolution of 1789, in putting forward equality, only succeeded in reality in sanctioning the substitution of one form of inequality for another.

The more equality there is in a society, the smaller is the action of the two stimulants connected with the two forms of inequality, and hence other stimulants are necessary.

Equality is all the greater in proportion as different human conditions are regarded as being, not more nor less than one another, but simply as other. Let us look on the professions of miner and minister simply as two different vocations, like those of poet and mathematician. And let the material hardships attaching to the miner's condition be counted in honour of those who undergo them.

In wartime, if an army is filled with the right spirit, a soldier is proud and happy to be under fire instead of at headquarters; a general is proud and happy to think that the successful outcome of the battle depends on his forethought; and at the same time the soldier admires the general and the general the soldier.

Such a balance constitutes an equality. There would be equality in social conditions if this balance could be found therein. It would mean honouring each human condition with those marks of respect which are proper to it, and are not just a hollow pretence.

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By Lila Zemborain
Translated by Mariela Méndez & Daniel Coudriet

and then, entering the dark night of the soul,
as if the body moved to the left
in an unusual shift and changed point of view
to arrive where I was with my parents,
both of them dead, or maybe just my father to
make the sharpness of the dream more bearable, and there
all three of us drinking tea outside at the only table
in the bar, as if the sea or a river were in the distance, and
a strong wind rises and we don't want to leave
the table, but the wind is so strong that it takes everything
away in its arrogance, confusing
so violently the chain of dendrites that prayer
superimposes over the circular
structure of the rosary and its cycle of decades and fingers
and beads, to speak of the mother, the father, and
the son with the sharpness of the body reduced
to syllables, to a variety of syncopated voices,
to rhymes, purrs and sweat that emerge from
cells in threads of sound; and the head
afraid of being made of clay and not wood or hardened
cement dissolving with words what doesn't
move like water around obstacles, and surrendering
without giving up or resigning;
and the battle puts the heart on one's skin so that
everything is confused and flooded with hatred or
sadness, because night is so nice that
we cannot abandon it even when daylight
becomes more and more ruthless

community in death ▬

$\boldsymbol{W}$e call society the forms of commitment, sealed in the handshake that marks an agreement, in which we associate in the exchange of messages, resources, and services. In these exchanges, the common discourse of science and culture can form and collective works be undertaken in which we communicate in the possession and production of something in common.

Something else is communicated in the handshake that associates after the agreement is conceived and assented to: the recognition of kinship. Our language, which identifies things and persons with generic terms and formulates general imperatives for individuals, is the language of our bodies whose kinship we recognize. In kinship, the genus is re-presented, corporeally reduplicated, in the reproduction of individuals. The common words, with which we designate the resources we separately know and the project we separately understand, find their warrant in the commonality of the genus incarnated in our bodies. In the recognition of kinship, the mutual commitment to the common language and the reciprocal commitments in the forms of exchange are confirmed. The monster is

one who, in his acts, impugns the claim of the genus in other individuals and in his own organism. With the handshake that seals an agreement, each one renounces the monster in the individuality of his or her body and its concupiscences.

It is not through seeing "family resemblances" that one recognizes kinship; the recognition of kinship is a recognition of obligation. The prodigal son that returns to his family knowing that he will be received demonstrates that when every trust, every commitment, and all communication in the civilized language that ceaselessly formulates the norms are broken, being-of-the-family subsists as the ground, in the generic structure of our bodies, of the imperative that imposes effective recognition. One's people are those of one's own lineage, and also possible spouses with whom one's lineage can be reproduced and people who will care for one's offspring as their own, if one dies. Being of the clan, being of the same people, or even being North American or of the white race is recognized in a recognition of obligation. This the traveler knows, who will not turn away (or will not turn away indifferently) from the appeal for assistance of someone, with whom he may have no interests or tastes in common, but who, like himself, is a Chicano in Pennsylvania, a North American in the Peruvian Andes, or a white man in the Sahel.

In the association in the exchange of messages, resources, and services, where each one confronts the

others with his own insight and power, there is recog-
nition of kinship which becomes effective as, in the
exchanges contracted, each augments the other as he
augments himself. When individuals associate, they
identify those outside their agreements as barbarians
and monsters; the effective recognition of common
humanity extends as the exchange of messages, re-
sources, and services with outsiders establishes an
agreement with reciprocal commitments.

Beyond the effective recognition of kinship in the
forms of society is something else: the brotherhood
of individuals who possess or produce nothing in
common, individuals destitute in their mortality. It is
real in the exchange not of insights, directions, and
resources but of the life of different individuals. The
one becomes the brother of the other when he puts
himself wholly in the place of the death that gapes
open for the other.

To catch sight, beyond kinship, of this *community
in death,* we should have to find ourselves, or put
ourselves through imagination, in a situation at the
farthest limits from kinship—in a situation in which
one finds oneself in a country with which one's own
is at war, among foreigners bound in a religion that
one cannot believe or which excludes one, with
whom one is engaged in no kind of productive or
commercial dealings, who owe one nothing, who do
not understand a word of one's language, who are far

from one in age (for even being of the same age-group is a commitment)—and on whom one finds oneself completely dependent, for one's very life.

One night, sick for weeks in a hut in Mahabali-puram in the south of India, I woke out of the fevered stupor of days to find that the paralysis that had inca-pacitated my arms was working its way into my chest. I stumbled out into the starless darkness of the heavy monsoon night. On the shore, gasping for air, I felt someone grasp my arm. He was naked, save for a threadbare loincloth, and all I could understand was that he was from Nepal. How he had come here, to the far south of the Indian subcontinent—farther by far than I who, equipped with credit card, could come here from my home in a day by jet plane—I had no way of learning from him. He seemed to have noth-ing, sleeping on the sands, alone. He engaged in a long conversation, unintelligible to me, with a fish-erman awakened from a hut at the edge of the jungle and finally loaded me in an outrigger canoe to take me, I knew without understanding any of his words, through the monsoon seas to the hospital in Madras sixty-five miles away. My fevered eyes contemplated his silent and expressionless face, from time to time illuminated by the distant flashes of lightning as he labored in the canoe, and it was completely clear to me that should the storm become violent, he would not hesitate to save me, at the risk of his own life.

We disembarked at a fishing port, where he put me

first on a rickshaw and then on a bus for Madras, and then he disappeared without a word or glance at me. He surely had no address but the sands; I would never see him again. I shall not cease seeing what it means to come to be bound with a bond that can never be broken or forgotten, what it means to become a brother.

How indecent to speak of such things in the anonymous irresponsibility of a writing he cannot read and a tongue he cannot understand!

We know ourselves in our mortality.

We act in a world that extends as an array of possibilities; the world we come to know through our initiatives is a field of sustenance, resources, implements, paths, dangers, and shelters. We apprehend the possibilities of the world with the power in our substance to conceive a possible position for itself and to cast our substance with its own forces into that position. To act is to quit one's existence positioned here now, for a possible position ahead. To act is to commence, to break with what has come to pass; it is to cast what has come to be in one into the future.

The real is not simply the sum-total of all we have taken possession of and maintain present in a representation. Reality lies before us as so many possibilities of apprehension and comprehension. The possibilities we grasp are not simple diagrams held fast by our thought. The functions and potentials of things

are real because they have to be reached out for by our powers, which do not possess them and may be unable to reach them. Reality is contingent; it is the eventuality of them being impossible that makes the possibilities we reach for real. The real world extends before us as a configuration of possibilities suspended in the abyss of impossibility.

Our substance acts out of a sense of the contingency of the position that supports it and out of the sense of its power to apprehend possible positions ahead and to cast itself with its own forces unto them. In every movement toward exterior things, which are grasped as nodes of possibility, we sense the contingency of the reality exposed to our initiatives and the eventuality of the impotence that things harbor. To exist in action is to cast ourselves with our own forces unto the eventuality of impotence. In every advance across the landscape which promises to support our steps toward the possibilities of vision, across its open planes and paths leading to finalities, we sense the possibility of its promises turning out to be lures, its paths turning out to be snares, and its contours harboring ambushes. It is in advancing unto the exteriority of our environment that we advance unto our death. Death is everywhere in the interstices of the world, the abyss lies behind any of its connections and beneath its paths. It is this abyss of impossibility, which shows through as we advance, that opens our understanding, indefinitely, beyond the things within

reach and the ground upon which we stand, makes our stance vertiginous and without repose in itself, and makes our existence action.

To act is to give form to one's powers. One envisions possibilities open to one's powers and casts oneself unto them. One finds one's substance and recaptures one's powers in another position, and at another moment of presence; the position one reaches is real with the reality of the world. The powers with which one has left one's position take on form, which subsists in the new position as the diagram for skills. The potentials and functions of things one has taken hold of hold one's forces in forms into which one can indefinitely send again one's forces. In acting, one discovers the real possibilities of the world and finds one's forces reborn in the midst of the real potentials and functions of things. Action risks impotence, to materialize its forces.

But in finding one has acted, one also finds that one leaves something of one's powers, their very power to commence, in the inertia of forms materialized in the world which hold those forces. Something is lost—the élan of initiative which surged forth out of the energies within, the power to break with the past and to arise innocent and free, the nature of being a birth which was in every power. Something of the force one has cast forth into a possible position and figure in the world, and which is now materialized in the world, is held there as one moves on. Something of

one's power of initiative is left in the rented room one
painted and furnished or in the vacant lot one dug up
and planted with trees and flowering shrubs last sea-
son. The giddy lightness, the soaring upsurge of force
that contracted the dance step will not again be felt
when one recycles that dance step as a performance.
Artists cease to be artists and turn into entertainers
and illustrators, simply by repeating themselves.
Something of one's thought is left in the book that
one has written and, were it lost, one would find one
could not write the same book again. Thoughts
thought all the way through no longer think anything,
Merleau-Ponty said; thought illuminates only when it
is not entirely clear to itself and only when it tracks
forth into the unknown. The wonder with which a
thought first illuminated something will not flash
anew when that thought has been fixed as a truth.
Something of one's ardor and wonder is left in youth
and will not flame up again. Finding one's forces held
in forms that one's own initiatives had actualized and
feeling oneself burdened with the weight of one's
own initiatives is the inner experience of aging. It is
the experience of mortality, not in the active form of
the power that casts itself unto the possible—possibly
impotence—it conceives, but in the passing of one's
powers of initiative into passivity. One does not only
cast one's forces against the continuities and inertia of
the world; one discharges one's forces into the inertia
of the world. One does not only risk one's existence

in the world, in the possibilities that turn out to be snares and ambushes, but one dies in the world and into the world. The freedom of initiative feels itself in an anxiety that is not only the apprehensiveness that senses the void of the impossible in which the possibilities ahead are suspended, but also the anxiety that is *angustia,* constriction in narrow straits, confinement in the shroud one wraps with one's own hands.

One resists this sense of inner debilitation by framing one's field of operations in such a way that each day lays out before one the tasks that one will have the strength to fulfill. One sets out to delimit one's horizons and equip one's field of operations in such a way that each day that recurs presents again an array of tasks and implements equivalent and interchangeable with those of the day that passed and the day that is coming. One casts time in the form of a succession of days that recur indefinitely, equivalent and interchangeable. One stabilizes one's practicable space in such a way that each day is full but one retains a sense of a reserve of power. In this way, one defers the day when one senses that one's powers have ebbed; one feels, after thirty years, to be as capable on the assembly-line or in the office as the twenty-year-old youth just hired. In controlling one's practicable environment, one prevents the occurrence of crises, that is, events that require all of one's resources at once and whose outcome is uncertain. One positions one's mind in an academic or industrial institution where

the problems from one day to the next are equivalent
and where there will never arise a problem that de-
mands all of one's intellectual powers, before which
they may prove failing. In one's free time from one's
post, one mingles with others with social skills already
contracted; one avoids once-in-a-lifetime encounters
and adventures which one senses that one will never
again have the ardor to live through. One codes and
measures one's feelings so as to respond to the prom-
ises and the threats, the ceremonies and the amuse-
ments, the places and the sights, and the news and
the gossip with what has been felt before and can be
felt again. One shies away from the exultant or tragic
eruptions, where one's heart would find itself over-
whelmed or aghast, disarmed and left scarred, such
that one could never again feel the same horror or
tears or joy.

One takes the others as equivalent to and inter-
changeable with oneself. To perceive another, not
simply as an object or an obstacle, but as another
agency operating in the ordered world, is to put one-
self potentially in his or her place. It is to perceive the
other's presence as a position that one could oneself
occupy and to perceive the layout about him or her as
an array of paths, resources, obstacles, and snares
one could manipulate if one stood there, where he or
she stands. In this equivalence and interchangeability,
one sees oneself in the others and sees the others in
oneself.

One takes one's place in a layout of tasks another has vacated; one picks up the operations and the skills from others. One takes one's place in the library, sitting as anyone sits and recoding in one's brain the axioms and proofs of Euclid as others have done; one makes oneself a student, another student. One says what one says, what everyone and anyone says, and one invests one's own discursive powers in formulating the common truth, which does not pass when any one passes into his own final silence. One's feelings are probings and palpations whose direction and form are picked up from others and passed on to others; one feels about the news, the sights, or the music what anyone, everyone, has felt and will feel. One sees the form of a succession of days that recur indefinitely equivalent and interchangeable, and in which one has cast the time of one's life, prolonging itself in the lives of others. In this way, one gives oneself the feeling that the strength one finds again for the tasks of the day is a crest on the current of life that comes from an immemorial past and continues into the unterminating future. One blots out the sense of the loss of the ardor and wonder of initiative, with the sense of the rhythm of life-force that rises in oneself each day.

Yet anxiety trembles in this constriction of the field of operations, this confinement in the common truths, this constriction of the heart—this wisdom of experience.

The sense of void wells up in the realization that
the positions and figures of oneself that one projects
before oneself in action and those one has left materi-
alized in the substance of the world, are anonymous.
The postures in which one's action mobilizes one's
own powers, that of a punch-press operator, a com-
puter programmer, or an office manager, are shapes
demanded of anyone by the machines, the circuitry,
the layout of the industry. The forces one has as a
student, factory worker, soldier, patient, or inmate are
forces invested in one by the social engineering of the
disciplinary archipelago, and not only the uniform one
wears but the feelings and the pride one has and the
instincts one obeys as parent, libertine, male or fe-
male, are variables of functions decided and main-
tained in the codes of gender and sexual identity. The
position one occupies is a place one has taken when
another, equivalent to and interchangeable with one-
self, vacated it; it is a place one will leave to others.
The forms one has given one's forces are configura-
tions picked up from others and passed on to others.
One touches nothing of oneself in them; one senses
one has made oneself someone in making oneself
anyone. One day one will not be there, and the stu-
dent, lawyer, corporation executive, patient, parent,
male or female one was, will be enacted by another.
The positions, the performances, the gestures will not
die with one; they are configurations on a wave of the
current of anonymous life where birth replaces dying.

It is then that the situations and days that recur lose
their urgency; one feels ineffectual and lost in the
midst of tasks that have become equivalent and paths
that have become interchangeable and directions re-
versible; the world recedes into insignificance and in-
substantiality. In the foreboding sense of a day immi-
nent in which one will not be there, there stirs an
immanent anxiety that senses that the place one occu-
pies is empty of oneself.

The anxiety finds not my own, the thought that
comprehended the tasks the recurrence of the day set
about me; not my own, the hands that manipulated
the instruments; and not my own, the gestures that
signaled to and the laughter that echoed that of the
others. The anxiety suffers in the solitude of some-
thing that was not yet born in the world. It cleaves to
the secret recesses where lurk powers of one's own:
singular powers to know, to feel, and to give, which
one's own being there engenders, which have not yet
been actualized, and which will to be. One looks at
one's hand, with which one can be identified, and at
these dozen lines on one's finger that are found on
no other of the four billion right hands in humanity,
and one understands this identity and these hands
have not touched what they alone can touch. One
senses in the constriction of the heart a fund of force
singularly one's own, a power, wired in the incompa-
rable circuitry of one's brain, awaiting a problem in
the universe for which no other brain is wired, a

power in one's nervous circuitry and musculature to carve idols or to dance or to embrace as no other body can carve or dance or embrace, and a power in one's sensibility to love or to laugh or to weep as no one can. But one finds that one has not stationed oneself in the zone where these powers can find what is awaiting them and that one would have to seek in the outer deserts beyond the map of tasks that the recurrence of the days lights up for one.

Outer deserts to which I am driven by the shadow of a death coming for me. In the anxiety that trembles with the singular pulse and heat of life that feels itself and clings to itself and wills to be, there is the foreboding of an imminent moment of impossibility advancing unto it. In the paths opening to anyone, anxiety senses snares from which I shall not escape. The paths and the time of the world will continue, extending indefinitely landscapes of possibilities for others. In the imminence of impossibility that stalks my life, I see the shadow of death closing off, in the horizons of possibility that are possibilities for anyone, those that are not for me, that are for others.

To feel, in the acuteness of anxiety, the heat and the pulse of life that is singularly my own and to cling to it as a power that wills to be, is to feel the support of the ground under my feet still and to feel it supporting possibilities destined for me alone. For the anxiety with which a singular power of life is con-

cerned with itself is possible only in the conviction that the world which made it possible harbors possibilities singularly destined for its forces. The concern for a power wired in the incomparable circuitry of one's brain is possible only in the conviction that a problem in the universe, for which no other brain is wired, awaits it; the concern for the power in one's sensibility to love or to laugh or to weep as no one can is possible only in the conviction that, in the back lanes and alleys of the world, there are those who wait for one's own kisses and caresses and there are glades and deserts that wait for one's own laughter and tears.

The shadow of death circumscribes, in the unending array of possibilities that are possible for anyone, what alone is possible for me. The shadow of death stalking me in particular brings out in relief the ground that is supporting me still and the enigmas it harbors that are for me alone, the contours surfacing for the tenderness of my hands alone, and the companions that are there for my kisses and caresses alone. In its dark light, anxiety finds the clairvoyance that discerns them.

This array of possibilities open to being actualized by the actualization of my own powers summons me, with a summons directed by the wall of the impossible that closes in. In responding to this imperative and in resolutely advancing upon the possibilities that are possible only for me, revealed by the death that is coming for me, I recognize in the imminence of

death, not a fatality but an imperative that directs me into the figure of being that is mine alone to be. That summons my thought upon the possibilities that are for everyone and for all times, in order to disengage the possibilities that are possible singularly for me. In responding to the sense of my approaching death, I will advance unto them, discharging my forces into the possibilities the world spreads singularly before me, die into the world with my own forces. The summons that weighs on my anxiety delivers me over to the powers of an existence that is my own and into a death that is my own in the world. The fear of dying that subsists is a fear of not having the strength of patience demanded and a fear of one's lucidity and resolve not having the strength to obey the imperative of dying that summons.

It is then that one becomes aware of *others*. One no longer sees oneself in the others or sees the others in oneself. One comes to see the other in an *other* place and time. To perceive him or her as other in the midst of the equivalence and interchangeability of paths, resources, obstacles, and snares, is to see oneself bound to one's own place and tasks. It is the wall of one's own death that circumscribes the zone of possibilities that are possible for oneself and separates them from those that are for others. Another death circumscribes the expanse of possibilities that are pos-

sible for the other. In this deferral of his or her death in relationship to one's own, the other is different.

The mortality of the other concerns me. Not only in that it is the sense of his mortality that makes me see him as different, destined for a zone of tasks circumscribed by the death coming singularly for him. Such that, as Heidegger says, the best thing I can do for the other if I care about him is to free him for his tasks and his dying, by resolutely pursuing my own. But the tasks that are my own are projected into the world by his passage to his death. I find the shape of my own destiny in the outline of enterprises that the others traced in the world but did not have the time or the power to realize.

If the latency of impossibility suspends the substance of things in their contingent reality, it is powers of apprehension and comprehension that delineate their shape and divine their forces. The world I find under my own feet does not extend about me as a miasma in which I grope alone; I am born in a place that another has vacated and sent forth along ·paths which others have trod. For me, the world is, from the start, a field of possibilities others have apprehended and comprehended, possibilities for others. What I find as possibilities for me are possibilities others have left me. Not only possibilities which they actualized and which another too can actualize, but singular possibilities which, in actualizing their own

powers, they were not able to actualize. The one who resolved to sing his own songs found, also in the world, the singular possibilities and, in himself, the singular power to be a lover, parent, writer, adventurer, which, in setting out to sing his own songs, he had to leave to others. For to sing his own songs required all his sensibility, all his powers to grieve and to jubilate, and all his time, as to love another with a singular love requires all one's understanding and all one's heart. Gandhi, who found in himself the power to become the singular figure of a liberator and that of a saint he was born to be, left aside the power to be a statesman and a lover and a parent, which he discovered he was also born to be. In taking my place at a post others have vacated, I see in the arrangement left on things, not only the diagram of their skills that can be reinscribed on my forces, but also the outline of singular enterprises that they did not have the power to realize: possibilities they left behind, for others, for me—traces of singular imperatives. The passing of others who pursued the singular powers of their own lives speaks singularly to me.

Born in a place another vacates, summoned already by a death that is my own, apprehending the possibilities open singularly to me, I discover the others in their otherness, in the places and the possibilities that are for them. The others who pursue their own singular powers also trace out possibilities they cannot actualize and leave for me. In the handshake that

recognizes our kinship, we exchange messages and resources.

In exchanging messages and resources with others, we communicate in the common time in which the insights of each are formulated in the common discourse and the forces born with each are absorbed in the anonymity of enterprises and works which endure or disintegrate in the materiality of the world. In exchanging messages and resources with the other, I sense the time opened ahead of him or her by his or her anticipation of the end; that is, the time the other extends in the world by engaging himself or herself in the field of his or her own possibilities and retaining his or her commitments. But my eyes, my touch, and my word addressed to the other divine, in the contact, the vulnerability, the weariness and the suffering, the mortality of the other. The time in which the other pursues his own tasks and approaches me is also a time of suffering and dying. There comes the time when the other can do nothing more, but has still to die. The time of his or her dying opens the black hole of a time that is not that of the common world. It is already present in the weariness and suffering that he or she has to endure alone.

In attending to the other who has to suffer and in coming to suffer with the other who is dying, one endures a time disconnected from the time of the world. Dying takes time; it extends a strange time that under-

mines the time one anticipates, a time without a fu-
ture, without possibilities, where there is nothing to
do but endure the presence of time. What is im-
pending is absolutely out of reach: incompre-
hendable, unnegatable, unconfrontable, and unpost-
ponable. What is impending is the unknown, not even
apprehendable as the impossible, as nothingness. The
time of dying disconnects one's powers from ends
and from their own ending. The imminence of death
disconnects from one the past which one can recap-
ture, retain, only by gathering one's forces for possi-
bilities. One does not advance into the distance
where the last moment awaits; one finds oneself sus-
pended in a time that is drifting, in which one is con-
strained to go on without going anywhere. The dying
takes place in an interval interminably and immemori-
ally coming from nowhere and going nowhere, abso-
lutely exterior to the time of a personal or interper-
sonal history.

A time in which there is nothing to do but suffer. A
time in which you, who have come to help, can do
nothing but suffer. One is held in this time outside
the course of the world, by the pain. The intensity of
pain does not throw one back upon one's own re-
sources or one's potential; it backs one up against
oneself, one is unable to flee and unable to retreat
from oneself. Mired in oneself, one exists in the pow-
erlessness to bear the weight of one's being. Pain
does not identify the death whose imminence it

senses as nothingness; pain longs for nothingness as deliverance from the dying, more strange than nothingness, come from within, to separate one from the exteriority of being. Pain, mired in itself, has not the force to cast itself across exteriority where one could apprehend the abyss beyond being; it is engulfed in the invasion of night and crushed by the weight of what lies in the night beyond night. One passes into passivity and dies into what comes neither as nothingness nor as another existence.

One suffers as one suffers, as anyone suffers, as carnal flesh suffers. One is held in a time in which one does not advance on one's own, divested of a oneself that was one's own. One dies as another, in a dying that is not one's own. One suffers, bearing the weight of passivity that invades from within, until the prostration and passivity of one's pain is exceeded by the excess of the dying that pursues its interminable course, and the one that suffers is broken and shattered in gasps and sobs.

The hand extended to the other makes contact with the vulnerability, the weariness, and the suffering of the other and extends one into the place of the other's dying. It obeys a strange imperative. This dying concerns me; one is not free to justify the death of the other, not free to justify, with the imperatives of my own tasks or those of the common work of civilization, leaving the dying of the other to him or her.

In the midst of objectives and equipment, the na-
kedness of the other's eyes seeks me out; the empty-
handedness of his gestures turn to me; the disarmed
and disarming insubstantiality of her words, which
pass without leaving a trace, single me out. His
glance, gestures, and words—importunate and insis-
tent—disturb the order of my sphere of operations
and contest me. The other approaches across the wall
that my own death has raised about the tasks destined
for me, to contest me with her mortality.

The imperative force with which the other ap-
proaches is not in the forms his eyes outline as they
scan the landscape about me, in the forms with which
his hands inform the emptiness, or in the words he or
she formulates and which signal remote and absent
things for my understanding and my undertakings. It
lies in the surface of exposure with which he or she
faces me. His or her facing exposes the frailty and vul-
nerability of naked skin. It exposes the smoothness of
skin, left virginal by every expression that passes
across it and vanishes. It exposes the night of eyes,
on which, unlike the interstellar nights in which stars
extinguished millions of years ago trace their lights
still, the forms of the world leave no trace. On the
diaphanous thinness of skin with which the other is
compressed, one senses sensibility, sensitivity, and
susceptibility. One senses vulnerability and mortality
in the tremblings of pleasure that die away and the
anxieties of pain that agitate those surfaces. One

senses it in the wrinkles with which aging inscribes the pressure of imminent death. One senses it in the lassitude and torpor into which the expressions he or she addresses to me sink. One senses the other, even in presenting himself or herself in the field of equip- ment and resources and discharging his or her forces into the transpersonal itinerary of enterprises, sinking into the time of endurance and suffering.

The exposed surfaces of the other do not position themselves before one as so much data for one's in- terpretation or as so much amorphous matter for one to give form and significance to. The carnal breaks through, collapsing the distances across which its presence can be represented. Carnal surfaces expose themselves without offering possibilities to one's powers. They halt one's hands in mid-air and decline one's organization and one's projects. They afflict one with the exposedness of their discharges of pleasure and their spasms of pain, and their susceptibility. They weigh on one and deliver themselves over to one's tenderness. In the immediacy of their presence, they are irremediably exterior: the surface of a sensibility, a susceptibility, a pleasure, and a torment that is irre- mediably alien to one and exposes a vulnerability and an alien mortality that summons one.

One's hand, divested of its power, finds itself ex- tending into this zone of suffering and extending its sensitivity and tenderness into this zone of an utterly

alien time where nothing is offered or promised. In one's look which attends to what the other says and offers light, in one's hands clasped in acknowledgment of common tasks and commitment, and in one's words subjected to the most remote things that respond to the other, there is also contact of mortality with mortality, and accompaniment in mortality.

The touch of consolation that extends to the suffering one is not a practical force that breaks through obstacles to materialize an end. The skilled hands of the nurse and the surgeon operate on another's organism like on a machine that requires repair or a chemical compound that requires refurbishments. They anaesthetize the pain, extract the bullet, suture the torn tissues. The suffering appeals to the forbearance of the one who handles the surgical instruments and the drugs and to the compassion in his or her consoling hands. The patient convalesces in patience, enduring the time in which dying and recovering contend among themselves. The touch of consolation is not itself a medication or a protection; it is a solicitude that has no idea of what to do or how to escape. Its movement is nowise a project; one goes where one cannot go, where nothing is offered and nothing is promised. The touch of consolation is an accompaniment, by one mortal and susceptible to suffering, of the other as he sinks into the time that goes nowhere, not even into nothingness. The touch of consolation opens the path, in the time of endurance and suffer-

ing, to an accompaniment in dying and finds brother-
hood with the other in the last limit of his or her desti-
tution.

In the compassion that turns to the other, there is
fear that the other will not be able to endure and fear
that the other, mired in pain, may not be able to obey
the summons addressed to him. The other feels the
touch one brings to him as a force come from else-
where that draws him out of his pain, mired in itself,
and draws him into a suffering that depersonalizes
and that is no longer his alone, and no longer his.

One goes because one finds oneself compelled to
go; one goes so that the other not be alone in his or
her dying. Every move of one's hand that is moved
to tact and tenderness acknowledges the imperative
addressed to one in the susceptibility of the other.
One has to suffer for the others and with the others.
The grief, when the other has been taken and no
medication or comfort were possible, understands
that one has to grieve.

WHISTLER

I wanted to be a champion whistler.

As an exercise I decided to capture in whistling
the buzz of a fly.
This is difficult because I could pay no attention
to the tune
but mimicked the stumbling of the fly from one key
to another.

At first it was necessary to whistle only scrambled
notes
and often these were shrill and painful
or very low
(the exact buzz impossible to render).

But finally I succeeded in a facsimile.

What's that noise? people asked me
at first annoyed as I sat whistling on the living
room sofa
or broke into a whistle at the breakfast table.

They recalled something
however distant.

It's the sound of the buzz of the fly, I said.

CHAPTER 4

LISTENING FOR WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

In a short manuscript posthumously published as *What is to be Done?* Althusser obliquely addresses the relationship between theoretical knowledge and the encounter. He starts by stressing that the political question of orienting and organizing the class struggle upholds "the primacy of the political line over the party, and the construction and organization of the party *as a function* of the political line."[1] Both the organization and the line it's built on articulate the contemporary conjuncture of the class struggle, and Althusser identifies two raw materials the party assembles to determine the conjunctural analysis. The first are produced by petitioning workers "to talk about their lives, their jobs, how they are exploited, and the like," through means such as letters to the editor. Going to "the field, without preparation, and interview[ing] the workers" generates the second raw material. Both raw materials are necessary but insufficient for grasp-

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1   Althusser, *What is to be Done?*, 1.

ing the current conjuncture and for "*preparing* for this encounter."[2] The two materials are *articulated* and involve speaking and listening, the latter of which is incomplete without the third raw material: theoretical and political knowledge. Their insufficiency stems from their one-sidedness in that they only entail relations between individual workers and not an encounter with the totality of the complex class antagonism in its current state, remaining only *elements* instead of *relations of force*.

To prepare for the political encounter and to better sense the complexity of the conjuncture, party members must gain "the ability to '*listen correctly*' [...] when face-to-face with workers talking about their life and work." Listening correctly is defined by the listeners' capability 1) to "know which questions to ask and which not to;" 2) "to put what the workers say into relation with what the workers themselves do not know about the effects that the general process has on their own condition;" and 3) to *listen for what they don't know*, or to "be open to learning, by way of this relation, what they do not know and what the workers do, but without knowing that they know it.[3] Proper listening consists in prompting the right line of investigation, placing the response within theoretical and political knowledge of the totality, and finally, listening for what the worker knows without knowing it and what the inquirer doesn't know. This last competence is somewhat confounding. How, after all, can one listen for what one doesn't know or for what the *sound doesn't say*? Even more fundamentally, how does one prepare for the encounter by acquiring the ability to listen for what we can't know or hear?

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2   Ibid., 3.
3   Ibid., 12.

Althusser repeatedly gestures to the inaudible dimensions of the class struggle throughout his works. In his essay on the encounter, for example, he writes that "silence is a *political* condition for the encounter."[4] More relevant to this project, in *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, Althusser listens to the silence of capitalist ideology and education. He conceptualizes Ideological State Apparatuses as a concert "dominated by a single score [...] the score of the ideology of the current ruling class." In the score, "one Ideological State Apparatus certainly has the dominant role, although hardly anyone lends an ear to its music: it is so silent! This is the school."[5] To sense the silent score of capitalist ideology and the silent condition of the encounter, we listen for what we can't hear, for the inaudible. This chapter pursues this latent but persistent aesthetic and pedagogical problematic so we might retrain ourselves in this "simplest" act of existence by unlearning it.

THE MUSIC OF CAPITAL

Some recent works on the political economy of music and sound provide entry points for thinking about the sonic dimensions of the perceptual ecology of capital and the actuality of revolution. In *Music and Capitalism*, Timothy Taylor takes up not the *effects* of capitalism on music but the *causes* of those effects. Because most of what we consider music today would be impossible without capitalism (as it's produced, distributed, and consumed as a commodity), this area needs attention.[6] The real

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4   Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 172.

5   Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, 251.

6   Timothy D. Taylor, *Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2017), 24-25.

issue isn't whether or to what extent music's been commodified, but in what value regimes it's produced and circulated. Music, like any "cultural" product, is not special or unique but is, simply, a commodity. Still, as a commodity it has a use-value, which is singular and heterogeneous, historical and contingent, traversing limits in space and time, exceeding the boundaries of any region and any individual life.

Without reliable funding and state support, musicians today adapt to a flexible market by, for instance, becoming public figures, taking jobs in art criticism, or writing memoirs. The thesis of art's autonomy again justifies this shift so that, "to this day, the idea that the artist and her work somehow stand apart from society remains strong."[7] Throughout the 20th century, musical production and distribution made radical twists and turns through new recording devices and playback machines, greater accessibility to recording studios and equipment, and so on. Capital also found a new source of value in counterculture in the 1950s, something from which the record industry was able to profit, which allowed it to "internalize" the artistic critique of capitalism and channel resistance into the individual subject-form and frame liberation through the commodity-form.

Taylor maps the commodification of musical labor and the changing working conditions and organizations of production and distribution because music forms "what people think and feel and should play a potent role in promoting ideologies of how the world is."[8] Nonetheless, music can and does exist outside of capitalist relations and he finds hope in restricted fields of production where people make music for others. This opens

7   Ibid., 32.

8   Ibid., 13.

a space for minority cultures that represent "one way to attempt to escape the ever-expanding net of today's capitalism" insofar as musicians in these fields are "aloof from" or ignorant of the profit motive.[9] Even though capital can and does capture such subfields, the fact they continue to proliferate signals a collective desire to produce an alternative musical world.

Marianna Ritchey examines the contradictory effects of classical music in neoliberalism and how the ideas of the latter filter through the former while the former reinforces and naturalizes the latter. She focuses on digital technologies and tech companies because they're the vanguard of neoliberalism and because they fetishize innovation and creativity. But here's the rub: "Tech firms present the past as a nightmare from which their products deliver us via ceaseless innovation; yet this relentlessly progressive vision does not gibe with the very notion of *the classic*, a term that since the late eighteenth century has been used to indicate objects whose value is perceived as eternal and unchanging."[10] As classical music is thought to be in decline, it needs innovation and democratization. It needs to be accessible, to speak to the masses; it thereby needs to be disrupted, innovated, and remixed with digital technologies and post-Fordist labor practices. This emerges in music education through "the necessity to 'innovate' classical music by enlivening it with technology of various kinds," "new modes of musician training that will encourage young artists to become flexible, adaptable, and self-managing individuals" working to extend classical music beyond the orchestra halls by making "music easier for untrained

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9   Ibid., 170.

10   Marianna Ritchey, *Composing Capital: Classical Music in the Neoliberal Era* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2019), 2.

listeners to consume."[11]

The ideology of art's autonomy is vital for *capital* because, as music's autonomy is a fact established through political struggles, the positioning of classical music as a truly autonomous art form allows corporations to "use historical ideas and stereotypes of classical music" to "help these corporations appear virtuous to the populations they plunder."[12] Because classical music represents one of the primary examples of musical autonomy, when mobilized by corporations, compositions like Beethoven's "convey the impression of sublime, timeless truth." The alleged autonomy of classical music functions as "a soothing pacifier for neoliberal marketers to use on citizens" because of classical music's "obvious associations with *the classic*, a term that began being used in the eighteenth century to indicate timeless moral virtue."[13] Capitalist firms use classical music's autonomy to link their products with timeless and ahistorical values. At the same time, Ritchey highlights the *ambivalence* of art's autonomy. The potentially radical side of the art autonomy thesis, which she concludes the book with, is "the chipping away of even the *desire* for a noncommodified space."[14]

More recently, Ritchey seeks to recover and redeploy art's autonomy against contemporary capital. In this framework, "art that is abstract, that lacks a participatory ethos, that fetishizes perfection, technique, and training, or that is otherwise seen as inaccessible to the masses [...] becomes effectively useless."[15]

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11   Ibid., 4.

12   Ibid., 2.

13   Ibid., 123.

14   Ibid., 161.

15   Marianna Ritchey, "Resisting Usefulness: Music and the Politi-

Ritchey conceives of a *collective* artistic autonomy that "must be explicitly anticapitalist" and "able to encompass a vast array of difference in terms of how to make, hear, and know about music."[16] The inability to *know* music is present in *Composing Capital*, where Ritchey salvages the important function of music's incomprehensibility, arguing that its opacity "can cause us to question what we think we know, and why and how we know it: What is 'music,' and why do I think it ought to sound a certain way? Who told me that music ought to sound in such a way, and why?"[17] Here, the inaccessibility of music generates the thoughtful contemplation and imagination required for revolutionary politics. Elsewhere, art for art's sake represents the desire for *life* rather than *a job* and is linked with music's ephemerality, which prevents its total capture by capital.

Ritchey's agnosticism towards the reality of art's autonomy is constructive in that she's not interested in affirming or denying its correspondence with reality but in exploring *why* it's been so appealing across such diverse periods and broad stretches of place. And, most importantly, Ritchey acknowledges that neither music nor critique substitute for political action and organization. Taylor's account of capital's flexible accumulation strategies foregrounds the danger of assigning music or any "cultural" commodity a privileged position in reproducing or resisting capitalism. By drawing out the historical production of music under capitalism they both explain how capital structures the organization of audibility and foreground our attempts to escape that structure by producing a non-capitalist sonic sur-

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cal Imagination," *Current Musicology* 108 (2021): 34.

16   Ibid., 48-49.

17   Ritchey, *Composing Capital*, 151.

round without either consigning those attempts to inevitable incorporation into capital or valorizing them as surefire paths of resistance.

SYMPTOMATIC LISTENING

If music as a sensuous object opens a space for a counterhegemonic imaginary, then we have to attend to *listening* practices and how we unlearn to sense music and sound in general. What kind of education do we need in what kind of aesthetics to unlearn capitalist imperialism and open ourselves up to encounters with others? Such listening is surely that which Althusser is after, a stupid listening for sounds that we don't know how to hear and that don't know how to speak to us, enabling an exposure to a silence that makes the encounter possible politically. I find a model of the final kind of listening Althusser urges his comrades to do in the writing and reading he practiced in *Reading Capital*, both of which were less sonic than they were visual or, put better, were visual practices of audibility.[18]

His pedagogy here implies that knowledge can't be produced by listening to "manifest discourse, because the text of history is not a text in which a voice (the Logos) speaks, but the inaudible and illegible notation of the effects of a structure of structures."[19] Immediately, Althusser is clear that the inaudibility of the text is not metaphorical, but literal. The invisible isn't the *outside* of the visible, which would only necessitate an immediate reading of the unread. Instead, "the invisible is defined by the visible as *its* invisible, *its* forbidden vision: the invis-

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18   Derek R. Ford, *Inhuman Educations: Jean-François Lyotard, Pedagogy, Thought* (Boston: Brill, 2021), 44-54.

19   Althusser, "From *Capital* to Marx's Philosophy," 15.

ible is not therefore simply what is outside the visible."[20] Marxist reading is like scientific production, which "*lives*, by the extreme attention it pays to the points where it is theoretically fragile." For the marxist reader—and listener—silence isn't merely what is excluded from the text "but *par excellence* what it contains that is fragile despite its apparently unquestionable 'obviousness', certain silences in its discourse" or, "in brief, everything in it that 'sounds hollow' to an attentive ear, despite its fullness."[21] Such marxist (or symptomatic) reading, "is attuned to the opacity of the object and the conceits of the concept."[22] Listening symptomatically is both philosophical and aesthetic, producing infinite theses to test, each test an aesthetic experience of the materiality of thought and a political attempt to test a philosophical hypothesis.

Althusser posits symptomatic reading just after he pleads with us to reinvent the "simplest" ways of sensing. This reading is far from that of the "master" who commands his students to follow his path and whose "theory of education is committed to preserving the power it seeks to bring to light."[23] Rancière critiques his former teacher's written pedagogy, arguing that Althusser's texts operate according to the logic of an elementary school textbook.[24] The dotted lines in such textbooks represent words that the teacher knows and that the student must

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20   Ibid., 25.

21   Ibid., 29.

22   Robyn Marasco, "Althusser's Gramscian Debt: On Reading Out Loud," *Rethinking Marxism* 31, no. 3 (2019): 343.

23   Rancière, *Althusser's Lesson*, 52.

24   Jacques Rancière, *The Flesh of Words: The Politics of Writing*, trans. C. Mandell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998/2004).

accurately discern. Althusser *knows* how to speak the silences because the dots are only the absent presence of the master himself. As Lewis astutely notes, however, these critiques contradict Rancière's actual descriptions of Althusser's classroom pedagogy, which convey that Althusser, in fact, "says very little (i.e. there is silence instead of speech), and the students are left to construct the answers for themselves."[25] Althusser's lesson repositions the pedagogical gesture from the cognitive to the aesthetic.

Althusser's marxist reading is irreducible to either the acquisition or the production of new knowledges because it "opens up the possibility of a fissure between sense (the common sense of the subject) and sense (as the sensation of difference beyond the sensory perception of the subject."[26] Althusser merely tries to listen for the silences and to teach us to listen, too. *This* is the knowledge the teacher must *teach* to the student. The pedagogical problematic in *Reading Capital* is not that of the expert or master theoretician imparting the truth to others, but "is first and foremost a pedagogy of affective rupture and redistribution" where "reading cannot be reduced to the mere cognitive acquisition of the various complexities of *Capital*."[27] Colin Davis verifies that Althusser's "symptomatic reading ensures that meaning is produced, in process, but never stable or unitary" and that "misunderstanding and misrecognition belong to the process as much as or more than their opposites."[28] There is no *final transparency* and no *final audible articulation* of any eternal

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25   Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education*, 24.

26   Ibid., 30.

27   Ibid., 29.

28   Colin Davis, "Althusser on Reading and Self-Reading," *Textual Practice* 15, no. 2 (2001): 304.

"truth" because marxist reading produces another abyss within the discourse and the fields of sight and sound.

Because the test is always to be taken, Althusser's primary beef with idealist philosophers is their self-positioning as "one who knows that others don't; and who also knows what the true meaning of what others know is [...] who, in a certain way, claims to possess, from the very beginning, the truth's birth certificate."[29] They start from the absolute beginning of the problem to pursue it and arrive at its solution. Althusser repeatedly uses the imagery of the philosopher and the train. Idealist philosophers hop on the train at the original, departing station and ride it until it reaches its end. Idealist philosophy is, as such, *teleological*, in that it is "an oriented process, a goal-directed [...] process." Materialist philosophers, on the contrary, "always board a moving train."[30] We begin where we are, denounce even the possibility of identifying an absolute origin, and don't profess to produce any truth.

Given this, it's surprising that Rancière frames Althusser's textual pedagogy as dotted lines of an elementary school textbook. In this model, the student proves their knowledge to the master by correctly filling in the absences left by the master. Lewis provides a better framing that models his teaching as falling dots of rain, like those Althusser uses to open his short treatise on the materialism of the encounter. "It is raining," he writes. "Let this book therefore be, before all else, a book about ordinary rain."[31] The rain represents how the world—and History—emerges. Before the world, "an infinity of atoms were falling parallel to

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29   Althusser, *How to be a Marxist in Philosophy*, 146.

30   Ibid., 18.

31   Althusser, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, 167.

each other" until something made one "swerve" into another, producing "*an encounter* with the atom next to it, and, from encounter to encounter, a pile-up and the birth of a world."[32] To translate this into the language of the previous chapter, before History happens innumerable contradictions occur in a social formation until for some contingent reason one swerves into another, and still another, and a revolutionary rupture occurs and a new mode of production takes hold.

Ordered developmentally according to the logic of learning, the textbook dots are "uniformly wedded to the page by a particular subject."[33] Arranged to facilitate encounters according to the logic of unlearning, the dots take the form of silences the teacher or author can't or won't determine. In the end, then, Rancière mistakes Althusser's silence as an *origin* instead of as a *beginning*. As an origin, silence awaits the teacher's answer, while as a beginning, silence remains open to the encounter.

Listening for What We Can't Hear

Althusser's pedagogy points to a silence beyond the current field of audibility. One place he points to this silence is in his reading of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Machiavelli had to theorize the political necessity of establishing a national unity (Italy) simultaneously with the pedagogical necessity of creating a new political figure that could establish that project. Yet Machiavelli only points to the void from which such a struggle could begin, like the marxist educator setting up the space for the encounter. The central theoretical axiom Althusser finds in Machiavelli's theory in *The Prince* comes at the moment when

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32   Ibid., 168, 169.

33   Lewis, *The Aesthetics of Education*, 32.

"politics appears in person," when Machiavelli addresses *what* subjective forces will accomplish the future project. While he is very explicit about the concrete nature of the book's conjuncture, Machiavelli doesn't define these forces ahead of time and instead "leaves the names of the protagonists in this encounter completely blank."[34] No one can know ahead of time precisely what composition of classes and political groupings will accomplish the revolution, only through the *political process* can and does that happen. Symptomatic listening makes sense as a sonic pedagogical form in teaching the actuality of revolution precisely because it points to the silences to be filled, demonstrating the open potential of filling those silences.

The ellipsis serves as another model where the dots on a page represent an opening to symptomatic listening. What is an ellipsis other than a present absence—or, what I'll term in the next chapter, an arrhythmic interruption—within a text? As a limit and opening, the origins of the word "ellipsis" come from the Greek words *akólouthos* and *an*, which taken together mean *not following*. The ellipsis interrupts or defers the meaning or end of a sentence, keeping thought going without annihilating the knowledge articulated. For example, when a list ends in an ellipsis, it keeps the contents of the list open to new additions and simultaneously keeps us thinking about the relationships between the content listed. In Octavia Butler's novel, *Fledgling*, the ellipsis serves as a pedagogical invitation to unlearning. Therí Alyce Pickens posits that *Fledgling* doesn't permit "the linear progressive understanding of time and narration but rather endorses the multiplicity courted by folds and gaps," bends and breaches that are the product of the overdetermination of contradictions at

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34   Althusser, *Machiavelli and Us*, 76.

any given point in time. Reading drafts for the novel, Pickens affirms that "Butler includes ellipses not as placeholders but as parts of the dialogue and narration" that "do the work of creating silence and pausing within the narrative."[35] The breaks in the text are not moments of internal reflection or dialogue but of silences that foil any hope of accessing the author's inner life. This is muteness as a threshold of possibility that the teacher can either develop into articulation or hold open as a space for an encounter with the infinite potentiality of the present.

Listening for what we don't know, for what a sound doesn't say, is a negative pedagogical form in that it only appears as an absence or at a limit. Beyond listening as a practice, then, the sonic is a clarifying media through which to theorize. Theory is dominated by visual metaphors and processes where presence is established through a structural distance between the viewer and viewed. The sonic enables us to think *from within* a structure as it "places us inside an event" because "sounds come to" and immerse us.[36] While seeing captures and fixes, listening prevents both because sound is, by definition, movement. Sounds are errant, always disbursing from their sources outward such that we can only listen for what we can't quite hear. Along these lines, Stephen Kennedy formulates listening as that which *takes seriously* "the noise of what cannot quite be grasped or understood."[37] Unlike hearing, listening here isn't motivated by a desire to know, discover, internalize, or accumulate because it

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35   Therí Alyce Pickens, *Black Madness :: Mad Blackness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 45.

36   Stephen Kennedy, *Future Sounds: The Temporality of Noise* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 132, 131.

37   Ibid., 9.

"challenge[s] our ability to make sense of the world according to a taxonomic order which organizes knowledge into discrete units, categories and disciplines."[38] Sounds, even when captured through recordings, are unlocalizable and fleeting.

While hearing is a kind of listening, it is only one kind. The differences between listening and hearing bear pedagogical and political import.[39] "If 'to hear' is to understand the sense," as Jean-Luc Nancy frames it, "to listen is to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible."[40] Hearing takes place where there is an immediate bridge between sound and meaning while listening occurs when and where there is a chasm between the two. There's no *linearity* or chronological progression with listening, whereas hearing follows "a certain kind of logic that is determined to bring the universe into some kind of order, to fix it as a knowable space that proceeds through time towards definable and predictable ends."[41] This is akin to "hungry listening," Dylan Robinson's term for colonial listening, when "the listener orients teleologically toward progression and resolution, just as hunger drives toward satiation."[42] The particular form of listening I'm sounding out, by way of contrast, is an immersion in something that's only thinkable, not understandable. Listening for the thinkable pro-

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38   Ibid., 148.

39   See Ford, *Encountering Education*, 68-85.

40   Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. C. Mandell (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 6.

41   Kennedy, *Future Sounds*, 133-134.

42   Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 50.

pels Althusser's directions to train Party members how to *listen* for what neither we nor other members of our class know.

Hearing, or listening to hear what we do or can know, is the sonic form of learning. Hearing is driven by the need to self-accumulate, to possess more information and knowledge, to ultimately *improve* the efficiency and performance of hearing, to better distinguish between noise and sound. Symptomatic listening is the paradoxical sonic form of unlearning. It's listening not to know but to sense the complex combinations of temporality that make the actuality of revolution perceptible. Educationally, the third form of listening Althusser calls for is important because it reasserts the pedagogical principle and ethos of acknowledging the limits to our knowledge of ourselves, our students, or our teachers. Sometimes, the more we know about our students the less open our conceptions of and approaches to them become. Althusser, moreover, asks us to recognize the limits of our self-knowledge so that we, too, can approach ourselves and the educational encounter in different ways, challenging our field of audibility—or the sounds we learn to hear and listen for through capitalist education—by listening to our listening.

LISTENING TO CAPITAL

Marx makes audible the invisible social relations that govern society under capitalism through his work on the fetishism of the commodity. Recalling our previous discussion, the reason Marx takes us from capitalism to feudalism and parochialism and then communism is "to see clearly in them what our own society hides from us." What is hidden is not the *reality* of social relations *behind* or *beneath* object relations; instead, it is the economic system itself that "is *never clearly visible*," that

"does not coincide with the 'given' in them any more than in any other reality."[43] If the section on commodity fetishism were an empirical argument or phenomenological proof uncovering the hidden essence of a pre-existing form, then the concept would not be so easy to get. Out of the many difficult parts of *Capital*, this section *is* relatively easy to understand. By pointing to the commodity fetish, Marx acknowledges that, yes, when we exchange our wages for commodities, we're interacting with the international working class by participating in the social character of production. I've never had a hard time explaining this to anyone.

With Marx's concept of (surplus-)value, we can conceive the mode of production and sense the global social relations at the heart of commodity exchange. There is no "essence" that is internal to capital, nor is there anything "insubstantial" that is external to it, no anthropological reality Marx points to behind the curtain of an extraneous ideological system. Marx instead points to the invisible within the visible, rearranging our aesthetic sensibilities and teaching us to listen for the silence that's the political condition for the possibility of the communist revolution, silences like those Marx hears in capital's account of its own origins.

Guided by the pedagogy of unlearning, the teacher's gesture of pointing attends to the silences of the marginal. It's perverse to point to something that is not sensed through sight even though the act of pointing in teaching can—and most often does—entail a vocalization accompanying the gesture. Pointing to silence is necessarily going to miss its mark, as the sound is always *now* in a way that escapes the pointing and listening. All the same,

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43   Althusser, "The Object of *Capital*," 334.

it is a mistake to conclude from this that decentering and embracing unpredictability and contingency are revolutionary in themselves, for these can be sources of accumulation and new nodes in capital's perceptual ecology—unless we acknowledge the different roles they play in pedagogy and politics.

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