

Radical Sense
Now Reader Volume 3

MEDITATIONS IN AN EMERGENCY

I wake up & it breaks my heart. I draw the blinds & the thrill of rain breaks my heart. I go outside. I ride the train, walk among the buildings, men in Monday suits. The flight of doves, the city of tents beneath the underpass, the huddled mass, old women hawking roses, & children all of them, break my heart. There's a dream I have in which I love the world. I run from end to end like fingers through her hair. There are no borders, only wind. Like you, I was born. Like you, I was raised in the institution of dreaming. Hand on my heart. Hand on my stupid heart.

Chapter 2

Violence: Is There a War on and against Women's Bodies?

Can we speak of *war* to name the escalation in deaths of women, lesbians, travestis, and trans people (80 percent of which occur at the hands of current or former lovers, boyfriends, or husbands)? Clearly it is not a war in the sense of a confrontation between two symmetrical sides or under clear rules of engagement. But it does seem necessary to qualify the type of conflict that today, in Argentina alone, involves the death of one woman, lesbian, travesti, or trans person every eighteen hours. That number continued to rise even after the first International Women's Strike in 2017, reaching its terrifying zenith in the month immediately following the strike. As the modalities of crimes diversify, the tendency is for them to become more and more gruesome. It is an escalation with no end.

Why do they kill us? The reconceptualization of sexist violence has been a key element of the feminist movement in recent years. This has emerged in two ways. First, we have pluralized its definition: we stopped talking "only" about violence against women and feminized bodies, and have instead connected it to a set of other forms of violence, without which its historic intensification could not be understood. Speaking of violence starting from femicides and travesticides positions them as its culminating point, but it also poses a challenge: to not limit ourselves to its necropolitical accounting, the tallying of femicides and victims.

In this sense, a recognition of the pluralization of violence is strategic: it is a concrete form of *connection* that creates *intelligibility* and, therefore, enables a displacement of the *totalizing figure of the victim*. Pluralization of the meaning of sexist violence is not only about quantifying and cataloging

different forms of violence. It is much more complex; it is a way of mapping its *simultaneity* and its *interrelation*. It connects imploded homes with lands razed by agribusinesses, with the wage gap and invisibilized domestic work; it links the violence of austerity and the crisis with the ways in which those are confronted by women's protagonism in popular economies, and it relates all of this with financial exploitation through public and private debt. It ties together ways of disciplining disobedience through outright state repression and the persecution of migrant movements, with the imprisonment of poor women for having abortions and the criminalization of subsistence economies. Moreover, it highlights the racist imprint on each one of these forms of violence. Nothing in this web of violence is obvious: to trace the modes of connection is to produce meaning, because it renders visible the machinery of exploitation and extraction of value that involves increasing thresholds of violence, which have a differential (and therefore strategic) impact on feminized bodies.

This work of weaving—and the strike is a fundamental tool for its deployment—functions precisely like a spiderweb: only by producing a political cartography, connecting the threads that make different forms of violence function as interrelated dynamics, can we denounce the ways their segmentation seeks to enclose us in isolated cells. Such a cartography implies overflowing the confines of “gender-based violence” to link it with the multiple forms of violence that make it possible. In this way, we escape the “corset” of pure victims with which they seek to pigeonhole us, to inaugurate a new political language that not only denounces violence against women's bodies, but also includes other feminized bodies in the discussion and, moreover, moves from a single definition of violence (as domestic or intimate, and therefore secluded) to understand it in relation to a web of economic, institutional, labor, colonial, and other violence.

In this political fabric we can also collectively evaluate the ways violence differentially impacts each one of us. Understood in this way, “violence” is not an enormous capital-letter word, producing that other equally enormous, equally abstract, capital-letter word: “Victim.” This is the second new element of the reconceptualization of violence: the forms taken by violence against women's bodies and feminized bodies are analyzed starting from particular situations, based on specific bodies. It is from there that a comprehension of violence as a complete phenomenon is produced. Each person's body, as a trajectory and experience, thus becomes

the entry point, a concrete mode of localization, from which a specific point of view is produced: How is violence expressed? How does it take particular form in each body? How do we recognize it? How do we fight it?

This embedded understanding of violence enables a questioning that runs transversally across each space: from the family to the union, from the school to community center, from the border to the plaza. But it does so by giving this questioning a material, familiar, corporeal anchor. While violence displays differentials of oppression and exploitation that are expressed in different concrete bodies, it also nurtures, starting from that difference, a historically novel “interclass sorority,” as the Argentine feminist sociologist Dora Barrancos has indicated.

However, an important clarification is needed: the common element is not violence; rather, the common is produced by the *situated and transversal questioning of violence*. Drawing connections between forms of violence gives us a shared perspective that is both specific and expansive, critical but not paralyzing, that links experiences. Mapping forms of violence based on their organic connection, without losing sight of the singularity of the production of the nexus between them, allows us to do something else: produce a language that goes beyond categorizing ourselves as victims.

Finally, the issue of violence proposes two other fundamental questions: What does it mean to produce feminist forms of self-defense when confronted with increased violence? And, going further: What would it mean for the feminist movement to be able to produce its own machines of justice?

Where Is the War Today?

The war against women, lesbians, travestis, and trans people finds expression in four specific scenes, which are at the foundation of femicide today. They are the substrate prior to the production of violence, or, paraphrasing Marx, its hidden abode, where there is a logic of connection between them. This logic of connection is supplied by finance, whose specificity I will highlight throughout this book. These scenes frame a reading of the violence of neoliberalism that accounts for structural adjustment measures, as well as the way that exploitation takes root in the

production of subjectivities that are compelled to precarity and nevertheless fight to prosper in structural conditions of dispossession.

The four scenes of violence to which I refer are:

1) The implosion of violence in homes as an effect of the crisis of the figure of the male breadwinner, and his subsequent loss of authority and privileged role in relation to his position in the labor market;

2) the organization of new forms of violence as a principle of authority in popular-sector neighborhoods, rooted in the expansion of illegal economies that replace other modes of provisioning resources;

3) the dispossession and looting of common lands and resources by transnational corporations, and thus the deprivation of the material autonomy of other economies; and

4) the articulation of forms of exploitation and value extraction for which the financialization of social life—particularly through the apparatus of debt—is a common code.

I would like to propose that there is an organic relationship between these four dimensions. Next I will return to the characterization of “war,” and then go back to the beginning: What sort of force responds to this offensive? In what sorts of economies is the autonomy of women, lesbians, travestis, and trans people inscribed? Here it will be necessary to return to some elements of the feminist strike. Finally, I would like to suggest that a displacement occurs here: it is because there is war *on* the body of women and feminized bodies that there is war *against* women.

The implosion of the home

It is male “dignity,” sustained by what Silvia Federici calls the “patriarchy of the wage,” that is in crisis.¹ For men, the wage has served as an “objective” measure of their dominant position in the labor market, even as more women participate in the waged labor force. In this sense, it has functioned historically as a political tool: it ensures both the control of “obligatory” and “unpaid” work in the home for which women were responsible, establishes a representative of the boss within the household, and affirms hierarchy within the labor market. It is not that the patriarchy of the wage no longer operates by seeking to exercise that power and

monopoly over the management of money. But its crisis runs deeper: today, for the majority, the wage is not guaranteed as a means of reproduction. Due to the collapse of the wage as an objective measure of male authority, sexist violence becomes “excessive” or “beyond measure” in the home: masculinities are no longer contained by the value that the wage provides them, and so they find compensatory affirmation of their authority in other ways. The crisis of unemployment, precarization, and increasingly harsh conditions of exploitation make it so that domestic violence structures the patriarchal domination previously mediated and measured by the wage (even if domestic violence was always a legitimate, albeit latent, element for “internal” discipline).

At the same time, a greater desire for autonomy is expressed by women who do not feel contained or constricted by domestic ideology, since they have already accumulated experiences of extra-domestic work (badly paid and undervalued, but functional as a way to desert the domestic mandate), and generations of youth that have cultivated forms of contempt for the patriarchy of the wage or have directly experienced its decline. The accumulation of disobedience, intensification of autonomies, and depreciation of the figure of the waged male provider destabilize the structured modes of obedience in the monogamous, heteronormative family. In light of this situation, devalued masculinities find themselves in a desperate and violent search to relegitimize themselves. Illegal economies, especially those linked to drug trafficking and recruitment into (illegal and legal) security forces, provide that promise of masculinity.

New violence in the territories

Where does the “civil war” between labor and capital take place today? Marx identified it in the working day, but now we see it broadened in both spatial terms (beyond the factory) and temporal measure (beyond the recognized working day). What violent forms does this civil war take under today’s neoliberal conditions if we look at it from the perspective of social cooperation, in which the illegal and a-legal, migrant and popular economies, as well as domestic and community work, are the key elements of new proletarian zones?

Over the past decade, unprecedented forms of violence markedly reorganized social conflict, driven by new forms of territorial authority linked to illegal economies in collusion with police, political, and judicial structures. These new forms of territorial authority confronted the popular, highly feminized economies, which were structured on the basis of social movements. It was finance, with its high level of abstraction, that took charge of this articulation, from below and from above, of subjectivities that had to procure prosperity without taking for granted the privilege of the wage as their main income. In Latin America, this was produced in connection with a neo-extractivist type of insertion in the global market (I will return to this in the following chapter). The new forms of violence are translated into an intense segmentation of hierarchized spaces based on differential access to security, which promotes a “civil war” for the defense of property between peripheral neighborhoods and the wealthy areas, but also within the more popular zones. The use of public and private security forces seeks to constrain all of those who, under the effects of the stimulus to social inclusion by means of consumption through debt, do not have equal conditions of access to property or its defense.

Today, illegal economies “organize” the vacuum left in many spaces by the retreat of wage labor. They provide employment, resources, and belonging, as well as a mode of affirmation of male authority, all of which are confirmed through territorial control on a daily basis. This supposes an accelerated passage of the thresholds of violence that structure the everyday. It is not a coincidence that the other path of recomposition of that male authority is through recruitment in state security forces—the only widely available work in Argentina. In this way, legal and illegal forces of confrontation substitute for the majoritarian model of waged authority, decisively contributing to the increase in violence and the implosion of homes discussed above, as the violence of those security forces spills over into the home. There is one more “economy” that must be accounted for, one that is booming and growing: the churches that offer access to employment, and promises of prosperity, as they manage to weave together a network of resources in increasingly critical everyday situations. Illegal economies, on one hand, and the theology of prosperity or charity, on the other, forge different modalities of an economy of obedience in a context of everyday impoverishment.

The dispossession and looting of community land and life

Understanding the offensive of agribusiness and extractivist industries on the continent requires an analysis of the ways Latin American countries have been inserted into the global market. Here, Rosa Luxemburg's analysis stands out for its contemporary relevance: the formulation of colonial capitalist expansion against what thinkers of her era called the "formations of the natural economy"—what we might describe as the advancing march of capital's frontiers. This means the advance of the frontiers of capital through the dispossession of lands to put an end to the self-sufficiency of peasant and Indigenous economies. She emphasized the mortgage debts of US farmers, as well as Dutch and British imperialist policy in South Africa against Black and Indigenous populations, as concrete forms of political violence, tax pressure, and introduction of cheap goods.² Diverse struggles have started to use the concept of body-territory to situate the resistances against neo-extractivist attacks primarily led by women. Such is the case of Berta Cáceres, whose murder the movement has named as a "territorial femicide."³ This point not only connects to a notion of the body as more-than-human, but that also refers to the question of nature from a non-liberal point of view. That is, it is not about an abstract conservationism, but about confronting the modes of dispossession of the material possibilities of life—ones that today structure a direct antagonism between multinational companies and states, and the populations that are looted, displaced, and redirected in new dynamics of exploitation.

Finance as common code

This analysis of the extractivist paradigm in rural settings must also be expanded to urban and suburban spaces. There, too, we find finance in multiple aspects of the "extractive operations," from real estate speculation to mass indebtedness. In this register, it is necessary to conceptualize extractivism in broader terms, as a way that the capture of value by capital is operationalized today.⁴ Just as capital accumulates by dispossessing peasant and Indigenous landholders, and extracting common resources from the earth, many of its leading forms in more urbanized spaces engage in a

similar sort of plunder, in a retrospective capture or appropriation of socially cooperative activities that are, to some degree, autonomous from capital.

Finance thus “lands” in popular economies, long after they’ve been organized—that is, in those economies that emerged in moments of crisis, fueled by the modalities of self-management and work without a boss—and it exploits the ways in which the subaltern fabrics reproduce life in a way that cannot simply be reduced to “survival.” A multiplicity of efforts, savings, and economies are “put to work” for finance. This means that finance becomes a code that manages to homogenize that plurality of activities, income sources, expectations, and temporalities. Finance has been the most skillful and quick to detect that popular vitality and root within it a system for value extraction, one that operates directly upon the labor force as living labor. This mode of financial exploitation of social cooperation that does not have the wage as a mediating part—so crucial to understanding contemporary capitalism—therefore is best grasped as “extractive.”

Against the Pathologization of Violence

There are advantages to accounting for the specific economy of violence against women, lesbians, travestis, and trans people as a sort of *war*, rather than via the personal pathologies of bad men. Doing so outlines a systemic phenomenon that evades attribution to the psychological motivations of some men, which end up being understood in terms of crimes of passion. Such an interpretation ends up exonerating violent forms of masculinity, treating its crimes as exceptional, as isolated pathologies, and making a casuistry of “deviance.” This explanation based on an individualist psychology, and the very idea of “health” that patriarchy proposes for males, is questioned in the streets, is condensed into graffiti, is conceptualized in songs. It is painted on the walls: “He is not sick, he is a healthy son of the patriarchy.”

The notion of war emphasizes a dynamic of forces in conflict, and it clears away the neutralizing language of “epidemic” or “outbreak,” which would obscure that conflict. But there is another dimension to the exculpatory diagnosis of pathologization: it blames the feminist

movement's collective emergence in the streets. In their analysis of the increase in femicides, these kinds of arguments denounce the "preventive inefficiency" of massive marches,⁵ suggesting that mobilizations do not have the capability or efficacy to prevent or diminish femicides, and therefore, that their usefulness is doubtful. They compare the increase in feminist mobilization and the increase in crimes, arguing, on the one hand, that there is a direct causal relation—that the disobedient presence of feminized bodies in the streets is itself the cause of violence. On the other, such arguments seek to confirm the "ineffectiveness" of mobilization to counteract femicidal violence.

Meanwhile, other discourses speak of a mimetic "illusion" of strength held by women, lesbians, travestis, and trans people, one that pushes them to take on "empowering" attitudes that lead to their deaths.⁶ This argument speaks of an "effect of contagion" of the collective, claiming that rather than protecting the victims, it exposes them even more.

Those discourses attempted to read the massive #EleNão (#NotHim) mobilization in Brazil in a similar way: by trying to blame it for the subsequent electoral victory of the ultra-fascist Jair Bolsonaro. A psychologizing, guilt-producing language was also used: the march of women and LGBTQI people "awoke the monster," they said.

The multitudinous effervescence of the movement is discredited as false, deceitful, and, above all, risky (compared to the "contagion" of a virus): it leads to trust in an experience of collective strength that is, supposedly, only dangerous and illusory—or further, counterproductive. Thus, it is a twofold strategy; these discourses attempt to make us feel guilty *and* impotent. The notion of war, on the other hand, situates us in a different economy of forces.

The "Internal" War

Today the household has gone from being an allegedly pacified place to a battlefield marked by open, if asymmetrical, conflict. Domestic violence itself does nothing other than show scenes of a domesticity that is exploding, and the home as the site of gruesome everyday experiences. The home is no longer the warrior's place of rest, as was proposed when the

sexual division of labor assigned women the task of romanticizing the house (under the command of the “patriarchy of the wage”). Today the house is where the “warrior” (one of the classical figures of patriarchal control) seeks to wage “internal” war as a symptom of his impotence and humiliation suffered in the workplace, among other existential territories. Rather than an explosion, the image of an implosion is more apt. Violence is deployed inward. It pierces through bodies. It unravels relationships.

However, a characterization of sexist violence as something that is only connected to the domestic sphere reinforces women’s isolation in the home, confirming its borders as marking a “private” space. It is the “great enclosure” of women within the domestic sphere—something Federici speaks of, remarking that Foucault forgot to account for it among his genealogies of prisons, schools, and hospitals—that also allows for violence to be confined, as something that is suffered “inside,” in other words, privately, intimately. “I only feel unsafe when I am in my house,” explained a woman in the assembly at Villa 21–24 of Barracas, a slum in the south of Buenos Aires, in the midst of preparations for the international strike on March 8, 2018. Her statement inverts the traditional idea of the home as a space of shelter and refuge: “Luckily, when I have a problem, I tell my compañeras, who arrive before the police and are more effective than the panic button and restraining order.”

Confronting violence this way, so that it is no longer a private issue, allows us deepen our analysis of how the webs of violence expressed “domestically” are directly linked to political, economic, labor, institutional, media, and social violence. By no longer placing our faith in solutions from the state, we alter the plane of “solutions” or responses. When we are confined to the home and the solitude that we sometimes feel when we are enclosed there, we become prisoners to the rhetoric of “saviors.” This comes not only from organizations that think solely in terms of rescue and refuge, but also from judicial and police institutions that are ineffective insofar as they are complicit in the same violence they wish to denounce. To escape confinement is to get away from the logic of rescue and refuge as the only options, and instead build denser fabrics of defense and protection. Self-defense, thus, displaces the question to be resolved onto the organization of collective care under conditions of structural dispossession.

The discourse of redeemers and saviors is intrinsic to the victimization of women, lesbians, trans people, and travestis. Without the figure of the

victim, the framework of rescue does not work. This perspective allows us to critique how much of the focus on the trafficking of women relies on this discourse and also to understand why that approach receives support from nongovernmental organizations and international financial networks, under the spiritual guidance of the church.

Similar to what happens with migrant workers, the notion of trafficking and its connection with slavery forms a part of this whole. Based on an exceptional case that is taken as emblematic, and using images that are capable of swaying public imagination (a textile worker handcuffed to the sewing machine or a young woman tied to a bed), those discourses seek to explain what they consider to be an intrinsic, *natural* submission as a general framework for understanding trafficking. This framework leaves no room for the freedom and autonomous rationality that persists despite difficult and desperate conditions.

Understood this way, the discourse of trafficking and slave labor as a totalizing perspective leads to a paternalism that is nothing other than a way of exerting control, as opposed to a more complex idea of the autonomy of women, lesbians, trans people, and travestis in difficult, violent, and adverse contexts—situations they respond to with more than mere resignation. In this sense, the trafficking discourse impedes any understanding of such forms of violence that would allow for a more profound explanation of the issue. The problem is that their argument about violence completely leaves out (1) an explanation of the exploitation of women and feminized bodies that is not moralizing; (2) the role of international funders in creating such a focus on the issue; and (3) the complex game of desire, calculus of progress, and risk that women and feminized bodies put in motion under diverse modes of migration, as well as when young women “flee” from their home. This analysis is a necessary condition for understanding how contemporary capitalism functions at its core.

By negating the strategic rationality that many of these trajectories put in play (through planning, frustration, recalculation, learning, sacrifice, appropriation), these types of analyses underestimate any knowledge in the name of an infantilization that renews, again and again, the colonial savior logic and, above all, that shows the impossibility of giving space to the rationality and voices of those involved in such processes. This problematization does not ignore extreme cases. The question is why

exceptional cases are turned into the truth of the whole phenomenon, and proposed in the media as the indisputable totalization of a much more varied and complex reality.

The perspective of trafficking constructs the figure of the woman—and especially the migrant woman, or daughter of migrants—as the perfect victim. It moralizes and judges her actions, while it legitimizes the actions of organizations, funders, and the savior rhetoric, which makes those women completely passive. To counteract that focus, it is necessary to account for the infrastructure and logistics that organize mobilities beyond the figures of “traffickers” and “slaves,” since trafficking tends to be characterized from the perspective of this all-encompassing narrative. Trafficking is not only a normative frame, but also progressively gains strength in media discourse and political disputes, flattening a reality that is much more entangled than what the category seeks to simplify into a specific conservative orientation.

This is made even more complex in the case of young women and girls who “disappear” from their homes for a time, who reappear and leave again. This reality is increasingly common, especially in slums and peripheral neighborhoods, and it challenges the perspective of the usual—juridical and political—approach to these issues. The notion of trafficking fails to effectively understand, investigate, or politicize these situations. It is a discourse that obstructs the very possibility of recognizing how those complex economies of movement, of fleeing, of linking young women with parallel or illegal circuits, conjugate a desire of autonomy that is processed in conditions of extreme violence and precarity. Forms of domestic violence are at the root of these forms of flight. These women and girls flee from a very violent home to other forms of violence. Sometimes, they come back to the neighborhood and home, and it is not clear that they want to “return.” Search campaigns led by the family and neighborhood are often the most effective way of finding these young women and girls, for they are the only pressure that makes police and juridical denunciation effective. But when I say that it is not clear that they want to return, I want to emphasize that the place to which they return is generally one that is not desired, one from which they attempt to flee. This does not mean that the possibilities in the place to which they flee are better, but rather that they create a path, in a pragmatic way, for that desire of flight.

This “coming and going” problematizes the more traditional understanding that typifies these dynamics of flight purely as “kidnapping,” or as the irrational obtundation of the youth with promises of drugs or alcohol. As in the case of migration, it is more about flight from a “depraved trinity,” as sociologist and migrant rights activist Amarela Varela characterizes it in regard to the migrant caravans of Central American women that have crossed borders toward the United States in recent years: femicidal violence, state violence, and market violence.⁷

Blame and juridicalization of young women is insufficient: investigations of the cases do not advance, dismissed because they cannot “fulfill” the definition of trafficking. This also socially “discredits” the young women: when they “reappear” in the neighborhood, they are signaled as guilty, and their very appearance is considered to “disprove” the violence in which they are then re-ensnared. So the most urgent problem becomes ignored and illegible: how their drift beyond the domestic space is appropriated, how their “escape” from violence takes place in extremely fragile conditions and at the cost of other forms of violence, and how, nevertheless, a will to autonomy persists in their flight.

Therefore, it is necessary to bring together different elements to criticize the one-dimensionality of the trafficking discourse as a rationality that simultaneously victimizes and passivizes women’s trajectories, especially those of youth and migrants (or daughters of migrants), under a biased global policy that we must stop seeing as “neutral.” As I indicated, we must register this dynamic within the circuits of the popular, informal, a-legal, and illegal economy (an intersection that is not at all clear and is increasingly intertwined in a dispute over forms of “authority” over territories). Here violence, exploitation, and also *a desire* to flee domestic spaces imploded by violence are articulated with logistics and infrastructure (of varying legalities) that make “mobility” possible for young women in conditions of extreme precarization.

I want to problematize the element of having “no will.” The forced recruitment that defines the figure of trafficking, both legally and subjectively, impedes understanding of the complexity of the majority of the actually existing situations, where the removal of will is never complete (there is an ambiguous voluntary component to flight) yet is still produced in a web of violence inscribed in the very situation of the conditions of “flight.”

The terminology of “trafficking” and “slavery”—which emphasizes the extreme side of that involuntary condition—and the merely legal acceptance of the calculation that the trafficking framework supposes,⁸ discredit other rationalities that have to do precisely with a way of fleeing domestic violence, abuse, and poverty in the home. Above all, it isolates a problematic in which what is at stake is a very concrete dispute over the normalization of hyper-exploitation that characterizes contemporary capitalism. In the case of the young women and girls, this is seen in the patriarchal appropriation of their desire to flee. The critique of violence cannot be made by denying the action of these youth who, in desperation, exercise their desire, taking an extreme risk, but by calculating that it is important not to submit to an initial violence—that of the household—and where autonomy is confronted with more complicated forms of its appropriation and exploitation.

War as an Interpretative Key

Michel Foucault proposed war as a principle of analysis of the relations of power and, more precisely, the model of war and struggles as a mode of intelligibility of political power. He also argued that there is a sort of permanent war, a constant fixture behind all order, such that war is the “point of maximum tension of the relations of forces,” but also something that is itself comprised of a web “of bodies, of cases, and of passions”: a true entanglement over which a “rationality” is assembled that seeks to appease the war.⁹

Silvia Federici often speaks of “a state of permanent war against women,” in which the common denominator is the devaluation of their lives and work by the current phase of globalization. Federici’s theoretical coordinates are set by the intersection of a Foucauldian perspective with feminism and Marxism. Federici argues that capitalism, since its transatlantic beginnings, has persecuted and fought “heretical” women with ferocity and terror. That is why, in her book *Caliban and the Witch*, she ties together three concepts: *women*, *the body*, and *primitive accumulation*. There she asks fundamental questions about that emblematic figure of rebellion: Why does capitalism, since its foundation, need to make war against women who hold knowledge and power? Why is the witch hunt one

of the most brutal and least remembered massacres in history? Why must friendship between women be made suspicious? What did they seek to eliminate when they burned those women at the stake? How can a parallel be traced between witches and the Black slaves on plantations in the Americas?

The war against women, as Federici characterizes it, is an “original” moment that is *repeated* in each new phase of “primitive accumulation” of capital: in other words, that which is deployed over the social field, prior to a time of extreme instability of the relations of command-obedience and exploitation. The idea that there are historical moments when violence becomes a productive force for the accumulation of capital, as sociologist Maria Mies argues in her book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, is fundamental for understanding the current phase of dispossession at various scales.¹⁰ Carrying out war against women and their forms of knowledge-power is the condition of possibility for the beginning of capitalism, Federici argues, but we are left with the question of what this means in the present. We must test the hypothesis of an updated witch hunt, mapping the new bodies, territories, and conflicts of its contemporary iteration.

Historically, reactionary violence against women responded to their growing power and authority in social movements, especially the “heretical” movements and guilds. Federici identifies a “misogynist reaction” to that massiveness, to the reproductive control that women practiced among themselves, their techniques of accompaniment and complicity. “Clean sex between clean sheets”: that was the objective of the capitalist rationalization of sexuality, which sought to turn women’s sexual activity into labor at the service of men and procreation. Additionally, it was a way of making women sedentary. Federici argues that it was much more difficult for them to become vagabonds or migrant workers, because nomadic life would expose them to male violence, precisely in the moment of the capitalist reorganization of the world when misogyny was on the rise. However, as she insists, such violence was not only a hidden story of its beginnings. That is why her image still feels so relevant, at a time when all female nomadism, from taking a taxi at night to abandoning a partner or leaving the home, is increasingly the occasion of sexist violence.

Women’s bodies, Federici continues, came to replace spaces held in common (especially lands) following their enclosure in continental Europe.

All at once, women were submitted to a new form of exploitation that would give rise to a growing submission of their work and of their bodies, which were increasingly understood as personal services and natural resources. The women *privatized* in this way were those who took refuge in bourgeois marriages, while those who remained out in the open were turned into a servile class (from housewives to domestic workers or prostitutes).

But to regard such women as “rebels” does not refer to any “specifically subversive” activity. “Rather, it describes the *female personality* that had developed, especially among the peasantry, in the course of the struggle over feudal power, when women had been in the forefront of heretical movements, often organizing in female associations, posing a growing challenge to male authority and the Church.”¹¹ The images that portrayed them—in stories and caricatures—described women mounted on the backs of their husbands, whip in hand, and many others dressed as men, ready for action. In this sequence, friendships between women also became an object of suspicion, seen as counterproductive to marriages and as an obstacle to the mutual denunciation promoted, once again, by male authority and the church.

Many of these scenes continue to resonate in the present; I identify at least three dynamics that call attention to how this framework persists in our conjuncture: (1) the relationship between feminized and dissident bodies and common lands/territories, both of which are understood as surfaces of colonization, conquest, and domination; (2) the criminalization of collective actions led by women, as the energizers of rebellious social movements; and (3) male and church authority as a key that is constantly present for the call to order of capitalist accumulation.

The Colonial Dimension

“New forms of war” are what Argentinian anthropologist Rita Segato calls the current modes of violence that take women’s bodies as their target. They are “new” because they update a geometry of power that goes beyond the nation-state, since it is often other actors who exercise violence, overwhelmingly linked to illegal capital. At the same time, a connection to the past persists amid the novelty, especially in its colonial dimension. That dimension is expressed in the properly colonial methods of murdering

women (such as impalement, acid, and dismemberment), but above all in the exercise of the affirmation of authority based on the ownership of bodies. This classical form of capitalist conquest (authority = property) today requires something extra: an intensification of scales and methodologies. In other words, it is what Segato defines as “a world of lordship,” what we might think of as a regime of appropriation that radicalizes the colonial form.¹²

Suely Rolnik emphasizes the colonial dimension of aggression against feminized bodies, proposing the category of the “colonial-capitalist unconscious.”¹³ This term refers to the traumatic effects of the “fear and humiliation” of colonial processes—in their various phases and repetitions—which organize “operations” of subjectivation that are “more subtle than the macropolitical movements that resulted in independence from the colonial statute.” I want to extract and specify three premises from Rolnik’s argument.¹⁴ First, the colonial unconscious operates by producing a “dissociation between the political, the aesthetic, and the clinical.” In other words, it disciplines and creates hierarchies between knowledges that are taken as “separate.” Then, this dissociation condemns us to despising the body’s knowledges and structures as “colonial repression”: “the object of that ‘repression’ is the body itself in its ability to listen to the diagram of forces of the present and the paradoxical dynamic of its frictions with the dominant forms of reality, an aptitude from which it extracts its power of evaluation and its potencia of action.” Lastly, “the abolition of the ‘repression’ of the body’s knowledge and the actions in which it is updated” become a fundamental practical dimension on the horizon of transformation.

Power of evaluation and potencia of action are two essential practices of subaltern knowledges and feminist epistemology. They confront that division, which is so patriarchal and always in fashion, between those who *think* and those who *do*, those who *conceptualize* and those who *struggle*—in short, between stereotypical notions of comfort and risk. The colonial element of this division is what stands out, in which *knowledge* is an overvalued power of the elite and *doing* a modest resource of the subaltern.

On the other hand, considering practices based on both their power of evaluation and their potencia of action mobilizes a key element against the colonial-capitalist unconscious. The knowledges of the body of which

Rolnik speaks today become the new object of suspicion and repression when they produce forms of socialization between women, lesbians, trans people, and travestis, becoming true political technologies of friendship, trust, rumor, and authority.

The misogynist and violent reaction also rises in response to these knowledges of the body. Therefore these knowledge-powers express the rupture of “minoritized” subjectivities (historically relegated and unappreciated) that flee from submission through recognition, from pure identity politics. In the case of women, lesbians, travestis, and trans people, a slogan such as #EstamosParaNosotras (#WeStandForOurselves) implies, among many other things, an impulse to stop adapting to heteronormative desire whose unilateral and violent deployment is the foundation of sexist affirmation. More precisely, the decomposition of the minoritized body, Rolnik says, dismantles the “scene” in which the dominant body is constructed, and in which the violent reaction is the attempt to maintain the stability of that scene, at any cost. The war against women could thus be rethought as a war against feminine and feminized characters who turn the knowledge of the body into power. It is no coincidence that she concludes with a discussion of the figure of the “witch” as a mode of existence that provides an “ethical compass,” positioning knowledges of the body as acts of subversion against the colonial-capitalist unconscious. Those knowledges operate in concrete situations (over which they are evaluated and over which they act), and they bring us face to face with the borders of a regime of power whose colonial structure contains fundamental clues both for evaluating its failures and the possibilities of flight. It is against those rebellious knowledge-powers that colonial war has been waged. They are powers and knowledges that are strategic, both in defensive withdrawal and in the persistent desire to disobey.

Beyond Victimization

Segato has developed the precise diagnosis of a “pedagogy of cruelty,” a term that has since become common parlance. She has analyzed gender-based crimes as “expressive violence,” leading her to interpret the murders of women in Ciudad Juárez as violence that sees the female body as a tapestry on which to write a message.¹⁵ Commenting on Segato’s work,

Raquel Gutiérrez Aguilar and I argued: “There is a novelty, even in its repetition. War takes on new forms, puts on unknown clothes. The textile metaphor is not a coincidence: today its main canvas is the female body. It becomes the privileged text and territory for marking violence. A new type of war.”¹⁶ We also spoke about the “opacity” of a social conflictiveness in which femicides are inscribed. This opacity is not simple confusion, lack of information, or the impossibility of interpretation, and it is not a coincidence. Such opacity should be analyzed as a strategic element of that newness: as a truly counterinsurgent dimension that seeks to dismantle the rebel capacity of certain body-territories.¹⁷

In Latin America, the reality of femicide demands that we return to the question of its meaning: What message is transmitted by these crimes that, now, seem no longer to be circumscribed by the home, but take place in the middle of a bar, a day care, or on the street itself? It exercises a “pedagogy of cruelty,” which is inseparable from the intensification of “media violence” that operates by spreading that aggression against women, distributing a message, and confirming a code of complicity between a mode of practicing masculinity. This is what Segato is referring to when she speaks of femicide as carrier of an “expressive violence” that is no longer only an instrumental violence.

The prevalence of such violence against women, lesbians, trans people, and travestis (which takes multiple forms, from dispossession to harassment, abuse to discrimination) is key to understanding a line of interconnected violence, one that has to do with the ways exploitation and value extraction are reconfigured today. Moving beyond the perspective of violence as victimization does not take us away from the problem of violence, nor does it free us from understanding its specificity. To the contrary, it relocates it. I already spoke of a strategic displacement: it is the intersection between gendered violence and economic and social violence that allows us to go beyond enclosing violence in a limited gender-based perspective. Its specificity emerges from that connection, not from a process of isolation. This specificity stems from a situated perspective that facilitates an understanding of the different forms of violence as a totality in movement, and each of them as a partial synthesis.

This connection allows us to build and move ourselves on a plane of intelligibility that gives meaning to violence to the extent that it links the domestic sphere with the world of work and the exploitation of our

precarity, as well as with new forms of financial exploitation that are assembled beyond the wage. It is this connection that explains how the impossibility of economic autonomy leads to immobility in homes that become hell, and how migration becomes a line of flight that is worthwhile, even as its risks grow ever greater.

The material possibility of making a critique of contemporary violence, then, has three intersecting elements: (1) a map of the world of work in a feminist register that allows us to reevaluate non-waged economies; (2) the emergence of a political ecology from below that deploys a non-liberal comprehension of the earth and resources, in a broad sense, because it emerges from struggles in favor of communitarian life; and (3) struggles for justice, understood as an extension of the work of collective care.

Therefore, we avoid, as I indicated above, the thematization of domestic violence as a “ghetto” that determines corresponding “responses” and “solutions,” which are also isolating: a new secretariat (of the state), or a new section (of a union), or a new program (of health care).

Once this displacement and linkage of different forms of violence produces a feminist diagnosis that starts to become common sense, we see how the neoliberal and conservative reaction attempts to recodify the violence. That reaction interprets violence as insecurity and, therefore, as the need for greater control. In general, governmental institutions attempt to respond to femicides through punitive, racist, and sexist reprisals: that is how the political system recodifies these forms of violence, in order to include them in a general discourse of *insecurity*. This reinforces classist and racist stereotypes (e.g., that men are dangerous in accordance with their class and their nationality), while it proposes the request for a “heavy hand” as the only way out. The solutions of punitive demagoguery thus appear as magical proposals.

Excursus: The War *on* Women’s Bodies

The war *on* women’s bodies, which I want to talk about here, can be understood in relation to those heterogeneous ways in which autonomy and contempt expand the limits of what a body can do.

Thinking about what type of war is being developed against women, lesbians, travestis, and trans people allows us to understand capital’s current

offensive to relaunch its control. But, before that, in terms of method and political perspective, we must account for the type of autonomy that is being deployed if we are to understand the magnitude of the misogynist reaction against it.

A widely circulated photo from Chile's 2018 feminist mobilizations for democratic and feminist education showed a masked youth with a patch sewn on her ski mask that read: "I am at war." When the balaclavas go from the jungle to the streets of the metropole, what sort of war are we talking about?

Being at war is a way of taking on an array of forces. It means finding another way of living in our bodies. It makes visible a backdrop of violence that differentiates "terminal" bodies from others in that weft. To be at war is to liberate forces that are experienced as contained. It is to stop covering up the violence.

In that sense, to be at war means assuming that we are being attacked, and there is a decision—which is a common force—to no longer pacify ourselves in the face of everyday violence. It has to do with a way of traversing the fear, not simply believing that it ceases to exist.

If the writer Simone de Beauvoir said that one is not born a woman, but becomes one, it was in order to reveal the historical construction of the female nature that *limited* us to certain tasks, functions, and obligations. Becoming, in *The Second Sex*, expresses a negative process of which we have to become conscious: it is the way in which becoming women emerges as synonymous with turning into *non-free* subjects. Becoming is a process of subjection, especially to maternity.

The French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari gave it the opposite meaning (but one that would be impossible to understand without de Beauvoir's precedent): becoming-woman is to leave one's assigned place, to get down from the family tree, to escape the patriarchal mandate. In this sense, becoming has nothing to do with progressing or adapting, nor with enacting a model or reaching a goal (there is no evolution, as the philosophers say). Becoming, to the contrary, "is the process of desire."¹⁸

However, the becoming-woman alerts us to a theft. They rob us of a body in order to produce a two-part, binary organism, thus making us into a body that is not our own. First they rob the young girl of her body: "Don't use that posture"; "You're not a girl anymore"; "Don't be a tomboy." Thus,

becoming-woman is a type of youthful movement: not because of age, but due to the capacity to circulate at different velocities and in different places, to go through passages, until turning into the process itself. Becoming-woman is the key of other becomings: a start, a rhythm, a vertigo that is opposed to the majority, which is understood as a state of power and domination.

“Becoming what you are”: if we had to identify an origin (or better, invent one provisionally) for the issue of becoming, we could go to this sentence from Friedrich Nietzsche. Lou Andreas-Salomé—the philosopher’s interlocutor and lover—wrote about the *impulse of transformation and change of opinion* as two key elements of his thought: thus, her reading highlights a process of transforming one’s self—that is, becoming—as an indispensable condition of all creative force.¹⁹ The aphorism “We should all become traitors, exercise disloyalty, constantly discard our ideas” functions as a call to a materialism whose fidelity is no longer to convictions or ideals, but to the process of transformation itself. In any case, what would a fidelity to becomings *be*?

Salomé—who would later become a friend of Freud and one of the women precursors to psychoanalysis—makes an interpretation of the philosopher that gives special emphasis to the emotional tone of his thought, to highlight “the subtle and secret sentimental relations that a thought or a word can awaken,” and also how intuition and truth are intertwined in his work to the point of producing a towing effect, an increase in energy. The relation between intuition and necessity, elaborated in this way, nourishes a new objectivity.

These knowledges—Salomé indicates—are linked to artists and women because they are the ones who “produce the impression of the fullness of force, of the living, of the full spirit, of the invigorating.” Becoming turns into war. “Eternal war that *one is*”: each person as composed of opposing elements, from which a higher form of health can sprout. As Nietzsche would say, “The price of fertility is to be rich in contradictions”; you just have to have the strength to bear them. Premises that are fundamental for a certain feminist perspective emerge from here: First, the idea that “everything is *non-truth*,” that is, that the violence of the totality is a suppression of concrete situations and partialities; therefore, there is no absolute truth, only *perspective*. Second, the notion that there is a certain preponderance for affective life to overtake intellectual life: the content of

truth is considered secondary in respect to its content of will and feeling, such that becoming involves an economy of forces. In that passage, truth is no longer discovered; it is *invented*. But there can be no truth without a declaration of war.

These premises are common knowledge to survivors. In her *Cancer Journals*, the Black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde is a survivor who says she needs to not write as a survivor.²⁰ She does so, rather, as a warrior who has not abandoned fear. Who goes from the biopsy to the detection of a tumor in her right breast. Who is fighting battles and victories in the face of death. Who deals with the vertiginous fantasies of a disease that can assault the entire body. Who resists the ups and downs before and after the decision for a mastectomy. She investigates her body as a battlefield where a combat between very different powers plays out: that of the erotic and self-care, against the cosmetic and surgical machinery; that of racist and aesthetic prejudices and the fear of not being desired, or of herself losing the desire to make love, against the healing power of a network of friendships. They are powers, Lorde shows, that require self-training. And a language that is also like a new skin.

It is said that young Amazon women remove their right breast to be better archers. Lorde brings the image of these determined fifteen-year-olds to her pages several times, almost as unexpected mythological allies. Or perhaps they are not so unexpected for this woman, who writes that “growing up as a black, fat, almost blind woman in the US” also requires knowledge of the bow and arrow to survive.

Lorde says that, as opposed to the (idealist) illusion of the end of fear, it is about recognizing fear as part of one’s own nature, precisely in order to stop fearing it. To familiarize oneself with it is to disarm it. To refrain from assuming it will magically disappear, so as to avoid paralysis when it arrives. To traverse it. To coexist with it to the point where one can guess its tricks. In this sense, the diary that she writes stops being intimate; in other words, it radicalizes her intimacy to the point of making it a political manifesto, the interpellation of a foreign sister or a wise teacher, of whom Lorde sometimes. From there, a direct question arises: What are the words you still have not found? What do you need to say? What are the tyrannies you swallow every day, and that you attempt to make yours until they make you sick and you die from them, still in silence?

"in the star . . ."

no

in a filthy dark room that I never leave that
I never enter where I always am not or I am crying or spitting
urinating writing crawling or speaking speaking to the painting a
room of crazy ancestors blacklegs usurers assassins suicides
beggars thieves solemn swollen in a dark room
of blood of shadow in a room where if I am I'm not
or I am who cares and waiting for everything outside inside
in a room with walls of the dead dead dead who leap out
of dreams they eat you in a room upstairs where I'm writing to you
convulsions of a dead woman and a dead man of a dead son of a bitch like all
the dead and their parents grandparents and nephews like all the dead women
a red room rotten with blood through their eyes a room
yours the neighbor's where I am or am not or you were or would be
or they were without day with a window onto the black background onto the wall of
mucous onto the abyss coagulated with sperm in a room of art of
the pure artist of seraphic filth parisian florentine scoundrel a
room of a scoundrel more scoundrel than dead like all the dead
and the women and the children first like all the dead from
across and from the corner and from the northeast in a room of
an incorruptible artist dead decorated and dead and tidy and
educated where I am or am not look what happens and dead woman and dead man
in a room of a dead sick healthy trodden-on famous artist
in a room of a child child ancestor sickly yellow from
masturbating against all the motherly human and divine of a dead
artist and father and pride of the school in a room brown and
filthy my eternity the eternity where the soul is scraped down to
the bone to find to find that word that ineffable
immortal sponger in order to lie in order to swindle

"in the star . . ."

Saidiya Hartman

The Anarchy of Colored Girls
Assembled in a Riotous Manner

Esther Brown did not write a political tract on the refusal to be governed, or draft a plan for mutual aid or outline a memoir of her sexual adventures. A manifesto of the wayward: Own Nothing. Refuse the Given. Live on What You Need and No More. Get Ready to Be Free—was not found among the items contained in her case file. She didn't pen any song lines: *My mama says I'm reckless, My daddy says I'm wild, I ain't good looking, but I'm somebody's angel child*. She didn't commit to paper her ruminations on freedom: *With human nature caged in a narrow space, whipped daily into submission, how can we speak of potentialities?* The cardboard placards for the tumult and upheaval she incited might have said: Don't mess with me. I am not afraid to smash things up. But hers was a struggle without formal declarations of policy, slogan, or credos. It required no party platform or ten-point program. Walking through the streets of New York City, she and Emma Goldman crossed paths, but failed to recognize one another. When Hubert Harrison encountered her in the lobby of the Renaissance Casino after he delivered his lectures on "Marriage versus Free Love" for the Socialist Club, he noticed only that she had a pretty face and a big ass. Esther Brown never pulled a

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soapbox onto the corner of 135th Street and Lenox Avenue to make a speech about autonomy, the global reach of the color line, involuntary servitude, free motherhood, or the promise of a future world, but she well understood that the desire to move as she wanted was nothing short of treason. She knew firsthand that the offense most punished by the state was trying to live free. To wander through the streets of Harlem, to want better than what she had, and to be propelled by her whims and desires was to be ungovernable. Her way of living was nothing short of anarchy.

Had anyone ever found the rough notes for reconstruction jotted in the marginalia of her grocery list or correlated the numbers circled most often in her dog-eared dream book with routes of escape not to be found in Rand McNally's atlas or seen the love letters written to her girlfriend about how they would live at the end of the world, the master philosophers and cardholding radicals, in all likelihood, would have said that her analysis was insufficient, dismissed her for failing to understand those key passages in the *Grundrisse* about the ex-slave's refusal to work—*they have ceased to be slaves, but not in order to become wage labourers*—she nodded in enthusiastic agreement at all the wrong places—*content with producing only what is strictly necessary for their own consumption*—and embraced *indulgence and idleness as the real luxury good*; all of which emphasized the limits of black feminist politics. What did they know of Truth and Tubman? Or the contours of black women's war against the state and capital? Could they ever understand the dreams of another world which didn't trouble the distinction between man, settler, and master? Or recounted the struggle against servitude, captivity, property, and enclosure that began in the barracocon and continued on the ship, where some fought, some jumped, some refused to eat. Others set the plantation and the fields on fire, poisoned the master. They had never listened to Lucy Parsons; they had never read Ida B. Wells. Or envisioned the riot as a rally cry and refusal of fungible life? Only a misreading of the key texts of anarchism could ever imagine a place for wayward colored girls. No, Kropotkin never described black women's mutual aid societies or the chorus in *Mutual Aid*, although he imagined animal sociality in its rich varieties and the forms of cooperation and mutuality found among ants, monkeys, and ruminants. Impossible, recalcitrant domestics weren't yet in his radar or anyone else's. (It would be a decade and a half before Marvel Cooke and Ella Baker wrote their essay "The Bronx Slave Market" and two decades before Claudia Jones's "An End to the Neglect of the Problems of the Negro Woman.")

It is not surprising that a *negress* would be guilty of conflating idleness with resistance or exalt the struggle for mere survival or confuse petty acts

for insurrection or imagine a minor figure might be capable of some significant shit or mistake laziness and inefficiency for a general strike or recast theft as a kind of cheap socialism for too fast girls and questionable women or esteem wild ideas as radical thought. At best, the case of Esther Brown provides another example of the tendency to exaggeration and excess that is common to the race. A revolution in a minor key was hardly noticeable before the spirit of Bolshevism or the nationalist vision of a Black Empire or the glamour of wealthy libertines, fashionable socialists, and self-declared New Negroes. Nobody remembers the evening she and her friends raised hell on 132nd Street or turned out Edmund's Cellar or made such a beautiful noise during the riot that their screams and shouts were improvised music, so that even the tone-deaf journalists from the *New York Times* described the black noise of disorderly women as a jazz chorus.

Wayward Experiments

Esther Brown hated to work, the conditions of work as much as the very idea of work. Her reasons for quitting said as much. Housework: *Wages too small*. Laundry work: *Too hard*. Ran away. General Housework: *Tired of work*. Laundress: *Too hard*. Sewing buttons on shirts: *Tired of work*. Dishwasher: *Tired of work*. Housework: *Man too cross*. Live-in-service: I might as well be a slave. At age fifteen, when she left school, she experienced the violence endemic to domestic work and tired quickly of the demand to care for others who didn't care for you. She ran the streets because nowhere else in the world was there anything for her. She stayed in the streets to escape the suffocation of her mother's small apartment, which was packed with lodgers, men who took up too much space and who were too easy with their hands. She had been going around and mixing it up for a few years, but only because she liked doing it. She never went with men *only* for money. She was no prostitute. After the disappointment of a short-lived marriage to a man who wasn't her baby's father (he had offered to marry her but she rejected him), she went to live with her sister and grandmother and they helped her raise her son. She had several lovers to whom she was bound by need and want, not by the law.

Esther's only luxury was idleness and she was fond of saying to her friends, "If you get up in the morning and feel tired, go back to sleep and then go to the theatre at night." With the support of her sister and grandmother and help from gentlemen friends, she didn't need to work on a regular basis. She picked up day work when she was in a pinch and endured a six-week stretch of "Yes, Mrs. I'll get to it" when coerced by need. So really,

she was doing fine and had nearly perfected the art of surviving without having to scrape and bow. She hated being a servant, as did every general houseworker. Service carried the stigma of slavery; white girls sought to avoid it for the same reason—it was *nigger work*. Had her employers suspected that the better the servant, the more severe the hatred of the mistress, Esther would not have been “entrusted to care for their precious darlings.”

Why should she toil in a kitchen or factory in order to survive? Why should she work herself to the bone for white people? She preferred strolling along Harlem’s wide avenues and losing herself in cabarets and movie houses. In the streets, young women and men displayed their talents and ambitions. It was better than staying home and staring at four walls. In Harlem, strolling was a fine art, *an everyday choreography of the possible*; it was the collective movement of the streets, headless and spilling out in all directions, yet moving and drifting en masse, like a swarm or the swell of an ocean; it was a long poem of black hunger and striving. The bodies rushing through the block and idling on corners and hanging out on front steps were an assembly of the damned, the venturesome, and the dangerous. “All modalities sang a part in this chorus” and the refrains were of infinite variety. On the avenues, the possibilities were glimmering and evanescent, even if fleeting and most often unrealized. The map of the *might could* or *what might be* was not restricted to the literal trail of Esther’s footsteps or anyone else’s. Hers was an errant path cut through the heart of Harlem in search of the open city, *l’ouverture*, inside the ghetto. Wandering and drifting was how she engaged the world and how she perceived it. The thought of what might be possible was indistinguishable from moving bodies and the transient rush and flight of black folks in this city-within-the-city. Streetwalking in the black capital emboldened the wayward, shored up the weary, stoked the dreams of the wretched, and encouraged wanderlust.

As she drifted through the city, a thousand ideas about who she might be and what she might do rushed into her head, but she was uncertain what to make of them. Her thoughts were inchoate, fragmentary, wild. How they might become a blueprint for something better was unclear. Esther was fiercely intelligent. She had a bright, alert face and piercing eyes that announced her interest in the world. This combined with a noticeable pride made the seventeen-year-old appear substantial, a force in her own right. Even the white teachers at the training school, who disliked her and were reluctant to give a colored girl any undue praise, conceded she was very smart, although quick to anger because of too much pride. She insisted on being treated no differently than the white girls, so they said she was

trouble. The problem was not her capacity; it was her attitude. The brutality she experienced at the Hudson Training School for Girls taught her to fight back, to strike out. The teachers told the authorities that she had enjoyed too much freedom. It had ruined her and made her into the kind of young woman who would not hesitate to smash things up. Freedom in her hands, if not a crime, was a threat to public order and moral decency. *Excessive liberty had ruined her.* The social worker concurred, “With no social considerations to constrain her, she was ungovernable.”



Esther Brown was wild and wayward. She longed for another way of living in the world. She was hungry for enough, for otherwise, for better. She was hungry for beauty. In her case, the aesthetic wasn't a realm separate and distinct from the daily challenges of survival, rather the aim was to make an art of subsistence, a lyric of being young, poor, gifted, and black. Yet, she did not try to create a poem or song or painting. What she created was Esther Brown. *That was the offering, the bit of art, that could not come from any other. She would polish and hone that. She would celebrate that everyday something had tried to kill her and failed.* She would make a beautiful life. What was beauty if not “the intense sensation of being pulled toward the animating force of life?” Or the yearning “to bring things into relation . . . and with as much urgency as though one's life depended upon it.” To the eyes of the world, her wild thoughts, dreams of another world, and longing to escape from drudgery were likely to lead to tumult and upheaval, to open rebellion. Esther Brown didn't need a husband or a daddy or a boss telling her what to do. But a young woman who flitted from job to job and lover to lover was considered immoral and destined to become a threat to the social order, a menace to society. Detective Brady said as much when he arrested Esther and her friends.



What the law designated as crime were the forms of life created by young black women in the city. The modes of intimacy and affiliation being fashioned in the ghetto, the refusal to labor, the forms of gathering and assembly, the practices of subsistence and getting over were under surveillance and targeted by the police as well as the sociologists and the reformers who gathered the information and made the case against them, forging their lives into tragic biographies of poverty, crime, and pathology. The activity required to reproduce and sustain life is, as Marx noted, a definite form of expressing life, it is an art of survival, social poesis. Subsistence—scraping

by, getting over, making ends meet—entailed an ongoing struggle to produce a way to live in a context in which poverty was taken for granted and domestic work or general housework defined the only opportunity available to black girls and women. The acts of the wayward—the wild thoughts, reckless dreams, interminable protests, spontaneous strikes, nonparticipation, willfulness, and bold-faced refusal redistributed the balance of need and want and sought a line of escape from debt and duty in the attempt to create a path elsewhere.

Mere survival was an achievement in a context so brutal. How could one enhance life or speak of its potentialities when confined in the ghetto, when daily subjected to racist assault and insult, and conscripted to servitude? *How can I live?*—It was a question Esther reckoned with every day. Survival required acts of collaboration and genius. Esther's imagination was geared toward the clarification of life—"what would sustain material life and enhance it, something that entailed more than the reproduction of physical existence." The mutuality and creativity necessary to sustain life in the context of intermittent wages, controlled deprivation, economic exclusion, coercion, and antiblack violence often bordered on the extralegal and the criminal. Beautiful, wayward experiments entailed what W. E. B. DuBois described as an "open rebellion" against society.

This speculative history of the wayward is an effort to narrate the open rebellion and beautiful experiment produced by young women in the emergent ghetto, a form of racial enclosure that succeeded the plantation. The narrative utilizes the reports and case files of the reformatory, private investigators, psychologists, and social workers to challenge the primary tenets of these accounts, the most basic of these assumptions being that the lives represented required intervention and rehabilitation and that the question—who are you?—is indistinguishable from one's status as a social problem. The method is critical fabulation. State violence, surveillance, and detention produce the archival traces and institutional records that inform the reconstruction of these lives; but desire and the want of something better decide the contours of the telling. The narrative emulates the errant path of the wayward and moves from one story to another by way of encounter, chance meeting, proximity, and the sociality created by enclosure. It strives to convey the aspiration and longing of the wayward and the tumult and upheaval incited by the chorus.

For the most part, the history of Esther and her friends and the potentiality of their lives has remained unthought because no one could imagine young black women as social visionaries, radical thinkers, and innovators in

the world in which these acts took place. This latent history has yet to emerge: *A revolution in a minor key* unfolded in the city and young black women were its vehicle. It was driven not by uplift or the struggle for recognition or citizenship, but by the vision of a world *that would guarantee to every human being free access to earth and full enjoyment of the necessities of life, according to individual desires, tastes, and inclinations*. In this world, free love and free motherhood would not be criminalized and punished. To appreciate the beautiful experiments of Esther Brown and her friends, one needs first to conceive something as unimaginable and unprecedented as *too fast girls and surplus women* and *whores* producing “thought of the outside,” that is, thought directed toward the outer bound of what is possible. Such far-reaching notions of *what could be* were the fruit of centuries of mutual aid, which was organized in stealth and paraded in public view.

Collaboration, reciprocity, and shared creation defined the practice of mutual aid. It was and remains a collective practice of survival for those bereft of the notion that life and land, human and earth could be owned, traded, and made the private property of anyone, those who would never be self-possessed, or envision themselves as acquisitive self-interested proprietors, or measure their life and worth by the ledger or the rent book, or long to be the settler or the master. Mutual aid did not traffic in the belief that the self existed distinct and apart from others or revere the ideas of individuality and sovereignty, as much as it did singularity and freedom. The mutual aid society survived the Middle Passage and its origins might be traced to traditions of collectivity, which flourished in the stateless societies that preceded the breach of the Atlantic and perdured in its wake. This form of mutual assistance was remade in the hold of the slave ship, the plantation, and the ghetto. It made good the ideals of the commons, the collective, the ensemble, the always-more-than-one of existing in the world. The mutual aid society was a resource of black survival. The ongoing and open-ended creation of new conditions of existence and the improvisation of life-enhancing and free association was a practice crafted in social clubs, tenements, taverns, dance halls, disorderly houses, and the streets.



Esther had been working for two days as a live-in domestic on Long Island when she decided to return to Harlem to see her baby and have some fun. It was summer and Harlem was alive. She visited her son and grandmother, but stayed at her friend Josephine’s place because she always had a house full

of folks dancing, drinking, carousing, and vamping. Esther had planned to return to her job the next day, but one day stretched into several. People tended to lose track of time at Josephine's place. Five West 134th street had a reputation as a building for lover's secret assignations, house parties, and gambling. The apartment was in the thick of it, right off Fifth Avenue in the blocks of Harlem tightly packed with crowded tenements and subject to frequent police raids. Esther was playing cards when Rebecca arrived with Krause, who said he had a friend he wanted her to meet. She didn't feel like going out, but they kept pestering her and Josephine encouraged her to give it a try. Why not have some fun?



Do you want to have a good time? Brady asked. Rebecca gave him the once-over. A smile and the promise of some fun was all the encouragement Rebecca needed. Esther didn't care one way or the other. She suggested they go back to Josephine's, but Brady didn't want to, so they decided to hang out in the hallway of a nearby building. A tenement hallway was as good as any lounge. In the dark passage, Brady snuggled up with Rebecca, while his friend tried to pair up with Esther. Krause asked Brady for fifty cents to go buy some liquor. That was when Brady said he was a detective. Krause took off quick, as if he knew what was coming as soon as the man opened his mouth. He would have gotten away if Brady hadn't shot him in the foot.

At the precinct, Detective Brady charged Krause with White Slavery, and Esther and Rebecca with Violation of the Tenement House Law. They were taken from the precinct to the Jefferson Market Court for an arraignment. Since they were seventeen years old and didn't have any previous offenses they were sent to the Empire Friendly Shelter while they awaited trial, rather than confined in the Tombs, which was what everyone called the prison cells above the Jefferson courthouse. A day later the charges were dismissed against Krause because the other detective failed to appear in court. They were waiting to appear before the judge when Krause sent word that he was free. Esther and Rebecca wouldn't be so lucky. It was hard to call the cursory proceedings and routine indifference at the Women's Court a hearing, since the magistrate court had no jury, produced no written record of the events, required no evidence but the police officer's word, failed to consider the intentions of the accused, or even to require the commitment of a criminal act. *The likelihood of future criminality* decided their sentence rather than any violation of the law. The magistrate judge barely looked at the two colored girls before sentencing them to three years at the reformatory. The

social worker recommended they be sent to Bedford Hills to rescue them from a life in the streets.



Harlem was swarming with vice-investigators and undercover detectives and do-gooders who were all intent on keeping young black women off the streets, even if it meant arresting every last one of them. Street strollers, exhausted domestics, nocturnal creatures, wannabe chorus girls, and too loud colored women were arrested on a whim or suspicion or likelihood. In custody, the reasons for arrest were offered: Loitering. Riotous and Disorderly. Solicitation. Violation of the Tenement House Law. Who knew that being too loud, or loitering in the hallway of your building or on the front stoop was a violation of the law; or making a date with someone you met at the club, or arranging a casual hookup, or running the streets was prostitution? Or sharing a flat with ten friends was criminal anarchy? Or the place where you stayed was a disorderly house, and could be raided at any moment? The real offense was blackness. Your status made you a criminal. The tell-tale sign of future criminality was a dark face.

Until the night of July 17, 1917, Esther Brown had been lucky and eluded the police, although she had been under their gaze all the while. The willingness to have a good time with a stranger or the likelihood of engaging in an immoral act—sexual intimacy outside of marriage—was sufficient evidence of wrongdoing. To be willing or *willful* was the offense to be punished. The only way to counter the presumption of wrongdoing and establish innocence was to give a good account of one's self. Esther failed to do this as did many young women who passed through the court. It didn't matter that Esther had not solicited Krause or asked for or accepted any money. She assumed she was innocent, but the Women's Court found otherwise. Esther's inability to give an account of herself, capable of justifying and explaining how she lived or, at least, willing to atone for her failures and deviations, were among the offenses levied against her. She readily admitted that she hated to work, not bothering to distinguish between the conditions of work available to her and some ideal of work that she and none she knew had ever experienced. She was convicted because she was unemployed and "leading the life of a prostitute." One could lead the life of a prostitute without actually being one.

With no proof of employment, Esther was indicted for vagrancy under the Tenement House Law. Vagrancy was an expansive and virtually all-encompassing category, like *the manner of walking* in Ferguson, it was a ubiquitous

charge that made it easy for the police to arrest and prosecute young women with no evidence of crime or act of lawbreaking. In the 1910s and 1920s, vagrancy statutes were used primarily to target young women for prostitution. To be charged was to be sentenced since the Women's Court had the highest rate of conviction of all the New York City courts. Nearly 80 percent of those who appeared before the magistrate judge were sentenced to serve time. It didn't matter if it was your first encounter with the law. Vagrancy statutes and tenement house laws made young black women vulnerable to arrest and transformed sexual acts, even consensual ones with no cash exchanging hands, into criminal offenses. What mattered was not what you had done, but the prophetic power of the police to predict future crime, to anticipate the mug shot in the bright eyes and intelligent face of Esther Brown.

The Future of Involuntary Servitude

In 1349, the first vagrancy statute was passed in England. The law was a response to the shortage of labor in the aftermath of the Black Plague and it was designed to conscript those who refused to labor. The vagrancy laws of England were adopted in the North American colonies and invigorated with a new force and scope after Emancipation and the demise of Reconstruction. They replaced the Black Codes, which had been deemed unconstitutional, but resurrected involuntary servitude in guises amenable to the terms liberty and equality.

In the South, vagrancy laws became a surrogate for slavery, forcing ex-slaves to remain on the plantation and radically restricting their movement, recreating slavery in all but name. In northern cities, vagrancy statutes too were intended to compel the labor of the idle, and, more importantly, to control the propertyless. Those without proof of employment were considered *likely to commit* or be involved in vice and crime. Vagrancy statutes provided the legal means to master the newly masterless. The origins of the workhouse and the house of correction can be traced to these efforts to force the idle to labor, to manage and regulate the ex-serf and ex-slave when lordship and bondage assumed a more indirect form. The statutes restricted and regulated black movement and punished the forms of intimacy that could not be categorized or settled by the question: *Is this man your husband?* Those without proof of employment and refusing to labor were in all likelihood guilty of crime—vagrancy or prostitution.

Vagrancy was a status, not a crime. It was *not* doing, withholding, non-participation, the refusal to be settled or bound by contract to husband or

employer. This refusal of a social order based on monogamous marriage or wage labor was penalized. Common law defined the vagrant as “someone who wandered about without visible means of support.” William Blackstone in his 1765 *Commentaries on the Law of England* defined vagrants as those who “wake on the night and sleep in the day and haunt taverns and ale-houses and roust about; and no man knows from where they came or whither they go.” The statutes targeted those who maintained excessive notions of freedom and imagined that liberty included the right *not* to work. In short, vagrants were the deracinated—migrants, wanderers, displaced persons, and strangers.

Status offenses were critical to the remaking of a racist order in the aftermath of slavery and accelerated the growing disparity between black and white rates of incarceration in northern cities at the beginning of the twentieth century. While the legal transformation from slavery to freedom is most often narrated as the shift from status to contract, from property to subject, from slave to Negro, vagrancy statutes make apparent the continuities and entanglements between a diverse range of unfree states—from slave to servant, from servant to vagrant, from domestic to prisoner, from idler to convict and felon. Involuntary servitude wasn’t one condition—chattel slavery—nor was it fixed in time and place; rather it was an ever-changing mode of exploitation, domination, accumulation (the severing of will, the theft of capacity, the appropriation of life), and confinement. Antiblack racism fundamentally shaped the development of “status criminality.” In turn, status criminality was tethered ineradicably to blackness.

Not quite two centuries after the conspiracy to burn down New York was hatched at a black-and-tan dive called Hughson’s Tavern, black assembly and the threat of tumult still made New York’s ruling elite quake in fear. The state was as intent on preventing the dangers and consequences posed by *Negroes assembled in a riotous manner*. Gatherings that were too loud or too unruly or too queer; hotels and cabarets that welcomed black and white patrons; black-and-tan dives frequented by Chinese men and white girls or black women with Italian paramours; or house parties and buffet flats offering refuge to pansies, lady lovers, and inverts—were deemed disorderly, promiscuous, and morally depraved. These forms of intimate association and unregulated assembly threatened the public good by transgressing the color line and eschewing the dominant mores. The lives of the wayward were riotous, queer, disposed to extravagance and wanton living. This promiscuous sociality fueled a moral panic identified and mobilized by the city’s ruling elite to justify the extravagant use of police power.

Penal laws against disorderly conduct, disorderly houses, disorderly persons, unlawful assembly, criminal anarchy, and vagrancy were intended to regulate intimacy and association, police styles of comportment, dictate how one assumed a gender and who one loved, and thwart free movement and errant paths through the city.

Esther Brown was confronted with a choice that was no choice at all: volunteer for servitude or be commanded by the law. Vagrancy statutes were implemented and expanded to conscript young colored women to domestic work and regulate them in proper households, that is, male-headed households, with a proper *he*, not merely someone pretending to be a husband or merely outfitted like a man, not lovers passing for sisters or a pretend *Mrs.* shacking up with a boarder, not households comprising three women and a child. For state authorities, black homes were disorderly houses as they were marked by the taint of promiscuity, pathology, and illegality, sheltering nameless children and strangers, nurturing intimacy outside the bounds of the law, not organized by the sexual dyad, and not ruled by the father; and producing criminals not citizens. The domestic was the locus of danger; it threatened social reproduction rather than ensured it. *Is this man your husband? Where is the father of your child?* Such questions, if not answered properly, might land you in the workhouse or reformatory. With incredible ferocity, state surveillance and police power acted to shape the black household and regulate intimate life. Affiliation and kinship organized along alternate lines, *an open mesh of possibilities*, was suspect and likely to yield crime. The discretionary power granted the police in discerning *future crime* would have an enormous impact on black social life and the making of the ghetto.

The plantation, the ghetto, and the prison were coeval; one mode of confinement and enclosure did not supersede the other, but extended the state of servitude, violence, and death in a new guise. The afterlife of slavery unfolded in a tenement hallway and held Esther Brown in its grasp. Plainly put, the Negro problem in the North was the arrival of the ex-slave in the city, and the moral panic and the race riots that erupted across the country document the reach of the plantation and the enduring status of the black as fungible life, eternal alien, and noncitizen.

The plantation was not abolished, but transformed. The problem of crime was the threat posed by the black presence in the city; the problem of crime was the wild experiment in black freedom; and the efforts to manage and regulate this crisis provided a means of solidifying and extending the color line that defined urban space, reproducing the disavowed apartheid of everyday life.

State violence, incarceration, and controlled depletion defined the world that Esther Brown wanted to destroy. It made her the sort of girl who would not hesitate to smash things up.

Contraband Love

The letter her ex-husband sent didn't say if the article appeared in the metro column of *The Amsterdam News* or the New York City Briefs in *The Chicago Defender* or the City News section of the *New York Herald*, in which case only a few lines dedicated to the when, where, and how would have appeared, just the cold hard facts, perhaps accompanied by statistics that documented the rising rate of prostitution, or the increasing numbers of young colored women arrested for solicitation and violation of the Tenement House Law. It would not have been a showy or sensationalist headline like *Silk and Lights Blamed for Harlem's Girl Demise* or a lead story of moral crisis and sexual panic manufactured by vice commissions and urban reformers. If the details were especially sordid, a column or two might be devoted to a young woman's demise.

All her ex-husband said was that "a rush of sadness and disbelief had washed over him" as he tried to figure out how *his Esther, his baby*, had come to be involved in such trouble. He encouraged her to be a good girl and he promised to take care of her when she was released, something he had failed to do in the few months they lived together as husband and wife in her mother's home. Now that it was too late, he was trying to be steady. The letter was posted on army stationery and it was filled with assurances about his love, promises about trying to be a better man and pleading that she try to do better. *You will not live happy*, he cautioned, *until [your] wild world end(s)*. He hoped she had learned a *long lost lesson in the wild world of fun and pleasure*.

Esther's grandmother and sister didn't know that she had been arrested until they saw her name in the daily newspaper. They were in disbelief. It wasn't true. It couldn't be. Anyone in Harlem could tell you that stool pigeons were paid to lie. Everyone knew Krause was working for the cops. He would sell his own mama for a dollar. Besides, if anyone was to blame for Esther's trouble, her grandmother thought, it was her mother, Rose. She was jealous of the girl, mostly because of the attention paid to Esther by the men boarding in the rented rooms of her flat. Rose was living with one of them as her husband, although the relation, properly speaking, was outside the bounds of the law.

When Rose heard the news of her daughter's arrest it confirmed what she believed: the girl was headed for trouble. Some time in the country and not running the streets might steady her, she confided to the social worker,

tipping the hand that would decide her daughter's fate. What passed for maternal concern was a long list of complaints about Esther's manner of living. Rose told the colored probation officer, Miss Campbell, that her daughter had "never worked more than six weeks at a time and usually stayed in a place only a couple of weeks." She just wouldn't stay put or keep a job. She had a good husband and she left him. She was young and flighty and did not want to be tied down to one husband. What more was there to say?

The neighbors told a different story. *The mother is the one who needs to be sent away*. Everyone knew Rose Saunders consorted with one of the men who lodged in her apartment. "What kind of example is that for a girl? That's no straight road."

The letter from Esther's girlfriend was nothing like her husband's. It didn't plead for her to be a good girl or beg her to leave the wild world behind or caution her to take the straight road, but instead reminded her of all the pleasures awaiting her when she received her *free papers*, not the least of these being Alice's love:

Dear Little Girl, Just a few lines to let you know that everything is o.k. I suppose you think I was foolish to leave Peekskill but I could not stand the work. I have not been used to working so hard when I leave Bedford and why should I do so when I don't have to, you stay where you are as you expect to live in New York when you are free. . . . It will surprise you, I am going to be married next month, not that I care much but for protection. I went to New York Sunday and seen quite a number of old friends and heard all the scandal and then some . . . New York is wide open, plenty of white stuff & everything you want so cheer up there are plenty of good times in store for you. So I must close with the same old love wishing you well.

It is not clear if Esther had the chance to read Alice's letter. This missive of contraband love was seized by prison authorities and included with the disciplinary reports and the notes from the staff meetings, augmenting the folio of documents that formed the case file and invited greater punishment.

Attitude: She is inclined to be sullen and defiant. Came to Bedford with the impression that this was a very bad place and decided that she would not let any of the matrons run over her." She said "If they keep yelling at her they'll find that isn't the way to treat Esther Brown." And "Esther Brown isn't going to stand for that."

Note: Patient is a colored girl with good mentality who has had her own way and enjoyed much freedom. The influence of her family and her environment have both been bad. She is the hyperkinetic type which craves continually activity and amusement.

Riot and Refrain

The reporters were most interested in what happened to the white girls. Ruth Carter, Stella Kramer, and Maizie Rice were the names that appeared in the newspapers. Ruth was the first one to tell the State Prison Commission about the terrible things done to them at Bedford Hills: they were handcuffed in the cells of Rebecca Halls, they were stripped and their mouths gagged with dirty rags and harsh soap, they were beaten with rubber hoses and handcuffed to their cots, they were hung from the doors of their cells with their feet barely reaching the ground, they were given the “water treatment” and their faces immersed in water until they could hardly breathe, and they were isolated for weeks and months behind the double doors of the cells in the Disciplinary Building. The double door prevented any light from entering and the lack of air made the dank smell of the dark chamber and their waste and rank unwashed bodies unbearable. The stench, the sensory deprivation, and the isolation were intended to break them.

There were two hundred and sixty-five inmates and twenty-one babies. The young women ranged in age from fourteen to thirty and the majority were city girls exiled to the country for moral reform. They came from crowded tenements. Eighty percent of the young women at Bedford had been subjected to some form of punishment—confined in their rooms for a week, confined in the cells of Rebecca Hall, confined in the Disciplinary Building. Even the State Prison Commission was forced to concede it was cruel and unusual punishment. It was a reformatory in name only and there was nothing modern or therapeutic about its disciplinary measures. When asked if hanging girls up, handcuffing them, and beating them with hoses was abusive, one matron replied: “If you don’t quell them or rule them with an iron hand you cannot live with these people.” When questioned as to why she failed to mention such punishments, the prison superintendent, Miss Helen Cobb, responded that she hadn’t mentioned such practices because she considered them “treatment,” not punishment.

The smallest infractions invited harsh punishment: a complaint about dinner, a sheet of stationery found tucked under a mattress, or dancing in a lewd manner might be punished with a week locked in your room or confined in Rebecca Hall or stripped and tied to a cell door in the Disciplinary building. Black girls were more likely to be punished and to be punished more harshly.

Loretta Michie was the only colored girl quoted in the newspaper article. The prison authorities resented that the inmates had been named at all. It fueled the public hysteria about the abuses and endowed the atrocities

with a face and a story. Loretta and several other black women testified before the State Prison Commission about how Miss Cobb and Miss Minogue treated them. Perhaps it was because the sixteen-year-old had curly hair, dark brown eyes, and a pretty face that she caught the attention of the reporters and prompted them to record her name. Perhaps it was the graphic account of brutality that made her words more noteworthy than the others. Did she describe more vividly the utter aloneness of the dungeon, how it felt to be cut off from the world and cast out again, and that in the darkness shouting out and hearing the voices of others was your lifeline; or how your heart raced because you were afraid you might drown, even when you knew it was just a pail of water, but hell it might as well have been the Atlantic. The fight to breathe waged again. How long could one live under water? The world went black and when your eyes opened you were beached on the dark floor of an isolation cell. Was the body suspended from the door of a neighboring cell yours too? The pain moving and cutting across the body shared by all those confined in the ten cells of the D.B.? The newspaper offered a pared-down description: Loretta Michie testified that she had been “handcuffed to the bars of her cell, with the tips of her toes touching the floor, for so long that she fell when she was released.” She also noted that the colored girls were assigned to the worst jobs in the kitchen, the laundry, and the psychiatric unit.

Other women reported being stripped and tied naked to their cots, they were fed bread and water for a week, they were strung up and suspended in their cells, denied even the small relief of toes touching the ground. Esther too could have told them about Rebecca Hall; like Loretta Michie she had been confined in the Disciplinary Building several times; she could have told them about Peter Quinn and the others slapping and kicking the girls had she been asked to appear. But Peter Quinn didn’t need anybody to testify against him. He was one of the few guards who owned up to some of the terrible things he had done, mostly to make Miss Cobb look bad. By his own admission, he helped string up girls about one hundred times. He was the one who “showed Miss Minogue how to first handcuff a girl to the cell partition with her hands back of her, and that he knows that at that time the feet were always wholly on the floor.” Under the direction of Miss Minogue the practice “just grew” to lift them a little higher.

In December 1919, the women in Lowell Cottage made their voices heard even if no one wanted to listen. Lowell, Flowers, Gibbons, Sanford, and Harriman were the cottages reserved for black prisoners. After a scandal about interracial sex and “harmful intimacy” erupted in 1914, segregation had been imposed and cottages sorted by race as well as age, status, addiction,

and capacity. A special provision of the Charities Law permitted the state to practice racial segregation while safeguarding it from legal claims that such practices were unconstitutional and a violation of the state's civil rights laws.

The newspaper described the upheaval and resistance of Lowell Cottage as a sonic revolt, a "noise strike," the "din of an infernal chorus." Collectively the prisoners had grown weary of gratuitous violence and being punished for trifles, so they sought retribution in noise and destruction. They tossed their mattresses, they broke windows, they set fires. Nearly everyone in the cottage was shouting and screaming and crying out to whoever would listen. They pounded the walls with their fists, finding a shared and steady rhythm that they hoped might topple the cottage, make the walls crumble, smash the cots, destroy the reformatory so that it would never be capable of holding another "innocent girl in the jailhouse." The "wailing shrieking chorus" protested the conditions of the prison, insisted they had done nothing to justify confinement; they refused to be treated as if they were not human, as if they were waste. The *New York Times* reported: "The noise was deafening. Almost every window of the cottage was crowded with Negro women who were shouting, angry and laughing hysterically. The uproarious din emanating from the cottage smote the ears of the investigators before they got within sight of the building." Songs and shouts were the vehicle of struggle.

The chorus spoke with one voice. All of them screamed and cried about the unfairness of being sentenced to Bedford, arrested in a frame-up, the three years of life stolen. Were they nothing or nobody? Could they be seized and cast away and no one in the world would care or even give a damn? Were Harriman and Gibbons and Sanford and Flowers also up in arms? A month after Miss Minogue put her in a chokehold, beat her head with a set of keys, pummeled her with a rubber hose, Mattie Jackson joined the chorus. Thinking about her son and how he was growing up without her made her wail and shout louder. It is not that she or any of the others imagined that their pleas and complaints would gain a hearing outside the cottage or that the findings of the New York State Commission of Prisons would make any difference for them. This riot, like the ones that preceded it and the ones that would follow in its wake, was not unusual. What was unusual was that the riot had been reported at all. The state investigation of abuse and torture at the reformatory made rioting colored women a newsworthy topic.

Loretta, or Mickey as some of her friends called her, beat the walls, bellowed, cursed, and screamed. At fourteen years old, before she had her first period, before she had a lover, before she penned lines like "sweetheart

in my dreams I'm calling you," Mickey waged a small battle against the prison and the damned police and the matrons and the parole officers and the social workers. She was unwilling to pretend that her keepers were anything else. The cottages were not homes. Miss Cobb didn't give a damn about her and Miss Minogue was a thug in a skirt. The matrons were brutes and not there to guide or provide counsel or assist them in making better lives, but to manage and control, punish and inflict harm. They let you know what they thought: you were being treated too well and each cruel punishment was deserved and the only way to communicate with the inmates, especially the colored girls. Miss Dawley, the sociologist, interviewed them. She asked questions and wrote down everything they said, but her recommendation was always the same: prison is the only place for her.

Mickey rebelled without knowing the awful things the prison staff said about her in their meetings—she was simple-minded and a liar, she thought too much of herself, “she had been with a good many men.” The psychologist, Dr. Spaulding, said she was trying to appear young and innocent, but clearly wasn't. Was it possible that she was just fourteen years old? Miss Cobb decided the matter: “let's just assume she is eighteen.” Everyone believed prison was the best place for a young black woman on an errant path.

Staying out all night at a dance with her friends or stealing \$2.00 to buy a new dress so she could perform on stage was sufficient cause to commit her. Mickey cursed and pummeled the wall with her fist and refused to stop no matter how tired. She didn't care if they threw her in the Disciplinary Building every single day, she would never stop fighting them, she would never submit.

Disciplinary Report: Very troublesome. She has been in Rebecca Hall and the Disciplinary Building. Punished continually. Friendship with the white girls.

She had been in the D.B. more times than her disciplinary sheet revealed. In Rebecca Hall, she schemed and plotted and incited the other girls to rioting and disorder. She was proud to have been the cause of considerable trouble her entire time at Bedford. When confined in the prison buildings, she managed to send a few letters to her girlfriend. The love letter seized by the matron was written in pencil on toilet paper because she was not allowed pen and paper in confinement. The missive to her girlfriend Catherine referred to the earlier riots of 1917 and 1918 and expressed the spirit of rage and resistance that fueled the December action in Lowell:

I get so utterly disgusted with these g-d—cops I could kill them. They may run Bedford and they may run some of the pussies in Bedford but they are never going to run Loretta Michie. . . . It doesn't pay to be a good fellow in a joint of this kind, but I don't regret anything I ever done I have been to prison (Rebecca Hall) three times and D.B. once and may go again soon and a few others and myself always got the Dirty End. Everytime prison would cut up in 1918 or 1917 when police came up whether we were cutting up or not we were [there]. . . . They would always string us up or put us in the Stairway sheets but we would cut up all the more. Those were the days when J.M. [Julia Minogue] was kept up all night and all day we would wait until she go to bed about 1 o'clock at night and then we would start and then we would quiet down about 4 o'clock and start again about 8 in the morning. . . . Then there was a good gang here then we could have those days back again 'if' we only had the women but we haven't so why bother. . . . I have only one more day but when you've had as much punishment as I have you don't mind it. Well the Lights are being extinguished so Good Night and Sweet pleasant dreams. Loyally yours, Black Eyes or Mickey

Lowell Cottage roared with the sounds of upheaval and revolt. They smashed the windows of the cottage. Broken windows linked the disorder of the prison to the ghetto, explained the sociologist in a lecture on the culture of poverty. Glints and shards of shattered glass were the language of the riot. Furniture was destroyed. Walls were defaced. Fires started. Like Esther Brown, Mickey didn't hesitate to smash things up. The cottage mates yelled and shouted and cursed for hours. Each voice blended with the others in a common tongue. Every utterance and shout made plain the truth: riot was the only remedy within reach.



It was the dangerous music of upheaval. En masse they announced what had been endured, what they wanted, what they intended to destroy. Bawling and screaming and cursing made the cottage tremble and corralled them together into one large pulsing formation, an ensemble reveling in the beauty of the strike. Young women hanging out of the windows, crowding at the doors, and huddling on shared beds sounded a complete revolution, an upheaval of the given, an undoing and remaking of values, which called property and law and social order into crisis. They sought redress among themselves. The call and the appeal transformed them from prisoners into rioters, from inmates to fugitives, even if only for thirteen hours. In the discordant assembly, they found a hearing in one another.

The *black noise* emanating from Lowell Cottage expressed their rage and their longing. It made manifest the latent rebellion simmering beneath the surface of things. It provided the language in which “they lamented their lot and what they called the injustice of their keepers at the top of their voices.” To those outside the circle it was a din without melody or center. The *New York Times* had trouble deciding which among the sensational headlines it should use for the article, so it went with three: “Devil’s Chorus Sung by Girl Rioters.” “Bedford Hears Mingled Shrieks and Squeals, Suggesting Inferno Set to Jaz[z].” “Outbreak Purely Vocal.” What exactly did Dante’s Inferno sound like when transposed into a jazz suite? For the white world, jazz was a synonym for primal sound and savage modernism. It was raw energy and excitement, nonsense and jargon, empty talk, excess, carnal desire: it was slang for copulation and conjured social disorder and free love rather than composition or improvisation.

You can take my tie
 You can take my collar
 But I’ll jazz you
 Till you holler

Sonic tumult and upheaval—resistance as music had to be construed as jazz. It was the only frame to make legible their utterances. In the most basic sense, the sounds emanating from Lowell were the free music of those in captivity, the abolition philosophy expressed within the circle. If freedom and mutual creation defined the music, so too did it define the strike and riot waged by the prisoners of Lowell. “The Reformatory Blues,” a facile label coined by the daily newspapers to describe the collective refusal of prison conditions, was Dante filtered through Ma Rainey and Buddy Bolden. Their utterances were marked by the long history of black radical sound—whoops and hollers, shrieks and squawks, sorrow songs and blues. It was the sound track to a history that hurt.

The chants and cries escaped the confines of the prison, even if their bodies did not: “Almost every window [of the cottage] was crowded with negro women who were shouting, crying, and laughing hysterically.” Few outside the circle understood the deep resources of this hue and cry. The aesthetic inheritance of “jargon and nonsense” was nothing if not a philosophy of freedom that reached back to slave songs and circle dances—struggle and flight, death and refusal became music or moaning or joyful noise or discordant sound.

For those within this circle, every groan and cry, curse and shout insisted slavery time was over. They were tired of being abused and confined, and they wanted to be free. Those exact words could be found in the letters written by their mothers and husbands and girlfriends: "I tell you Miss Cobb, it is no slave time with colored people now." All of them might well have shouted, *No slave time now. Abolition now. In the surreal, utopian nonsense of it all*, and at the heart of riot, was the anarchy of colored girls: treason en masse, tumult, gathering together, the mutual collaboration required to confront the prison authorities and the police, the willingness to lose oneself and become something greater—a chorus, a swarm, an ensemble, a mutual aid society. In lieu of an explanation or an appeal, they shouted and stomped and screamed. How else were they to express the longing to be free? How else were they to make plain their refusal to be governed?

Outsiders described the din as a swan song, to signal that their defeat was certain and they would return to their former state as prisoners without a voice in the world and to whom anything might be done. There was little that was mournful in the chants and curses, the hollers and squawks. This collective utterance was not a dirge. As they crowded in the windows of the cottage, some hanging out and others peeking from the corners, the dangerous music of black life was unleashed from within the space of captivity, a raucous polyphonic utterance that sounded beautiful and terrible. Before the riot was quashed, its force touched everyone on the grounds of the prison and as far away as the tenements, rented rooms, and ramshackle lodging houses of Harlem, Brooklyn, and Staten Island.

The noise conveyed the defeat and the aspiration, the beauty and the wretchedness that was otherwise inaudible to the ears of the world; it revealed a sensibility at odds with the institution's brutal realism. What to make of the utopian impulse that enabled them to believe that anyone cared about what they had to say? What convinced them that the force of their collective utterance was capable of turning anything around? What urged them to create a reservoir of living within the prison's mandated death? What made them tireless? The next month, the prisoners confined in Rebecca Hall waged another noise strike. "Prisoners began to jangle their cell doors, throw furniture against the walls, scream, sing, and use profanity. In the opinion of one of the noisemakers, "the medley of sounds, 'the Reformatory Blues,' may yet make a hit on Broadway, even if the officials appear to disdain jazz." They carried on all night in the prison building. They rioted again in July, August, and November.

The chants and cries insisted: We want to be free. The strike begged the question: Why are we locked up here? Why have you stolen our lives? Why do you beat us like dogs? Starve us? Pull our hair from our heads? Gag us? Club us over the head? It isn't right to take our lives. No one deserved to be treated like this.

All those listening on the outside could discern were: "gales of catcalls, hurricanes of screams, cyclones of rage, tornadoes of squalls." The sounds yielded to "one hair-raising, ear-testing Devil's chorus." Those inside the circle listened for the love and disappointment, the longing and the outrage that fueled this collective utterance. They channeled the fears and the hopes of the ones who loved them, the bad dreams and the nightmares about children stolen away by white men and lost at sea. The refrains were redolent with all the lovely plans about what they would do once they were free. These sounds traveled through the night air.

Voices in the Chorus

This speculative history of Esther Brown is based on the "Statement of the Girl," the interviews with her family members, the verified history, personal and institutional correspondence, notes of staff meetings found in Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, 14610-77B Inmate Case Files, Records of the Department of Correctional Services, New York State Archives. The New York State Archives required that the names of the prisoners be changed to maintain the privacy of the records. See Inmate File #s 2507, 2503, 2466, and 4092. The Bedford prison files are very detailed, particularly until the year 1920, when the Laboratory of Social Hygiene conducted extensive intake interviews of the girls and women upon their arrival. The intake process included personal interviews, family histories, interviews with neighbors, employers, and teachers, psychological tests, physical examinations, intelligence tests, social investigators' reports, as well as the reports of probation officers, school report cards, letters from former employers, and other state records (from training schools and orphanages). Following a two-week evaluation of the compiled materials, physicians, psychologists, social workers, sociologists, and prison superintendents met to discuss each individual case. The idea of indeterminate sentencing was based on the notion that punishment must be tailored to the requirements of the individual prisoners. In practice, this resulted in sentences as long as three years for status offenses and the likelihood of future crime. The files contain personal correspondence, discussions of sexual history, life experiences, family background, hobbies, as well as poems and plays written by the prisoners. The case file intended to produce deep knowledge of the individual in a genre that combined sociological investigation with literary fiction creating a statistical portrait of the young women. The importance of the case file was critical to prison reform and the idea that probation, punishment, and parole must be individually suited to each offender; this approach favored indeterminate sentencing. In practice, this meant that for status offenses and the likelihood of future criminality or the likelihood to become morally depraved a young woman might spend three years confined at Bedford and be entangled with the criminal justice system and under state surveillance for a decade of her life. The case was grounded in a hermeneutics of suspicion and a horizon of reform. It was an exemplary product of the therapeutic state.

BEAUTY KEEPSAKE

Jorge Enrique Adoum

Translated by Katherine M. Hedeem and Víctor Rodríguez Núñez

after somanyears of maybes perhapses hopefullies
nothing's left but whys nevermores and eithers
now neverly the mostest
now just the shescorpion
alwaysly not been
pure postlove almost inlove shrouded
in the subsoul or the dislife
decemberly ended

1

THE TECHNOLOGY OF GENDER

In the feminist writings and cultural practices of the 1960s and 1970s, the notion of gender as sexual difference was central to the critique of representation, the rereading of cultural images and narratives, the questioning of theories of subjectivity and textuality, of reading, writing, and spectatorship. The notion of gender *as* sexual difference has grounded and sustained feminist interventions in the arena of formal and abstract knowledge, in the epistemologies and cognitive fields defined by the social and physical sciences as well as the human sciences or humanities. Concurrent and interdependent with those interventions were the elaboration of specific practices and discourses, and the creation of social spaces (gendered spaces, in the sense of the “women’s room,” such as CR groups, women’s caucuses within the disciplines, Women’s Studies, feminist journal or media collectives, and so on) in which sexual difference itself could be affirmed, addressed, analyzed, specified, or verified. But that notion of gender as sexual difference and its derivative notions—women’s culture, mothering, feminine writing, femininity, etc.—have now become a limitation, something of a liability to feminist thought.

With its emphasis on the sexual, “sexual difference” is in the first and last instance a difference of women from men, female from male; and even the more abstract notion of “sexual differences” resulting not from biology or socialization but from signification and discursive effects (the emphasis here being less on the sexual than on differences as *différance*), ends up being in the last instance a difference (of woman) from man—or better, the very instance of difference *in* man. To continue to pose the question of gender in either of these terms, once the critique of patriarchy has been fully outlined, keeps feminist thinking bound to the terms of Western patriarchy itself, contained within the frame of a conceptual opposition that is “always already” inscribed in what Fredric Jameson would call “the political unconscious” of dominant cultural discourses and their underlying “master narratives”—be they biological, medical, legal, philosophical, or

literary—and so will tend to reproduce itself, to retextualize itself, as we shall see, even in feminist rewritings of cultural narratives.

The first limit of “sexual difference(s),” then, is that it constrains feminist critical thought within the conceptual frame of a universal sex opposition (woman as the difference from man, both universalized; or woman as difference *tout court*, and hence equally universalized), which makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to articulate the differences of women from Woman, that is to say, the differences among women or, perhaps more exactly, the differences *within women*. For example, the differences among women who wear the veil, women who “wear the mask” (in the words of Paul Laurence Dunbar often quoted by black American women writers), and women who “masquerade” (the word is Joan Riviere’s) cannot be understood as sexual differences.¹ From that point of view, they would not be differences at all, and all women would but render either different embodiments of some archetypal essence of woman, or more or less sophisticated impersonations of a metaphysical-discursive femininity.

A second limitation of the notion of sexual difference(s) is that it tends to recontain or recuperate the radical epistemological potential of feminist thought inside the walls of the master’s house, to borrow Audre Lorde’s metaphor rather than Nietzsche’s “prison-house of language,” for reasons that will presently become apparent. By radical epistemological potential I mean the possibility, already emergent in feminist writings of the 1980s, to conceive of the social subject and of the relations of subjectivity to sociality in another way: a subject constituted in gender, to be sure, though not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations; a subject en-gendered in the experiencing of race and class, as well as sexual, relations; a subject, therefore, not unified but rather multiple, and not so much divided as contradicted.

In order to begin to specify this other kind of subject and to articulate its relations to a heterogeneous social field, we need a notion of gender that is not so bound up with sexual difference as to be virtually coterminous with it and such that, on the one hand, gender is assumed to derive unproblematically from sexual difference while, on the other, gender can be subsumed in sexual differences as an effect of language, or as pure imaginary—nothing to do with the real. This bind, this mutual containment of gender and sexual difference(s), needs to be unraveled and deconstructed. A starting point may be to think of gender along the lines of Michel Foucault’s theory of sexuality as a “technology of sex” and to propose that gender, too, both as representation and as self-representation, is the product of various social technologies, such as cinema, and of institutionalized discourses, epistemologies, and critical practices, as well as practices of daily life.

Like sexuality, we might then say, gender is not a property of bodies or something originally existent in human beings, but “the set of effects produced in bodies, behaviors, and social relations,” in Foucault’s words, by the deployment of “a complex political technology.”² But it must be said first off, and hence the title of this essay, that to think of gender as the product and the process of a number of social technologies, of techno-social or bio-medical apparatus, is to have already gone beyond Foucault, for his critical understanding of the technology of sex did not take into account its differential solicitation of male and female subjects, and by ignoring the conflicting investments of men and women in the discourses and practices of sexuality, Foucault’s theory, in fact, excludes, though it does not preclude, the consideration of gender.

I will proceed by stating a series of four propositions in decreasing order of self-evidence and subsequently will go back to elaborate on each in more detail.

(1) Gender is (a) representation—which is not to say that it does not have concrete or real implications, both social and subjective, for the material life of individuals. On the contrary,

(2) The representation of gender is its construction—and in the simplest sense it can be said that all of Western Art and high culture is the engraving of the history of that construction.

(3) The construction of gender goes on as busily today as it did in earlier times, say the Victorian era. And it goes on not only where one might expect it to—in the media, the private and public schools, the courts, the family, nuclear or extended or single-parented—in short, in what Louis Althusser has called the “ideological state apparatus.” The construction of gender also goes on, if less obviously, in the academy, in the intellectual community, in avant-garde artistic practices and radical theories, even, and indeed especially, in feminism.

(4) Paradoxically, therefore, the construction of gender is also effected by its deconstruction; that is to say, by any discourse, feminist or otherwise, that would discard it as ideological misrepresentation. For gender, like the real, is not only the effect of representation but also its excess, what remains outside discourse as a potential trauma which can rupture or destabilize, if not contained, any representation.

1.

We look up *gender* in the *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* and find that it is primarily a classificatory term. In grammar, it is a

category by which words and grammatical forms are classified according to not only sex or the absence of sex (which is one particular category, called “natural gender” and typical of the English language, for example) but also other characteristics, such as morphological characteristics in what is called “grammatical gender,” found in Romance languages, for example. (I recall a paper by Roman Jakobson entitled “The Sex of the Heavenly Bodies” which, after analyzing the gender of the words for sun and moon in a great variety of languages, came to the refreshing conclusion that no pattern could be detected to support the idea of a universal law determining the masculinity or the femininity of either the sun or the moon. Thank heaven for that!)

The second meaning of *gender* given in the dictionary is “classification of sex; sex.” This proximity of grammar and sex, interestingly enough, is not there in Romance languages (which, it is commonly believed, are spoken by people rather more romantic than Anglo-Saxons). The Spanish *género*, the Italian *genere*, and the French *genre* do not carry even the connotation of a person’s gender; that is conveyed instead by the word for sex. And for this reason, it would seem, the word *genre*, adopted from French to refer to the specific classification of artistic and literary forms (in the first place, painting), is also devoid of any sexual denotation, as is the word *genus*, the Latin etymology of gender, used in English as a classificatory term in biology and logic. An interesting corollary of this linguistic peculiarity of English, i.e., the acceptance of gender which refers to sex, is that the notion of gender I am discussing, and thus the whole tangled question of the relationship of human gender to representation, are totally untranslatable in any Romance language, a sobering thought for anyone who might be still tempted to espouse an internationalist, not to say universal, view of the project of theorizing gender.

Going back to the dictionary, then, we find that the term *gender is a representation*; and not only a representation in the sense in which every word, every sign, refers to (represents) its referent, be that an object, a thing, or an animate being. The term *gender* is, actually, the representation of a relation, that of belonging to a class, a group, a category. Gender is the representation of a relation, or, if I may trespass for a moment into my second proposition, gender constructs a relation between one entity and other entities, which are previously constituted as a class, and that relation is one of belonging; thus, gender assigns to one entity, say an individual, a position within a class, and therefore also a position vis-à-vis other pre-constituted classes. (I am using the term *class* advisedly, although here I do not mean *social* class(es), because I want to retain Marx’s understanding of class as a group of individuals bound together by social determinants and

interests—including, very pointedly, ideology—which are neither freely chosen nor arbitrarily set.) So gender represents not an individual but a relation, and a social relation; in other words, it represents an individual for a class.

The neuter gender in English, a language that relies on natural gender (we note, in passing, that “nature” is ever-present in our culture, from the very beginning, which is, precisely, language), is assigned to words referring to sexless or asexual entities, objects or individuals marked by the absence of sex. The exceptions to this rule show the popular wisdom of usage: a child is neuter in gender, and its correct possessive modifier is *its*, as I was taught in learning English many years ago, though most people use *his*, and some, quite recently and rarely, and even then inconsistently, use *his or her*. Although a child does have a sex from “nature,” it isn’t until it becomes (i.e., until it is signified as) a boy or a girl that it acquires a gender.³ What the popular wisdom knows, then, is that gender is not sex, a state of nature, but the representation of each individual in terms of a particular social relation which pre-exists the individual and is predicated on the *conceptual* and rigid (structural) opposition of two biological sexes. This conceptual structure is what feminist social scientists have designated “the sex-gender system.”

The cultural conceptions of male and female as two complementary yet mutually exclusive categories into which all human beings are placed constitute within each culture a gender system, a symbolic system or system of meanings, that correlates sex to cultural contents according to social values and hierarchies. Although the meanings vary with each culture, a sex-gender system is always intimately interconnected with political and economic factors in each society.⁴ In this light, the cultural construction of sex into gender and the asymmetry that characterizes all gender systems cross-culturally (though each in its particular ways) are understood as “systematically linked to the organization of social inequality.”⁵

The sex-gender system, in short, is both a sociocultural construct and a semiotic apparatus, a system of representation which assigns meaning (identity, value, prestige, location in kinship, status in the social hierarchy, etc.) to individuals within the society. If gender representations are social positions which carry differential meanings, then for someone to be represented and to represent oneself as male or as female implies the assumption of the whole of those meaning effects. Thus, the proposition that the representation of gender is its construction, each term being at once the product and the process of the other, can be restated more accurately: *The construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation.*

2.

When Althusser wrote that ideology represents “not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they ‘live’ and which govern their existence, he was also describing, to my mind exactly, the functioning of gender.⁶ But, it will be objected, it is reductive or overly simplistic to equate gender with ideology. Certainly Althusser does not do that, nor does traditional Marxist thought, where gender is a somewhat marginal issue, one limited to “the woman question.”⁷ For, like sexuality and subjectivity, gender is located in the private sphere of reproduction, procreation, and the family, rather than in the public, properly social, sphere of the superstructural, where ideology belongs and is determined by the economic forces and relations of production.

And yet, reading on in Althusser, one finds the emphatic statement “*All ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects*” (p. 171). If I substitute *gender* for *ideology*, the statement still works, but with a slight shift of the terms: Gender has the function (which defines it) of constituting concrete individuals as men and women. That shift is precisely where the relation of gender to ideology can be seen, and seen to be an effect of the ideology of gender. The shift from “subjects” to “men and women” marks the conceptual distance between two orders of discourse, the discourse of philosophy or political theory and the discourse of “reality.” Gender is granted (and taken for granted) in the latter but excluded from the former.

Although the Althusserian subject of ideology derives more from Lacan’s subject (which is an effect of signification, founded on misrecognition) than from the unified class subject of Marxist humanism, it too is ungendered, as neither of these systems considers the possibility—let alone the process of constitution—of a female subject.⁸ Thus, by Althusser’s own definition, we are entitled to ask, If gender exists in “reality,” if it exists in “the real relations which govern the existence of individuals,” but not in philosophy or political theory, what do the latter in fact represent if not “the imaginary relation of individuals to the real relations in which they live”? In other words, Althusser’s theory of ideology is itself caught and blind to its own complicity in the ideology of gender. But that is not all: more important, and more to the immediate point of my argument, Althusser’s theory, to the extent that a theory can be validated by institutional discourses and acquire power or control over the field of social meaning, can itself function as a techno-logy of gender.

The novelty of Althusser’s theses was in his perception that ideology operates not only semi-autonomously from the economic level but also,

fundamentally, by means of its engagement of subjectivity (“The category of the subject is constitutive of all ideology,” he writes on p. 171). It is, thus, paradoxical and yet quite evident that the connection between gender and ideology—or the understanding of gender as an instance of ideology—could not be made by him. But the connection has been explored by other Marxist thinkers who are feminists, and better still the other way around, by some feminist thinkers who are also Marxists. Michèle Barrett, for one, argues that not only is ideology a primary site of the construction of gender, but “the ideology of gender . . . has played an important part in the historical construction of the capitalist division of labour and in the reproduction of labour power,” and therefore is an accurate demonstration of “the integral connection between ideology and the relations of production.”⁹

The context of Barrett’s argument (originally made in her 1980 book *Women’s Oppression Today*) is the debate elicited in England by “discourse theory” and other post-Althusserian developments in the theory of ideology, and more specifically the critique of ideology promoted by the British feminist journal *m/f* on the basis of notions of representation and difference drawn from Lacan and Derrida. She quotes Parveen Adams’s “A Note on the Distinction between Sexual Division and Sexual Difference,” where sexual division refers to the two mutually exclusive categories of men and women as given in reality: “In terms of sexual *differences*, on the other hand, what has to be grasped is, precisely, the *production* of differences through systems of representation; the work of representation produces differences that cannot be known in advance.”¹⁰

Adams’s critique of a feminist (Marxist) theory of ideology that relies on the notion of patriarchy as a given in social reality (in other words, a theory based on the fact of women’s oppression by men) is that such a theory is based on an essentialism, whether biological or sociological, which crops up again even in the work of those, such as Juliet Mitchell, who would insist that gender is an effect of representation. “In feminist analyses,” Adams maintains, the concept of a feminine subject “relies on a homogeneous oppression of women in a state, reality, given prior to representational practices” (p. 56). By stressing that gender construction is nothing but the effect of a variety of representations and discursive practices which produce sexual differences “not known in advance” (or, in my own paraphrase, gender is nothing but the variable configuration of sexual-discursive positionalities), Adams believes she can avoid “the simplicities of an always already antagonistic relation” between the sexes, which is an obstacle, in her eyes, to both feminist analysis and feminist political practice (p. 57). Barrett’s response to this point is one I concur with, especially as regards its implications for feminist politics: “We do not need to talk of sexual division

as 'always already' there; we can explore the historical construction of the categories of masculinity and femininity without being obliged to deny that, historically specific as they are, they nevertheless exist today in systematic and even predictable terms" (Barrett, pp. 70–71).

However, Barrett's conceptual framework does not permit an understanding of the ideology of gender in specifically feminist theoretical terms. In a note added to the 1985 reprinting of her essay, from which I have been quoting, she reiterates her conviction that "ideology is an extremely important site of the construction of gender but that it should be understood as part of a social totality rather than as an autonomous practice or discourse" (p. 83). This notion of "social totality" and the thorny problem of the "relative" autonomy of ideology (in general, and presumably of the ideology of gender in particular) from "the means and forces of production" and/or "the social relations of production" remain quite vague and unresolved in Barrett's argument, which becomes less focused and less engaging as she goes on to discuss the ways in which the ideology of gender is (re)produced in cultural (literary) practice.

Another and potentially more useful way to pose the question of gender ideology is suggested, though not followed through, in Joan Kelly's 1979 essay "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory." Once we accept the fundamental feminist notion that the personal is political, Kelly argues, it is no longer possible to maintain that there are two spheres of social reality: the private, domestic sphere of the family, sexuality, and affectivity, and the public sphere of work and productivity (which would include all of the forces and most of the relations of production in Barrett's terms). Instead we can envision several interconnected sets of social relations—relations of work, of class, of race, and of sex/gender: "What we see are not two spheres of social reality, but two (or three) sets of social relations. For now, I would call them relations of work and sex (or class and race, and sex/gender)."¹¹ Not only are men and women positioned differently in these relations, but—this is an important point—women are affected differently in different sets.

The "doubled" perspective of contemporary feminist analysis, Kelly continues, is one in which we can see the two orders, the sexual and the economic, operate together: "in any of the historical forms that patriarchal society takes (feudal, capitalist, socialist, etc.), a sex-gender system and a system of productive relations operate simultaneously . . . to reproduce the socioeconomic and male-dominant structures of that particular social order" (p. 61). Within that "doubled" perspective, therefore, it is possible to see quite clearly the working of the ideology of gender: "*woman's place*," i.e., the position assigned to women by our sex/gender system, as she empha-

sizes, “is not a separate sphere or domain of existence but a position within social existence generally” (p. 57). That is another very important point.

For if the sex-gender system (which I prefer to call gender *tout court* in order to retain the ambiguity of the term, which makes it eminently susceptible to the grasp of ideology, as well as deconstruction) is a set of social relations obtaining throughout social existence, then gender is indeed a primary instance of ideology, and obviously not only for women. Furthermore, that is so regardless of whether particular individuals see themselves primarily defined (and oppressed) by gender, as white cultural feminists do, or primarily defined (and oppressed) by race and class relations, as women of color do.¹² The importance of Althusser’s formulation of the subjective working of ideology—again, briefly, that ideology needs a subject, a concrete individual or person to work on—appears more clearly now, and more central to the feminist project of theorizing gender as a personal-political force both negative and positive, as I will propose.

To assert that the social representation of gender affects its subjective construction and that, vice versa, the subjective representation of gender—or self-representation—affects its social construction, leaves open a possibility of agency and self-determination at the subjective and even individual level of micropolitical and everyday practices which Althusser himself would clearly disclaim. I, nevertheless, will claim that possibility and postpone discussing it until sections 3 and 4 of this essay. For the moment, going back to proposition 2, which was revised as “The construction of gender is both the product and the process of its representation,” I can rewrite it: *The construction of gender is the product and the process of both representation and self-representation.*

But now I must discuss a further problem with Althusser, insofar as a theory of gender is concerned, and that is that in his view, “ideology has no outside.” It is a foolproof system whose effect is to erase its own traces completely, so that anyone who is “in ideology,” caught in its web, believes “himself” to be outside and free of it. Nevertheless, there is an outside, a place from where ideology can be seen for what it is—mystification, imaginary relation, wool over one’s eyes; and that place is, for Althusser, science, or scientific knowledge. Such is simply not the case for feminism and for what I propose to call, avoiding further equivocations, the subject of feminism.

By the phrase “the subject of feminism” I mean a conception or an understanding of the (female) subject as not only distinct from Woman with the capital letter, the *representation* of an essence inherent in all women (which has been seen as Nature, Mother, Mystery, Evil Incarnate, Object of [Masculine] Desire and Knowledge, Proper Womanhood, Femininity, et

cetera), but also distinct from women, the real, historical beings and social subjects who are defined by the technology of gender and actually engendered in social relations. The subject of feminism I have in mind is one *not* so defined, one whose definition or conception is in progress, in this and other feminist critical texts; and, to insist on this point one more time, the subject of feminism, much like Althusser's subject, is a theoretical construct (a way of conceptualizing, of understanding, of accounting for certain *processes*, not women). However, unlike Althusser's subject, who, being completely "in" ideology, believes himself to be outside and free of it, the subject that I see emerging from current writings and debates within feminism is one that is at the same time inside *and* outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so, conscious of that twofold pull, of that division, that doubled vision.

My own argument in *Alice Doesn't* was to that effect: the discrepancy, the tension, and the constant slippage between Woman as representation, as the object and the very condition of representation, and, on the other hand, women as historical beings, subjects of "real relations," are motivated and sustained by a logical contradiction in our culture and an irreconcilable one: women are both inside and outside gender, at once within and without representation.¹³ That women continue to become Woman, continue to be caught in gender as Althusser's subject is in ideology, and that we persist in that imaginary relation even as we know, as feminists, that we are not *that*, but we are historical subjects governed by real social relations, which centrally include gender—such is the contradiction that feminist theory must be built on, and its very condition of possibility. Obviously, then, feminism cannot cast itself as science, as a discourse or a reality that is outside of ideology, or outside of gender as an instance of ideology.¹⁴

In fact, the shift in feminist consciousness that has been taking place during this decade may be said to have begun (if a convenient date is needed) with 1981, the year of publication of *This Bridge Called My Back*, the collection of writings by radical women of color edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, which was followed in 1982 by the Feminist Press anthology edited by Gloria Hull, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith with the title *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave*.¹⁵ It was these books that first made available to all feminists the feelings, the analyses, and the political positions of feminists of color, and their critiques of white or mainstream feminism. The shift in feminist consciousness that was initially prompted by works such as these is best characterized by the awareness and the effort to work through feminism's complicity with ideology, both ideology in general (including classism or bourgeois liberalism, racism, colonialism, imperialism, and, I would also

add, with some qualifications, humanism) and the ideology of gender in particular—that is to say, heterosexism.

I said complicity, not full adherence, for it is obvious that feminism and a full adherence to the ideology of gender, in male-centered societies, are mutually exclusive. And I would add, further, that the consciousness of our complicity with gender ideology, and the divisions and contradictions attendant upon that, are what must characterize all feminisms today in the United States, no longer just white and middle-class women, who were the first to be forced to examine our relation to institutions, political practice, cultural apparatus, and then to racism, anti-Semitism, hetero-sexism, classism, and so forth; for the consciousness of complicity with the gender ideologies of their particular cultures and subcultures is also emerging in the more recent writings of black women and Latinas, and of those lesbians, of whatever color, who identify themselves as feminists.¹⁶ To what extent this newer or emerging consciousness of complicity acts with or against the consciousness of oppression, is a question central to the understanding of ideology in these postmodern and postcolonial times.

That is why, in spite of the divergences, the political and personal differences, and the pain that surround feminist debates within and across racial, ethnic, and sexual lines, we may be encouraged in the hope that feminism will continue to develop a radical theory and a practice of sociocultural transformation. For that to be, however, the ambiguity of gender must be retained—and that is only seemingly a paradox. We cannot resolve or dispel the uncomfortable condition of being at once inside and outside gender either by desexualizing it (making gender merely a metaphor, a question of *différance*, of purely discursive effects) or by androgynizing it (claiming the same experience of material conditions for both genders in a given class, race, or culture). But I have already anticipated what I shall discuss further on. I have trespassed again, for I have not yet worked through the third proposition, which stated that the construction of gender through its representation goes on today as much as or more than in any other times. I will begin with a very simple, everyday example and then go on to more lofty proofs.

3.

Most of us—those of us who are women; to those who are men this will not apply—probably check the *F* box rather than the *M* box when filling out an application form. It would hardly occur to us to mark *M*. It would be like cheating or, worse, not existing, like erasing ourselves from the world.

(For men to check the *F* box, were they ever tempted to do so, would have quite another set of implications.) For since the very first time we put a check mark on the little square next to the *F* on the form, we have officially entered the sex-gender system, the social relations of gender, and have become en-gendered as women; that is to say, not only do other people consider us females, but from that moment on *we* have been representing ourselves as women. Now, I ask, isn't that the same as saying that the *F* next to the little box, which we marked in filling out the form, has stuck to us like a wet silk dress? Or that while we thought that we were marking the *F* on the form, in fact the *F* was marking itself on us?

This is, of course, the process described by Althusser with the word *interpellation*, the process whereby a social representation is accepted and absorbed by an individual as her (or his) own representation, and so becomes, for that individual, real, even though it is in fact imaginary. However, my example is all too simple. It does not explain how the representation is constructed and how it is then accepted and absorbed. For that purpose we turn, first, to Michel Foucault.

The first volume of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* has become highly influential, especially his bold thesis that sexuality, commonly thought to be a natural as well as a private, intimate matter, is in fact completely constructed in culture according to the political aims of the society's dominant class. Foucault's analysis begins from a paradox: the prohibitions and regulations pertaining to sexual behaviors, whether spoken by religious, legal, or scientific authorities, far from constraining or repressing sexuality, have on the contrary produced it, and continue to produce it, in the sense in which industrial machinery produces goods or commodities, and in so doing also produces social relations.

Hence the notion of a "technology of sex," which he defines as "a set of techniques for maximizing life" that have been developed and deployed by the bourgeoisie since the end of the eighteenth century in order to ensure its class survival and continued hegemony. Those techniques involved the elaboration of discourses (classification, measurements, evaluation, etc.) about four privileged "figures" or objects of knowledge: the sexualization of children and of the female body, the control of procreation, and the psychiatrization of anomalous sexual behavior as perversion. These discourses, which were implemented through pedagogy, medicine, demography, and economics, were anchored or supported by the institutions of the state, and became especially focused on the family; they served to disseminate and to "implant," in Foucault's suggestive term, those figures and modes of knowledge into each individual, family, and institution. This technology, he remarked, "made sex not only a secular concern but a

concern of the state as well; to be more exact, sex became a matter that required the social body as a whole, and virtually all of its individuals, to place themselves under surveillance.”¹⁷

The sexualization of the female body has indeed been a favorite figure or object of knowledge in the discourses of medical science, religion, art, literature, popular culture, and so on. Since Foucault, several studies have appeared that address the topic, more or less explicitly, in his historical methodological framework;¹⁸ but the connection between woman and sexuality, and the identification of the sexual with the female body, so pervasive in Western culture, had long been a major concern of feminist criticism and of the women’s movement quite independently of Foucault, of course. In particular, feminist film criticism had been addressing itself to that issue in a conceptual framework which, though not derived from Foucault, yet was not altogether dissimilar.

For some time before the publication of volume I of *The History of Sexuality* in France (*La volonté de savoir*, 1976), feminist film theorists had been writing on the sexualization of the female star in narrative cinema and analyzing the cinematic techniques (lighting, framing, editing, etc.) and the specific cinematic codes (e.g., the system of the look) that construct woman as image, as the object of the spectator’s voyeurist gaze; and they had been developing both an account and a critique of the psycho-social, aesthetic, and philosophical discourses that underlie the representation of the female body as the primary site of sexuality and visual pleasure.¹⁹ The understanding of cinema as a social technology, as a “cinematic apparatus,” was developed in film theory contemporaneously with Foucault’s work but independently of it; rather, as the word *apparatus* suggests, it was directly influenced by the work of Althusser and Lacan.²⁰ There is little doubt, at any rate, that cinema—the cinematic apparatus—is a technology of gender, as I have argued throughout *Alice Doesn’t*, if not in these very words, I hope convincingly.

The theory of the cinematic apparatus is more concerned than Foucault’s with answering both parts of the question I started from: not only how the representation of gender is constructed by the given technology, but also how it becomes absorbed subjectively by each individual whom that technology addresses. For the second part of the question, the crucial notion is the concept of spectatorship, which feminist film theory has established as a gendered concept; that is to say, the ways in which each individual spectator is addressed by the film, the ways in which his/her identification is solicited and structured in the single film,²¹ are intimately and intentionally, if not usually explicitly, connected to the spectators’ gender. Both in the critical writings and in the practices of women’s cinema, the exploration of female

spectatorship is giving us a more subtly articulated analysis of the modalities of film viewing for women and increasingly sophisticated forms of address in filmmaking (as discussed in chapters 7 and 8).

This critical work is producing a knowledge of cinema *and* of the technology of sex which Foucault's theory could not lead to, on its own terms; for there, sexuality is not understood as gendered, as having a male form and a female form, but is taken to be one and the same for all—and consequently male (further discussion of this point is to be found in chapter 2). I am not speaking of the libido, which Freud said to be only one, and I think he may have been right about that. I am speaking here of sexuality as a construct and a (self-) representation; and that does have both a male form and a female form, although in the patriarchal or male-centered frame of mind, the female form is a projection of the male's, its complementary opposite, its extrapolation—Adam's rib, so to speak. So that, even when it is located *in* the woman's body (seen, Foucault wrote, "as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality," p. 104), sexuality is perceived as an attribute or a property of the male.

As Lucy Bland states in response to an article on the historical construction of sexuality along Foucauldian lines—an article which not surprisingly omits what she considers "one of the *central* aspects of the historical construction of sexuality, namely its construction as gender specific"—the various conceptions of sexuality throughout Western history, however diverse among themselves, have been based on "the perennial contrast of 'male' to 'female' sexuality."²² In other words, female sexuality has been invariably defined both in contrast and in relation to the male. The conception of sexuality held by feminists of the first wave, at the turn of the century, was no exception: whether they called for "purity" and opposed all sexual activity for degrading women to the level of men, or whether they called for a free expression of the "natural" function and "spiritual" quality of sex on the part of women, sex meant heterosexual intercourse and primarily penetration. It is only in contemporary feminism that the notions of a different or autonomous sexuality of women and of non-male-related sexual identities for women have emerged. But even so, Bland observes, "the displacement of the sexual act as penetration from the centre of the sexual stage remains a task still facing us today" (p. 67).

The polarity 'male'/'female' has been and remains a central theme in nearly all representations of sexuality. Within 'common-sense', male and female sexuality stand as distinct: male sexuality is understood as active, spontaneous, genital, easily aroused by 'objects' and fantasy, while female sexuality is thought of in terms of its *relation* to male sexuality, as basically expressive and responsive to the male. (p. 57)

Hence the paradox that mars Foucault's theory, as it does other contemporary, radical but male-centered, theories: in order to combat the social technology that produces sexuality and sexual oppression, these theories (and their respective politics) will deny gender. But to deny gender, first of all, is to deny the social relations of gender that constitute and validate the sexual oppression of women; and second, to deny gender is to remain "in ideology," an ideology which (not coincidentally if, of course, not intentionally) is manifestly self-serving to the male-gendered subject.

In their collective book, the authors of *Changing the Subject* discuss the importance and the limits of discourse theory, and develop their own theoretical proposals from a critique as well as an acceptance of the basic premises of poststructuralism and deconstruction.²³ For example, they accept "the post-structuralist displacement of the unitary subject, and the revelation of its constituted and not constitutive character" (p. 204), but maintain that the deconstruction of the unified subject, the bourgeois individual ("the subject-as-agent"), is not sufficient for an accurate understanding of subjectivity. In particular, Wendy Hollway's chapter "Gender difference and the production of subjectivity" postulates that what accounts for the content of gender difference is gender-differentiated meanings and the positions differentially made available to men and women in discourse. Thus, for example, since all discourses on sexuality are gender-differentiated and therefore multiple (there are at the very least two in each specific instance or historical moment), the same practices of (hetero)sexuality are likely to "signify differently for women and men, because they are being read through different discourses" (p. 237).

Hollway's work concerns the study of heterosexual relations as "the primary site where gender difference is re-produced" (p. 228), and is based on the analysis of empirical materials drawn from individual people's accounts of their own heterosexual relationships. Her theoretical project is, "How can we understand gender difference in a way which can account for changes?"

If we do not ask this question the change of paradigm from a biologicistic to a discourse theory of gender difference does not constitute much of an advance. If the concept of discourses is just a replacement for the notion of ideology, then we are left with one of two possibilities. Either the account sees discourses as mechanically repeating themselves, or—and this is the tendency of materialist theory of ideology—changes in ideology follow from changes in material conditions. According to such a use of discourse theory people are the victims of certain systems of ideas which are outside of them. Discourse determinism comes up against the old problem of agency typical of all sorts of social determinisms. (p. 237)

The “gap” in Foucault’s theory, as she sees it, consists in his account of historical changes in discourses. “He stresses the mutually constitutive relation between power and knowledge: how each constitutes the other to produce the truths of a particular epoch.” Rather than equating power with oppression, Foucault sees it as productive of meanings, values, knowledges, and practices, but inherently neither positive nor negative. However, Hollway remarks, “he still does not account for how people are constituted as a result of certain truths being current rather than others” (p. 237). She then reformulates, and redistributes, Foucault’s notion of power by suggesting that power is what motivates (and not necessarily in a conscious or rational manner) individuals’ “investments” in discursive positions. If at any one time there are several competing, even contradictory, discourses on sexuality—rather than a single, all-encompassing or monolithic, ideology—then what makes one take up a position in a certain discourse rather than another is an “investment” (this term translates the German *Besetzung*, a word used by Freud and rendered in English as *cathexis*), something between an emotional commitment and a vested interest, in the relative power (satisfaction, reward, payoff) which that position promises (but does not necessarily fulfill).

Hollway’s is an interesting attempt to reconceptualize power in such a manner that agency (rather than choice) may be seen to exist for the subject, and especially for those subjects who have been (perceived as) “victims” of social oppression or especially disempowered by the discursive monopoly of power-knowledge. It not only may explain why, for example, women (who are people of one gender) have historically made different investments and thus have taken up different positions in gender and sexual practices and identities (celibacy, monogamy, non-monogamy, frigidity, sexual-role playing, lesbianism, heterosexuality, feminism, anti-feminism, postfeminism, etc.); but it may explain, as well, the fact that “other major dimensions of social difference such as class, race and age intersect with gender to favor or disfavor certain positions” (p. 239), as Hollway suggests. However, her conclusion that “every relation and every practice is a site of potential change as much as it is a site of reproduction” does not say what relation the potential for change in gender relations—if it is a change both in consciousness and in social reality—may bear to the hegemony of discourses.

How do changes in consciousness affect or effect changes in dominant discourses? Or, put another way, whose investments yield more relative power? For example, if we say that certain discourses and practices, even though marginal with regard to institutions, but nonetheless disruptive or oppositional (e.g., women’s cinema and health collectives, Women’s Studies’ and Afro-American Studies’ revisions of the literary canon and college

curricula, the developing critique of colonial discourse), do have the power to “implant” new objects and modes of knowledge in individual subjects, does it follow that these oppositional discourses or counter-practices (as Claire Johnston called women’s cinema in the early 1970s “counter-cinema”) can become dominant or hegemonic? And if so, how? Or need they not become dominant in order for social relations to change? And if not, how will the social relations of gender change? I may restate these questions into one, as follows: If, as Hollway writes, “gender difference is . . . reproduced in day-to-day interactions in heterosexual couples, through the denial of the non-unitary, non-rational, relational character of subjectivity” (p. 252), what will persuade women to invest in other positions, in other sources of power capable of changing gender relations, when they have assumed the current position (of female in the couple), in the first place, because that position afforded them, as women, a certain relative power?

The point I am trying to make, much as I agree with Hollway in most of her argument, and much as I like her effort to redistribute power among most of us, is that to theorize as positive the “relative” power of those oppressed by current social relations necessitates something more radical, or perhaps more drastic, than she seems willing to stake. The problem is compounded by the fact that the investments studied by Hollway are secured and bonded by a heterosexual contract; that is to say, her object of study is the very site in which the social relations of gender and thus gender ideology are re-produced in everyday life. Any changes that may result therein, however they may occur, are likely to be changes in “gender difference,” precisely, rather than changes in the social relations of gender: changes, in short, in the direction of more or less “equality” of women *to men*.

Here is, clearly in evidence, the problem in the notion of sexual difference(s), its conservative force limiting and working against the effort to rethink its very representations. I believe that to envision gender (men and women) otherwise, and to (re)construct it in terms other than those dictated by the patriarchal contract, we must walk out of the male-centered frame of reference in which gender and sexuality are (re)produced by the discourse of male sexuality—or, as Luce Irigaray has so well written it, of hom(m)osexuality. This essay would like to be a rough map of the first steps of the way out.

Taking up position in quite another frame of reference, Monique Wittig has stressed the power of discourses to “do violence” to people, a violence which is material and physical, although produced by abstract and scientific discourses as well as the discourses of the mass media.

If the discourse of modern theoretical systems and social science exert[s] a power upon us, it is because it works with concepts which closely touch

us. . . . They function like primitive concepts in a conglomerate of all kinds of disciplines, theories, and current ideas that I will call the straight mind. (See *The Savage Mind* by Claude Lévi-Strauss.) They concern “woman,” “man,” “sex,” “difference,” and all of the series of concepts which bear this mark, including such concepts as “history,” “culture,” and the “real.” And although it has been accepted in recent years that there is no such thing as nature, that everything is culture, there remains within that culture a core of nature which resists examination, a relationship excluded from the social in the analysis—a relationship whose characteristic is ineluctability in culture, as well as in nature, and which is the heterosexual relationship. I will call it the obligatory social relationship between “man” and “woman.”²⁴

In arguing that the “discourses of heterosexuality oppress us in the sense that they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms” (p. 105), Wittig is recovering the sense of the oppressiveness of power as it is imbricated in institutionally controlled knowledges, a sense which has somehow been lost in placing the emphasis on the Foucauldian view of power as productive, *and hence as positive*. While it would be difficult to disprove that power is productive of knowledges, meanings, and values, it seems obvious enough that we have to make distinctions between the positive effects and the oppressive effects of such production. And that is not an issue for political practice alone, but, as Wittig forcefully reminds us, it is especially a question to be asked of theory.

I will then rewrite my third proposition: *The construction of gender goes on today through the various technologies of gender (e.g., cinema) and institutional discourses (e.g., theory) with power to control the field of social meaning and thus produce, promote, and “implant” representations of gender. But the terms of a different construction of gender also exist, in the margins of hegemonic discourses. Posed from outside the heterosexual social contract, and inscribed in micropolitical practices, these terms can also have a part in the construction of gender, and their effects are rather at the “local” level of resistances, in subjectivity and self-representation.* I will return to this last point in section 4.

In the last chapter of *Alice Doesn't*, I used the term *experience* to designate the process by which, for all social beings, subjectivity is constructed. I sought to define experience more precisely as a complex of meaning effects, habits, dispositions, associations, and perceptions resulting from the semiotic interaction of self and outer world (in C.S. Peirce’s words). The constellation or configuration of meaning effects which I call experience shifts and is reformed continually, for each subject, with her or his continuous engagement in social reality, a reality that includes—and for women centrally—the social relations of gender. For, as I began to argue in that book, following through the critical insights of Virginia Woolf and Catharine MacKinnon, female subjectivity and experience are necessarily couched in a specific relation to sexuality. And however insufficiently de-

veloped, that observation suggests to me that what I was trying to define with the notion of a complex of habits, associations, perceptions, and dispositions which en-genders one as female—what I was getting at was precisely the experience of gender, the meaning effects and self-representations produced in the subject by the sociocultural practices, discourses, and institutions devoted to the production of women and men. And it was surely not coincidental, then, that my analyses had been concerned with cinema, narrative, and theory. For these themselves, of course, are all technologies of gender.

Now, to assert that theory (a generic term for any theoretical discourse seeking to account for a particular object of knowledge, and in effect constructing that object in a field of meaning as its proper domain of knowledge, the domain being often called “discipline”) is a technology of gender may seem paradoxical given the fact I have been lamenting for most of these pages; namely, that the theories that are available to help us map the passage from sociality to subjectivity, from symbolic systems to individual perception, or from cultural representations to self-representation—a passage in discontinuous space, I might say—are either unconcerned with gender or unable to conceive of a female subject.²⁵ They are unconcerned with gender, like Althusser’s and Foucault’s, or the earlier work of Julia Kristeva or of Umberto Eco; or else, if they do concern themselves with gender, as Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis does (more than any other, in fact, with the exception of feminist theory), and if they do then offer a model of the construction of gender in sexual difference, nevertheless their map of the terrain between sociality and subjectivity is one that leaves the female subject hopelessly caught in patriarchal swamps or stranded somewhere between the devil and the deep blue sea. However, and this is my argument in the present book, *both* kinds of theories, and the fictions they inspire, contain and promote some representation of gender, no less than cinema does.

A case in point is Kaja Silverman’s illuminating work on subjectivity and language in psychoanalysis. In arguing that subjectivity is produced through language, and that the human subject is a semiotic and therefore also a gendered subject, Silverman makes a valiant effort, in her words, “to create a space for the female subject within [its] pages, even if that space is only a negative one.”²⁶ And indeed, in the Lacanian framework of her analysis, the issue of gender does not fit, and the female subject can be defined only vaguely as a “point of resistance” (p. 144, p. 232) to patriarchal culture, as “potentially subversive” (p. 233), or as structured negatively “in relation to the phallus” (p. 191). This negativity of woman, her lacking or transcending the laws and processes of signification, has a counterpart, in poststructuralist psychoanalytic theory, in the notion of femininity as a

privileged condition, a nearness to nature, the body, the side of the maternal, or the unconscious. However, we are cautioned, this femininity is purely a representation, a positionality within the phallic model of desire and signification; it is not a quality or a property of women. Which all amounts to saying that woman, *as* subject of desire or of signification, is unrepresentable; or, better, that in the phallic order of patriarchal culture and in its theory, woman is unrepresentable except as representation.

But even when it diverges from the Lacanian version that is predominant in literary criticism and film theory, and when it does pose the question of how one becomes a woman (as does, for instance, object-relations theory, which has appealed to feminists as much as if not more than Lacan or Freud), psychoanalysis defines woman *in relation to* man, from within the same frame of reference and with the analytical categories elaborated to account for the psychosocial development of the male. That is why psychoanalysis does not address, cannot address, the complex and contradictory relation of women to Woman, which it instead defines as a simple equation: women = Woman = Mother. And that, as I have suggested, is one of the most deeply rooted effects of the ideology of gender.

Before I go on to consider the representations of gender that are contained in other current discourses of interest to feminism, I want to return briefly to my own position vis-à-vis the problem of understanding gender both through a critical reading of theory and through the shifting configurations of my experience as a feminist and a theorist. If I could not but see, although I was unable to formulate it in my earlier work, that cinema and narrative theories were technologies of gender,²⁷ it was not only that I had read Foucault and Althusser (they had said nothing about gender) and Woolf and MacKinnon (they had), but also that I had absorbed as my experience (through my own history and engagement in social reality and in the gendered spaces of feminist communities) the analytical and critical method of feminism, the *practice* of self-consciousness. For the understanding of one's personal condition as a woman in terms social and political, and the constant revision, reevaluation, and reconceptualization of that condition in relation to other women's understanding of their sociosexual positions, generate a mode of apprehension of all social reality that derives from the consciousness of gender. And from that apprehension, from that personal, intimate, analytical, and political knowledge of the pervasiveness of gender, there is no going back to the innocence of "biology."

That is why I find it impossible to share some women's belief in a matriarchal past or a contemporary "matristic" realm presided over by the Goddess, a realm of female tradition, marginal and subterranean and yet all positive and good, peace-loving, ecologically correct, matrilineal, matrifocal, non-Indo-European, and so forth; in short, a world untouched by

ideology, class and racial struggle, television—a world untroubled by the contradictory demands and oppressive rewards of gender as I, and surely those women, too, have daily experienced it. On the other hand, and much for the same reasons, I find it equally impossible to dismiss gender either as an essentialist and mythical idea of the kind I have just described, or as the liberal-bourgeois idea encouraged by media advertisers: someday soon, somehow, women will have careers, their own last names and property, children, husbands, and/or female lovers according to preference—and all that without altering the existing social relations and the heterosexual structures to which our society, and most others, are securely screwed.

Even this scenario, which, honestly I must admit, looms often enough in the background of a certain feminist discourse on gender, even this Ideal State of gender equality is not sufficient to deter me from claiming gender as a radical issue for feminist theory. And so I come to the last of the four propositions.

4.

The ideal state of gender equality, as I have just described it, is an easy target for deconstructors. Granted. (Although it is not altogether a straw man, because it is a real representation, as it were: just go to the movies on your next date, and you may see it.) But besides the blatant examples of ideological representation of gender in cinema, where the technology's intentionality is virtually foregrounded on the screen; and besides psychoanalysis, whose medical practice is much more of a technology of gender than its theory, there are other, subtler efforts to contain the trauma of gender—the potential disruption of the social fabric and of white male privilege that could ensue if this feminist critique of gender as ideologico-technological production were to become widespread.

Consider, for one, the new wave of critical writings by men on feminism that have appeared of late. Male philosophers writing as woman, male critics reading as a woman, men on feminism—what is it all about? Clearly it is an *hommage* (the pun is too tempting not to save it), but to what end? For the most part in the form of short mentions or occasional papers, these works do not support or valorize within the academy the feminist project per se. What they valorize and legitimate are certain positions within academic feminism, those positions that accommodate either or both the critic's personal interests and male-centered theoretical concerns.²⁸

As the introduction to a recent collection of essays on *Gender and Reading* remarks, there is evidence that men are “resisting readers” of women's fiction. More precisely, “it is not that men can't read women's texts; it is,

rather, that they *won't*.”²⁹ As far as theory goes, the evidence is very easy to check by a quick glance through the index of names of any book that does not specifically identify itself as feminist. The poverty of references to both feminist and female critics there is so consistent that one may be tempted, as Elaine Showalter was, to welcome “the move to feminist criticism on the part of [prominent] male theorists.”³⁰ And the temptation may be irresistible if, like the editors of *Gender and Reading*, one is concerned “that discussions of *gender difference* do not foreclose the recognition of individual variability and of *the common ground shared by all humans*” (p. xxix; emphasis added).

The limits and the liability of this view of gender as “gender difference” become especially apparent when, in one of the essays of the collection, which proposes “A Theory for Lesbian Readers,” Jean Kennard finds herself in agreement with Jonathan Culler (quoting Showalter) and reinscribes his-and-her words directly into her own: “Reading as a lesbian is not necessarily what happens when a lesbian reads. . . . The hypothesis of a *lesbian* reader [is what] changes our apprehension of a given text.”³¹ Ironically, or, I should rather say, thanks to poetic justice, this last statement contradicts and runs in the opposite direction of Kennard’s own critical project, clearly stated a few pages earlier: “What I wish to suggest here is a theory of reading which will not oversimplify the concept of identification, which will not subsume lesbian difference under a universal female. . . . It is an attempt to suggest a way in which lesbians could reread and write about texts” (p. 66).

The irony is in that Culler’s statement—in line with Derridean deconstruction, which is the context of his statement—is intended to make gender synonymous with discursive difference(s), differences that are effects of language or positions in discourse, and thus indeed independent of the reader’s gender (this notion of difference was already mentioned à propos of Michèle Barrett’s critique of it). What Kennard is suggesting, then, is that Culler can read not only as a woman but also as a lesbian, and that would “subsume lesbian difference” not only “under a universal female” but also under the universal male (which Jonathan Culler himself might not accept to represent, in the name of *différance*). The poetic justice is welcome in that Kennard’s critical hunch and initial assumption (that lesbians read differently from committedly heterosexual women as well as men) are quite correct, in my opinion; only, they need to be justified, or rendered justice to, by other means than male theories of reading or Gestalt psychology (for in addition to Lacan and Derrida, via Culler, Kennard draws her theory of “polar reading” from Joseph Zinker’s theory of opposing characteristics or “polarities”). For the purposes of the matter at

hand, poetic justice may be impersonated by Tania Modleski's critical assessment of the Showalter-Culler "hypothesis":

For Culler, each stage of feminist criticism renders increasingly problematic the idea of "women's experience." By calling this notion into question, Culler manages to clear a space for male feminist interpretations of literary texts. Thus, at one point he quotes Peggy Kamuf's remark about feminism as a way of reading, and he borrows a term, ironically enough, from Elaine Showalter in order to suggest that "reading as a woman" is ultimately not a matter of any actual reader's gender: over and over again, Culler speaks of the need for the critic to adopt what Showalter has called the "hypothesis" of a woman reader in lieu of appealing to the experience of real readers.³²

Then, showing how Culler accepts Freud's account in *Moses and Monotheism*, and hence speculates that a literary criticism bent on ascertaining the *legitimate* meanings of a text must be seen as "patriarchal," Modleski suggests that Culler is himself patriarchal "just at the point when he seems to be most feminist—when he arrogates to himself and to other male critics the ability to read as women by 'hypothesizing' women readers" (p. 133). A *feminist* criticism, she concludes, should reject "the *hypothesis* of a woman reader" and instead promote the "actual female reader."³³

Paradoxically, as I point out in chapter 2 with regard to Foucault's stance on the issue of rape, some of the more subtle attempts to contain this trauma of gender are inscribed in the theoretical discourses that most explicitly aim to deconstruct the status quo in the Text of Western Culture: antihumanist philosophy and Derridean deconstruction itself, as re-fashioned in literary and textual studies in the Anglo-American academy. In her analysis of the notion of femininity in contemporary French philosophy, Rosi Braidotti sees that notion as central to its foremost preoccupations: the critique of rationality, the demystification of unified subjectivity (the individual as subject of knowledge), and the investigation of the complicity between knowledge and power. The radical critique of subjectivity, she argues, "has become focused on a number of questions concerning the role and the status of 'femininity' in the conceptual frame of philosophic discourse."³⁴ This interest appears to be "an extraordinary co-occurrence of phenomena: the rebirth of the women's movement, on the one hand, and the need to reexamine the foundations of rational discourse felt by the majority of European philosophers," on the other. Braidotti then goes on to discuss the various forms that femininity assumes in the work of Deleuze, Foucault, Lyotard, and Derrida, and, concurrently, the consistent refusal by each philosopher to identify femininity with real women. On the contrary, it is only by giving up the insistence on sexual specificity (gender) that women, in their eyes, would be the social group best qualified (because they

are oppressed by sexuality) to foster a radically “other” subject, de-centered and de-sexualized.

So it is that, by displacing the question of gender onto an ahistorical, purely textual figure of femininity (Derrida); or by shifting the sexual basis of gender quite beyond sexual difference, onto a body of diffuse pleasures (Foucault) and libidinally invested surfaces (Lyotard), or a body-site of undifferentiated affectivity, and hence a subject freed from (self-)representation and the constraints of identity (Deleuze); and finally by displacing the ideology, but also the reality—the historicity—of gender onto this diffuse, decentered, or deconstructed (but certainly not female) subject—so it is that, paradoxically again, these theories make their appeal to women, naming the process of such displacing with the term *becoming woman* (*devenir-femme*).

In other words, only by denying sexual difference (and gender) as components of subjectivity in real women, and hence by denying the history of women’s political oppression and resistance, as well as the epistemological contribution of feminism to the redefinition of subjectivity and sociality, can the philosophers see in “women” the privileged repository of “the future of mankind.” That, Braidotti observes, “is nothing but the old mental habit [of philosophers] of thinking the masculine as synonymous with universal . . . the mental habit of translating women into metaphor” (pp. 34–35). That this habit is older, and so harder to break than the Cartesian subject, may account for the predominant disregard, when it is not outright contempt, that male intellectuals have for feminist theorizing, in spite of occasional gestures in the direction of “women’s struggles” or the granting of political status to the women’s movement. That should not, and does not, prevent feminist theorists from reading, rereading and rewriting their works.

On the contrary, the need for feminist theory to continue its radical critique of dominant discourses on gender, such as these are, even as they attempt to do away with sexual difference altogether, is all the more pressing since the word *postfeminism* has been spoken, and not in vain. This kind of deconstruction of the subject is effectively a way to recontain women in femininity (Woman) and to reposition female subjectivity *in* the male subject, however that will be defined. Furthermore, it closes the door in the face of the emergent social subject which these discourses are purportedly seeking to address, a subject constituted across a multiplicity of differences in discursive and material heterogeneity. Again, then, I rewrite: *If the deconstruction of gender inevitably effects its (re)construction, the question is, in which terms and in whose interest is the de-re-construction being effected?*

Returning now to the problem I tried to elucidate in discussing Jean

Kennard's essay, the difficulty we find in theorizing the construction of subjectivity in textuality is greatly increased, and the task proportionately more urgent, when the subjectivity in question is en-gendered in a relation to sexuality that is altogether unrepresentable in the terms of hegemonic discourses on sexuality and gender. The problem, which is a problem for all feminist scholars and teachers, is one we face almost daily in our work, namely, that most of the available theories of reading, writing, sexuality, ideology, or any other cultural production are built on male narratives of gender, whether oedipal or anti-oedipal, bound by the heterosexual contract; narratives which persistently tend to re-produce themselves in feminist theories. They *tend to*, and will do so unless one constantly resists, suspicious of their drift. Which is why the critique of all discourses concerning gender, including those produced or promoted as feminist, continues to be as vital a part of feminism as is the ongoing effort to create new spaces of discourse, to rewrite cultural narratives, and to define the terms of another perspective—a view from “elsewhere.”

For, if that view is nowhere to be seen, not given in a single text, not recognizable as a representation, it is not that we—feminists, women—have not yet succeeded in producing it. It is, rather, that what we have produced is not recognizable, precisely, as a representation. For that “elsewhere” is not some mythic distant past or some utopian future history: it is the elsewhere of discourse here and now, the blind spots, or the space-off, of its representations. I think of it as spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses, social spaces carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparati. And it is there that the terms of a different construction of gender can be posed—terms that do have effect and take hold at the level of subjectivity and self-representation: in the micropolitical practices of daily life and daily resistances that afford both agency and sources of power or empowering investments; and in the cultural productions of women, feminists, which inscribe that movement in and out of ideology, that crossing back and forth of the boundaries—and of the limits—of sexual difference(s).

I want to be very clear about this movement back and forth across the boundaries of sexual difference. I do *not* mean a movement from one space to another beyond it, or outside: say, from the space of a representation, the image produced by representation in a discursive or visual field, to the space outside the representation, the space outside discourse, which would then be thought of as “real”; or, as Althusser would say, from the space of ideology to the space of scientific and real knowledge; or again, from the symbolic space constructed by the sex-gender system to a “reality” external to it. For, clearly, no social reality exists for a given society outside of its

particular sex-gender system (the mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories of male and female). What I mean, instead, is a movement from the space represented by/in a representation, by/in a discourse, by/in a sex-gender system, to the space not represented yet implied (unseen) in them.

A while ago I used the expression “space-off,” borrowed from film theory: the space not visible in the frame but inferable from what the frame makes visible. In classical and commercial cinema, the space-off is, in fact, erased, or, better, recontained and sealed into the image by the cinematic rules of narrativization (first among them, the shot/reverse-shot system). But avant-garde cinema has shown the space-off to exist concurrently and alongside the represented space, has made it visible by remarking its absence in the frame or in the succession of frames, and has shown it to include not only the camera (the point of articulation and perspective from which the image is constructed) but also the spectator (the point where the image is received, re-constructed, and re-produced in/as subjectivity).

Now, the movement in and out of gender as ideological representation, which I propose characterizes the subject of feminism, is a movement back and forth between the representation of gender (in its male-centered frame of reference) and what that representation leaves out or, more pointedly, makes unrepresentable. It is a movement between the (represented) discursive space of the positions made available by hegemonic discourses and the space-off, the elsewhere, of those discourses: those other spaces both discursive and social that exist, since feminist practices have (re)constructed them, in the margins (or “between the lines,” or “against the grain”) of hegemonic discourses and in the interstices of institutions, in counter-practices and new forms of community. These two kinds of spaces are neither in opposition to one another nor strung along a chain of signification, but they coexist concurrently and in contradiction. The movement between them, therefore, is not that of a dialectic, of integration, of a combinatory, or of *différance*, but is the tension of contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronomy.

If in the master narratives, cinematic and otherwise, the two kinds of spaces are reconciled and integrated, as man recontains woman in his (man)kind, his hom(m)osexuality, nevertheless the cultural productions and micropolitical practices of feminism have shown them to be separate and heteronomous spaces. Thus, to inhabit both kinds of spaces at once is to live the contradiction which, I have suggested, is the condition of feminism here and now: the tension of a twofold pull in contrary directions—the critical negativity of its theory, and the affirmative positivity of its politics—is both the historical condition of existence of feminism and its theoretical condition of possibility. The subject of feminism is en-gendered there. That is to say, elsewhere.

Notes

I wish to thank my students in the History of Consciousness seminar in "Topics in Feminist Theory: Technologies of Gender" for their comments and observations, and my colleague Hayden White for his careful reading of this essay, all of which helped me formulate more clearly some of the issues discussed here.

1. For further discussion of these terms, see Teresa de Lauretis, ed., *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), especially the essays by Sondra O'Neale and Mary Russo.

2. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 127.

3. I need not detail other well-known exceptions in English usage, such as ships' and automobiles' and countries' being feminine. See Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), for a very useful survey of the issues raised in Anglo-American feminist sociolinguistic research. On the philosophical issue of gender in language, and especially its subversion in practices of writing by the strategic employ of personal pronouns, see Monique Wittig, "The Mark of Gender," *Feminist Issues* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1985): 3–12.

4. See Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981). The term *sex/gender system* was first used by Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes toward a Political Economy of Sex," in *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, ed. Rayna Reiter (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), pp. 157–210.

5. Jane F. Collier and Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "Politics and Gender in Simple Societies," in Ortner and Whitehead, *Sexual Meanings*, p. 275. In the same volume, see also Sherry B. Ortner, "Gender and Sexuality in Hierarchical Societies," pp. 359–409.

6. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), p. 165. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.

7. Cf. *The Woman Question: Selections from the Writings of Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V. I. Lenin, Joseph Stalin* (New York: International Publishers, 1951).

8. A clear exposition of the theoretical context of Althusser's subject in ideology can be found in Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 56–65. In Lacan's theory of the subject, 'the woman' is, of course, a fundamental category, but precisely as 'fantasy' or 'symptom' for the man, as Jacqueline Rose explains: "Woman is constructed as an absolute category (excluded and elevated at one and the same time), a category which seems to guarantee that unity on the side of the man. . . . The problem is that once the notion of 'woman' has been so relentlessly exposed as a fantasy, then any such question [the question of her own *jouissance*] becomes an almost impossible one to pose" (Jacques Lacan, *Feminine Sexuality*, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose [New York: W. W. Norton, 1982], pp. 47–51). On both Lacan's and Althusser's subjects together, see Stephen Heath, "The Turn of the Subject," *Cine-Tracts*, no. 8 (Summer-Fall 1979): 32–48.

9. Michèle Barrett, "Ideology and the Cultural Production of Gender," in *Feminist Criticism and Social Change*, ed. Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt (New York: Methuen, 1985), p. 74.

10. Parveen Adams, "A Note on the Distinction between Sexual Division and Sexual Differences," *m/f*, no. 3 (1979): 52 [quoted in Barrett, p. 67].

11. Joan Kelly, *Women, History, and Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 58. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.

12. See, for example, Patricia Hill Collins, "The Emerging Theory and Pedagogy of Black Women's Studies," *Feminist Issues* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 3–17; Angela Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); and Bell Hooks,

Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism (Boston: Long Haul Press, 1981).

13. Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

14. On the feminist critique of science, Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), states: "A feminist perspective on science confronts us with the task of examining the roots, the dynamics, and consequences of . . . what might be called the 'science-gender system'. It leads us to ask how ideologies of gender and science inform each other in their mutual construction, how the construction functions in our social arrangements, and how it affects men and women, science and nature" (p. 8). Moving from "the woman question" in science to survey the distinct epistemologies that inform the feminist critique of science, Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1986), raises some crucial theoretical questions regarding the relations "between knowing and being, between epistemology and metaphysics" and the alternatives "to the dominant epistemologies developed to justify science's modes of knowledge-seeking and ways of being in the world" (p. 24). "The feminist criticisms of science," she argues, "have produced an array of conceptual questions that threaten both our cultural identity as a democratic and socially progressive society and our core personal identities as gender-distinct individuals" (pp. 28–29). A further reference is appropriate in this context: Mary Ann Warren, *Gendercide* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman & Allanheld, 1985), a study of the developing "technology of sex selection," as reviewed by Shelley Minden in *The Women's Review of Books*, February 1986, pp. 13–14.

15. *This Bridge Called My Back* was originally published by Persephone Press in 1981. It is now available in its second edition, reprinted by Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press (New York, 1983).

16. See, for example, Cheryl Clark, "Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance," and Mirtha Quintanales, "I Paid Very Hard for My Immigrant Ignorance," both in *This Bridge Called My Back*; Cherríe Moraga, "From a Long Line of Vendidas," and Sheila Radford-Hill, "Considering Feminism as a Model for Social Change," both in de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*; and Elly Bulkin, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Barbara Smith, *Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism* (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Long Haul Press, 1984).

17. Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, p. 116. The preceding paragraph also appears in another essay in this volume, "The Violence of Rhetoric," written prior to this essay, where I first considered the applicability of Foucault's notion of a technology of sex to the construction of gender. I wrote: "Illuminating as his work is to our understanding of the mechanics of power in social relations, its critical value is limited by his unconcern for what, after him, we might call the 'technology of gender'—the techniques and discursive strategies by which gender is constructed."

18. For example, Mary Poovey, "'Scenes of an Indelicate Character': The Medical 'Treatment' of Victorian Women," *Representations*, no. 14 (Spring 1986): 137–68; and Mary Ann Doane, "Clinical Eyes: The Medical Discourse," a chapter in her book *The Desire to Desire: The "Woman's Film" of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

19. Although more detailed references to feminist work in film may be found in *Alice Doesn't*, I want to mention two fundamental critical texts, both published in 1975 (the year in which Foucault's *Surveiller et Punir* [Discipline and Punish] first appeared in France): Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16, no. 3 (August 1975): 6–18; and Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," now in *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), pp. 19–75.

20. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: Macmillan, 1980).

21. In the single film text, but always by way of the entire apparatus, including cinematic genres, the "film industry," and the whole "history of the cinema-machine," as Stephen Heath has defined it ("The Cinematic Apparatus: Technology as Historical and Cultural Form," in de Lauretis and Heath, *The Cinematic Apparatus*, p. 7).

22. Lucy Bland, "The Domain of the Sexual: A Response," *Screen Education*, no. 39 (Summer 1981): 56. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.

23. Julian Henriques, Wendy Hollway, Cathy Urwin, Couze Venn, and Valerie Walkerdine, *Changing the Subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (London: Methuen, 1984). Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.

24. Monique Wittig, "The Straight Mind," *Feminist Issues*, no. 1 (Summer 1980): 106–107. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.

25. It may also sound paradoxical to assert that theory is a social technology in view of the common belief that theory (and similarly science) is the opposite of technique, empirical know-how, "hands-on" expertise, practical or applied knowledge—in short, all that is associated with the term *technology*. But I trust that everything said so far in the essay absolves me from the burden of again defining what I mean by technology.

26. Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 131. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text.

27. I find that I wrote the following, for example: "Narrative and cinema solicit women's consent and by a surplus of pleasure hope to seduce women into femininity" (*Alice Doesn't*, p. 10).

28. See Elaine Showalter, "Critical Cross-Dressing: Male Feminists and the Woman of the Year," *Raritan* 3, no. 2 (1983): 130–49; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman," in *Displacement: Derrida and After*, ed. Mark Krupnick (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), pp. 169–95; Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, pp. 213–229; and Alice Jardine et al., eds., *Men on Feminism* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

29. Elizabeth A. Flynn and Patrocínio P. Schweickart, eds., *Gender and Reading: Essays on Readers, Texts, and Contexts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), p. xviii. This passage in the introduction refers specifically to the essay by Judith Fetterley "Reading about Reading," pp. 147–64. Subsequent references to this volume are included in the text. The programmatic emphasis of that refusal is corroborated by the historical evidence that Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar bring to document "the reaction-formation of intensified misogyny with which male [modernist] writers greeted the entrance of women into the literary marketplace" since the end of the nineteenth century, in their essay "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality," *New Literary History* 16, no. 3 (Spring 1985): 524.

30. Showalter, "Critical Cross-Dressing," p. 131. However, as Gilbert and Gubar also point out, such a move is not unprecedented or necessarily disinterested. It may well be—and why not?—that the effort of European (male) writers since the Middle Ages to transform the *materna lingua*, or mother tongue (the vernacular), into a cultivated *patrius sermo*, or father speech (in Walter Ong's terms), as a more suitable instrument for art, has been an effort to cure what Gilbert and Gubar call "the male linguistic wound": "Mourning and waking a lost *patrius sermo*, male modernists and postmodernists transform the maternal vernacular into a new morning of patriarchy in which they can wake the old powers of the 'Allfather's Word'" (Gilbert and Gubar, "Sexual Linguistics," pp. 534–35).

31. Jean E. Kennard, "Ourselves behind Ourselves: A Theory for Lesbian Readers," in Flynn and Schweickart, *Gender and Reading*, p. 71. Here Kennard is quoting and readapting (by replacing the word *woman* with the word *lesbian*) from Jonathan

Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 49 and 50; on p. 50, Culler himself is quoting from Showalter.

32. Tania Modleski, "Feminism and the Power of Interpretation: Some Critical Readings," in de Lauretis, *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*, p. 132. Subsequent references to this work are included in the text. See also, in the same volume, Nancy K. Miller, "Changing the Subject: Authorship, Writing, and the Reader," pp. 102–120.

33. Modleski's "actual female reader" seems to parallel Kennard's "individual lesbian readers." For example, and I quote from her conclusion, Kennard states: "Polar reading, then, is not a theory of lesbian reading, but a method particularly appropriate to lesbian readers" (p. 77). This sentence, however, is also put into question by the author's preoccupation, a few lines above, with satisfying all possible readers: "Polar reading permits the participation of any reader in any text and thus opens up the possibility of enjoying the widest range of literary experience." In the end, this reader remains confused.

34. Rosi Braidotti, "Modelli di dissonanza: donne e/in filosofia," in Patrizia Magli, ed., *Le donne e i segni* (Urbino: Il lavoro editoriale, 1985), p. 25. Although, as I understand, an English version of this paper is available, this and subsequent references included in the text are to the Italian version, in my translation.

FUNNY BUSINESS

I wonder if later
I will forgive myself
for having denied my loved ones
demonstrations of my loving them.
I was too busy demonstrating
myself to the universe.
I was too busy turning
strangers into sites of worship.
I was so, so busy
considering the symbolism
of the fish's boiled eyeball
as it sat there on the platter.
I was feeling uncomfortable
in the presence of the wide
smile of the holographic customer
service associate.
I Googled what
delphiniums are.
I took my shirt off
and rolled around in the yard,
pretending to be a little worm
while actual worms were rolling
around in the yard and I
actually crushed one
to death.

— Mikko Harvey

QUIET SOUNDINGS

The Grammar of Black Futurity

Black Futurity—A Primer in Feminist Grammar

fu·ture: noun.

—time that is to be or come hereafter

—something that will exist or happen in a time to come

—condition, especially of success or failure, to come

What does it mean for a black feminist to think about, consider, or concede the concept of futurity? As an African American feminist scholar of a certain generation—a generation educated in the 1980s and weaned on the writings of a cadre of radical black feminist thinkers, who were among the first to claw their way into the university and make a place for others like myself—the question of futurity is inextricably bound up in the conundrum of being captured by and accountable to the historical impact of the Atlantic slave trade on the meaning of black womanhood in the Americas. It is a conundrum that Hortense Spillers famously described in haunting terms in the opening lines of her 1987 essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.”

Let’s face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. “Peaches” and “Brown Sugar,” “Sapphire” and “Earth Mother,” “Aunty,” “Granny,” “God’s Holy Fool,” a “Miss Ebony First,” or “Black

Woman at the Podium”: I describe a locus of confounded identities, a meeting ground of investments and privations in the national treasury of rhetorical wealth. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented. (65)

On the same page of this transformative text, Spillers explains that these terms capture her in a web of what she calls “overdetermined nominative properties.” She continues,

They are markers so loaded with mythical prepossession that there is no easy way for the agents buried beneath them to come clean. . . . In order for me to speak a truer word concerning myself, I must strip down through layers of attenuated meanings, made an excess in time, over time, assigned by a particular historical order, and there await whatever marvels of my own inventiveness. (65)

Almost thirty years since the publication of Spillers’s seminal text, I share her sense of capture. More important, I still share the sense of urgency she expressed—an urgency to see possibility in the tiny, often minuscule chinks and crevices of what appears to be the inescapable web of capture for black women and men alike. Like Spillers, I too feel the need to engage those possibilities obliquely, in the terms she presented so brilliantly back then, which remain utterly salient for me today. They are terms found not so much in the foreground of her impactful text, but instead in its margins. They are the terms and tenses of grammar, in Spillers’s case, “An American Grammar Book” of the black female body. It is a grammar of black capture that echoes her equally profound statements in “Interstices: A Small Drama of Words,” that black women continue to await “their verb.”

In his elegant revisiting of Spillers’s work, Alexander Weheliye describes her intervention as an attempt to theorize “some general dimensions of modern subjectivity from the vantage point of black women” in ways that “develop a grammar [and] create a vocabulary that does not choose between addressing the specific location of black women, a broader theoretical register about what it means to be human during and in the after-

math of the transatlantic slave trade, and the imagination of liberation in the *future anterior sense of the NOW*.”¹ It is in a similarly grammatical sense—a grammar of futurity realized in the present—that I now repeat my opening question: What does it mean for a black feminist to think in the grammar of futurity?

Futurity is, for me, not a question of “hope”—though it is certainly inescapably intertwined with the idea of aspiration. To me it is crucial to think about futurity through a notion of “tense.” What is the “tense” of a black feminist future? It is a tense of anteriority, a tense relationship to an idea of possibility that is neither innocent nor naïve. Nor is it necessarily heroic or intentional. It is often humble and strategic, subtle and discriminating. It is devious and exacting. It’s not always loud and demanding. It is frequently quiet and opportunistic, dogged and disruptive.

The grammar of black feminist futurity that I propose here is a grammar of possibility that moves beyond a simple definition of the future tense as *what will be* in the future. It moves beyond the future perfect tense of *that which will have happened* prior to a reference point in the future. It strives for the tense of possibility that grammarians refer to as the future real conditional or *that which will have had to happen*. The grammar of black feminist futurity is a performance of a future that hasn’t yet happened but must. It is an attachment to a belief in what should be true, which impels us to realize that aspiration. It is the power to imagine beyond current fact and to envision that which is not, but must be. It’s a politics of prefiguration that involves living the future *now*—as imperative rather than subjunctive—as a striving for the future you want to see, right now, in the present.²

Some see the realization of such a future in the form of acts and actions. They see it in political movements and acts of resistance like those that have produced fundamental shifts in the status of subordinated, subaltern, and marginalized groups. But I believe we must not only look but also listen for it in other, less likely places. I locate it in the everyday imagining practices of black communities past, present, and future. And I find it, over and over again, in some of the least celebrated, often most disposable

archives of photography. They are images that we are compelled or required to take: identification photos. It is an alternative visual archive of the African Diaspora that I call quiet photography.

The Hum of Silence

The silence of the space couldn't have been louder. Stepping off the elevator of a converted Chelsea warehouse in the middle of a weekday felt like walking into a whitewashed mausoleum. The building was a warren of small but established galleries, yet to me it felt like a maze. I passed the door of the Walther Collection twice but only found it on the third pass. As soon as I entered the gallery, it was clear that quiet was the most appropriate modality for encountering the installation. But its quietude was anything but simple. It was the kind of quiet that is in no way an absence. It is fulsome and expressive. Restless, awkward, and unsettling, it is a form of quiet where gnawing questions simmer and send one searching for more complicated answers.

More than a hundred faceless images hung on the walls of the gallery. The room was empty, except for me and the curator who greeted me. It felt cold and uninviting in spite of the warm welcome he immediately extended. We had corresponded by email and he explained the story behind the exhibit when I arrived. After that, quiet descended once again as I walked around the room to peer at images that wrapped around the room like a thin, bright ribbon. A horizontal line of red, white, and blue back-



grounds traversed two of its walls; two others were covered by a grid of similar images. Each photo was both unique and at the same time serial.

Hands resting on laps. Hands folded over one another or open with fingers extended; hands clasping a bench, a knee, or a receipt of payment for the image itself. And blazers—blue blazers that swallow up men, women, and children. It is in fact a single blazer: a blazer required to be worn by all account applicants to one of the region’s largest employers and financial institutions, supplied by the studio for its sitters regardless of gender, age, or size. A polka-dotted clutch purse contrasts with an intricately patterned dress; gently folded, surprisingly delicate hands rest in the lap of a camouflage-clad military man; broad white cuffs frame an oversized shirt and the long slender fingers of a sitter. And a child’s smoothly shaven head is framed by the opening of a blazer on his father’s lap. But a second look reveals it is not a father, but instead a mother. It is another compulsory blazer that, this time, covers not the shirt and trousers of a man, but the blue, patterned dress of a woman instead.

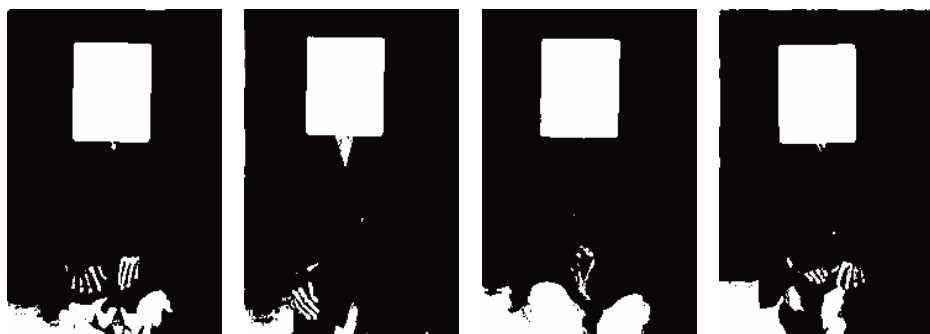
Beyond any other details they share, what unifies this series of images is the absence of a face cut out of a photo, leaving behind an identical white square. That which normally distinguishes individuals—the face—is absent. But in that absence, other forms of individuality are transferred from background to foreground as *studium* shifts to *punctum*. We are drawn to the elements of the image deliberately removed from our view in the finished portrait. Ironically, details intended to impose uniformity—jackets, poses, and backdrops—are now serialized enactments of individuality and difference.

Gulu Real Art Studio assembles an unlikely genre of vernacular portraiture: discarded cutouts of African identity photos, originally taken by Obal Denis, a photographer and the proprietor of *Gulu Real Art Studio*, the oldest photography studio in the Ugandan city of Gulu, and collected by the Italian photojournalist Martina Bacigalupo. The result is a reinstantiation of once-discarded, now-reclaimed images that Bacigalupo compares to “a choral narrative” of the Acholi people of northern Uganda. It is a studio typical of countless others scattered across the African conti-

ment—seemingly utilitarian photography studios frequently repurposed by their sitters to create a visual archive of their desire to be agential black subjects.

The explanation for the practice of the cutout faces is simple and functional: the studio's ID photo machine produces small prints only in multiples of four. Because customers rarely want more than one or two, it is less expensive and more efficient to make one full-sized image, cut out the standard-size facial portrait, and discard the rest of the image. As Bacigalupo explains, identification photography is ubiquitous in postconflict Uganda—a region that experienced the violence and instability of civil war for more than two decades.³ ID photos are required for access to and across institutional spaces, to secure and maintain employment, to navigate governmental interactions, and to negotiate financial transactions. Here, as elsewhere, the photograph remains a privileged vehicle of veracity and authentication. These faceless portraits register most profoundly through their seriality—a serial image-making practice that, while frequently voluntary, in the majority of cases is in fact compulsory. Indeed, what resonates most emphatically throughout the series is the recurring presence of a curious detail of compulsion: a blazer required for banking transactions and applications at Barclays Bank.

The exhibit could be viewed as a prime example of the type of serial art championed by artists such as Sol Lewitt or the “ready-mades” problematized by Marcel Duchamp. As Lewitt famously maintained, the creator of



serial art is neither the author nor the agent of the work, but is more of “a clerk cataloging the results of his premise.”⁴ Yet the seriality of *Gulu Real Art Studio* is not Bacigalupo’s artistic creation. The seriality of these images is the product of their photographic genre: identification photography. The work is a serial installation of a serialized object, for identification photography is defined by two primary attributes: it is required and it is serially and sequentially (re)produced. They are photographs created to validate and verify identity as a uniform set of multiples intended to produce an aggregate image of a group of individuals.

The seriality imposed on the Gulu sitters was required as part of the neoliberal economic structures created after the years of war and unrest that have plagued Uganda since the outbreak of civil war in the 1980s. Nongovernmental organizations, international aid organizations, and corporate financial institutions mushroomed in the region during the thirty-plus years of this ongoing crisis, as part of a multinational push to resuscitate and bring security to the region. Visual authentication was compulsory for filing claims not only to provide financial support, but also to seek restitution for loss or damage. Many of the sitters interviewed by Bacigalupo recount journeys from miles away to the studio to purchase identification photos for aid, microfinance loans, passports, or opening bank accounts and filing compensation claims.⁵

Gulu Real Art Studio assembles these images as a series defined not by a unifying attribute; they produce instead patterns of similarity that yield multiplicity and difference. The seriality that defines them constructs an open set of identifications and visualizes the articulated identity of African Diasporic subjects. Like other blacks in the diaspora, these internally displaced Africans forge their identities in and through difference, rather than as sameness or unity. The seriality that characterizes this collection diverges from traditional forms of serial photography. Departing from the concept of seriality most often associated with serial photography where the serial production of images functions to constitute an aggregate group, *Gulu Real Art Studio* deploys seriality in ways that fracture and fragment the notion of a unified subject by creating a living archive of images that foregrounds difference as the core of African Diasporic identity.

The group of African subjects in these photos is in no way aggregate. When displayed together, the seriality of these “leftover” images registers in dissonance with the uniformity and anonymity that the ID photo so effortfully strives to achieve. These images resonate well beyond the frames of the cutout faces. The irreverent, intimate, and off-putting forms of (dis)embodiment they stage just below the intended frame of the photo play with difference in ways that defer the meaning of photographic identification and that contest the forms of uniformity, homogeneity, and governmentality that identity photos seek to impose on their subjects. Their complexly mundane performances of everyday life telegraph aspirations to dignity and futurity in postconflict Uganda that register in profound ways in these images.

Do faceless images emit sound? If so, at what frequencies do they register? If not, what can we apprehend in and through their muteness? The quiet litany of the Gulu cutouts is, paradoxically, deafening. It resonates intensely as an effect of their seriality—the seriality of turquoise ties, navy blue blazers, vividly patterned traditional dresses, and red, white, and blue backdrops. Their litany registers not only through the uniformity prescribed by the strictures of identification photography; it re-sounds in the multiplicity of quotidian practices captured in the extended frames of these castaway photos in a chorus of quiet frequencies. Engaging these frequencies requires us not only to read these images, but also to listen to the sonic dimensions through which they also register.

I’ve been listening to images for years now. In *Image Matters*, listening to images meant attending to the musical patterns, rhythms, and registers enacted in vernacular photographs of black European communities. My listening practices focused on the affective registers of black family photography; on how and why such photos touch and move people both physically and affectively; and on excavating the gendered narratives of diaspora captured in images of communities, often overlooked in many scholarly accounts. My image-listening practices began in 2007 at the City

Archives in Birmingham, England, where I started listening because I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of images I encountered in a collection of found photographs of Birmingham's postwar Afro-Caribbean community.

The Ernest Dyche Collection is an archive of hundreds of photographs, negatives, and ephemera recovered en masse from the Ernest Dyche Photography Studios in an area of the city known as Balsall Heath. From the late 1940s through the early 1980s when it closed, the Dyches were the photographers of choice for many members of the city's largely working-class Afro-Caribbean community (as well as many in the South Asian and Irish migrant communities that also settled in Birmingham), who commissioned portraits to keep and to send to loved ones both in the United Kingdom and in the diaspora. These images were both material and affective objects of diasporic connection that instantiated practices of attachment, belonging, and relation between sitters and their recipients.

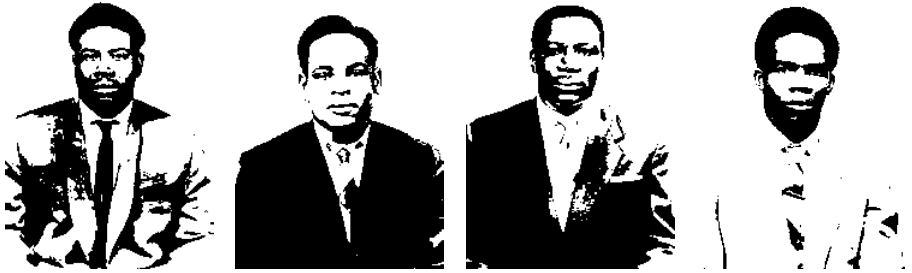
Amid the hundreds of images of this community recovered from the Dyche studio that I encountered at the Birmingham City Archives, there was one set of images I both literally and figuratively "overlooked." They were images I had scanned and reviewed like so many others in the vast collection of artifacts recovered from the Dyche studio. Yet these were images I decided, at the time, to intentionally ignore. To me, they were historically, sensorially, and affectively flat. They were images that, at the time, neither affected nor moved me. They said nothing, told no stories, and gave me no insight into the interiority of their subjects or their historical contexts. The photographs in question share the same archival and diasporic history as the collection of images that initially inspired me to think and theorize images through their sonic qualities. But these photographs command a different kind of attention and a different kind of listening. Viewing them in relation to the Gulu cutouts shifted my encounter with these photos. They are images I have returned to and see quite differently today. They are archetypically quiet photos, yet they are photos that ruminate loudly on practices of diasporic refusal, fugitivity, and futurity.



Quiet Photos, Fugitive Practices

A black man stares down a camera. Full frontal, with shoulders squared and lips pursed. Sullen or solemn; glaring, glowering, or merely dismissive. Fierce, aggressive, or potentially subdued. Jaws clenched in suppressed rage or resentment? This is a familiar script of a black man's identification photograph. Yet it is a script belied by a smart suit and a skinny tie. Middle-class pretension or dapper gangster? Lapels pressed to perfection, their line is marred only by a casually unbuttoned jacket. Stoic, though not without emotion, the image slides between "honorific" and "repressive" genres of the photographic portrait. The repressive genre of the mug shot and identification photos was historically used to archive and categorize criminals, mental patients, and colonial Others deemed deviant or pathological. The honorific "middle-class" portrait aspired to or proclaimed bourgeois respectability and social status. Here, however, the line between them is not quite so clear.

Neither silent nor inaudible, these photographs resonate just below the



threshold of hearing. They do not speak, but they are not mute. Both honorific and repressive, these portraits are command performances of a very specific kind—performances dictated by crown and country of their subjects and citizens. They are passport photos, images that strive to enunciate respectability and aspiration, albeit within highly regulated regimes of social and geographic mobility. They are photographs that engendered new circuits of movement, relation, and dwelling that reshaped the post-war culture of the Black Atlantic. They are some of the least audible and, for many, most ordinary of photos. To me, these sublimely quiet images enunciate an aspirational politics that are accessible at the lowest of frequencies—frequencies that hum and vibrate between and beyond the leather binding and governmental pages to which they were intended to be affixed.

While the passport records the circuits of movement of individuals in transit, these photos, freed from the frame of a leather passbook, exceed the transliteration of sites of entry and exit in stamps of date and place. Passport photos are steeped in history and memory as images invested with the power to create new lives and histories. They are images that transmit their sitters' hopes and dreams prior to travel, along with the journeys these documents made possible. They register a transnational circuit of negotiations of transit, passage, and connection mediated by the state, family, and community. Scholarly histories of the passport recount the deep entanglement of this document with the increasing need of states to track the movement of citizens, identify those who belong,



and exercise control over populations by certifying some and excluding others. As a technology used to regulate mobility and exercise control over citizens and subjects, the passport is characterized by Lesley Higgins and Marie-Christine Leps as “emblematic of governmentality,” as an instrument of biopower that

targets the life of the one and the many, of the population as a whole and of each individual. It works not only through laws and regulations securing the biological, economic and political health of the nation, but also through the fostering of individual pleasures and passions, desires and ambitions—our very sense of who we are.⁶

In spite of the history of the passport’s emergence as what Lily Cho has called “a document of suspicion”⁷ issued by the state and used for population surveillance, the passport photo has an equally significant lower frequency. As Craig Robertson notes, the logics of classification, evidence, and authenticity that made the passport such an effective archi-

val technology and investigative modality also privileged these documents as the basis of a retrievable state memory — “an objective, mobile memory that reduced dependence on the recall of specific individuals.”⁸ But how is the passport photo implicated in this investigative modality? Are these images inseparable from the regimes of state regulation and surveillance of the documents for which they were made? Put simply, is the passport photo reducible to a mere function of the passport?

Returning to the photographs we have viewed, it is useful to disaggregate the passport from the photograph in order to discern their alternative enactments of black futurity and transfiguration. The archival technology of these photos is less instrumental, less regulatory, and less bureaucratic than the history of the passport might lead us to believe. For we must remember that our encounter with this collection of images is structured neither by the state nor by the mobility of the passport itself. Like the Gulu cutouts, they too are found photographs—in this case, images recovered by an archivist from the Birmingham City Archives, in boxes, on floors, and on the shelves of what remained of the Dyche studio when it was discovered unexpectedly in 1990. They are photos produced with the intent of inclusion in passports that never found their way to their pages, as duplicates of the images that served this function. They are not photos that journeyed back and forth across the Atlantic. These are images left behind or not chosen. They are photos that stayed in the studio and dwell in the archive. They are quiet, yet anything but silent.

What forms of futurity are made both visible and audible through quiet, “orphaned” photos that never left the studio and never traveled or circulated in the bureaucratic, regulatory regimes for which they were intended? Rather than a punitive document of constraint, for individuals like the postwar Caribbean migrants imaged in these photographs, the regulatory regime of the passport was both an affective and political circuit that facilitated their transfiguration of Britishness. It is a transfiguration that materializes in these photos not as a statement of facts or as a narrative record of transit or mobility.

The quiet frequencies of futurity these images make audible were a



concrete reverberation of the waves of reverse migration initiated by the British Nationality Act (BNA) of 1948. Hailed as “the formal mechanism that legitimated the transformation of the United Kingdom into a multi-racial society,”⁹ the 1948 BNA built on the foundation laid by the BNA of 1914, which established equal standards for naturalization throughout the Empire and Commonwealth.¹⁰ Unlike the 1914 act, which had little significant impact on colonial migration to the United Kingdom, the opposite was the case following World War II. Passed in a vastly different economic climate, when the United Kingdom had achieved full employment and was actively recruiting to solve its postwar labor shortage, the 1948 BNA accelerated Caribbean migrants’ active exercise of the privileges of Britishness that the Empire had promised long before.¹¹ As Randall Hansen emphasizes, “Those arriving from the colonies and independent Commonwealth countries landed in the UK as citizens. From a strictly legal point of view, the term ‘Commonwealth immigrant’ is a misnomer; Commonwealth immigrants were citizens exercising the rights of citizenship.”¹²

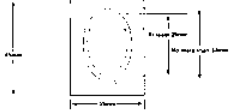
UK Visas and Immigration Photograph Guidance for immigration applications made in the UK (version 07/2013)

The photographs which you have to provide in your applications are taken in the format specified below. These format requirements have been chosen to ensure that your photographs are accepted. The photographs are not to be accepted if they do not meet the requirements below. It is mandatory when an application for a Biometric Immigration Document is made. [Click here](#) for applications which are accepted as a result of the photographs process, but do not meet any of the below-mentioned requirements. If you require any further information, please contact us.

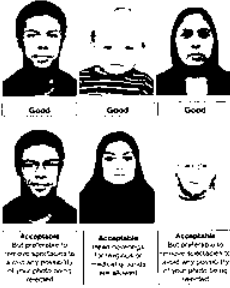
- The photographs must be:**
- taken in colour (photographs of monochrome are not accepted)
 - of your full face and shoulders
 - taken against a plain, light or neutral background
 - 45 millimetres (mm) high x 35mm wide
 - taken in front of a transparent (see the section on photographs in the UK visa code)
 - free from shadows
 - taken with the subject and camera both facing the subject and camera across the front
 - with the subject facing forward (no side shots or the camera)
 - with a neutral expression on the mouth (smile, no frown, neutral, no stare)
 - at least 70% of the face to be visible (e.g. no shadows or hair covering the face)
 - taken with colour, covering the face in general (e.g. no red)
 - with a strong contrast between face and background

[The requirements which apply are mandatory for visa applications. See also \[UKVI website\]\(#\).](#)

- The photographs must also:**
- not be retouched or altered
 - be taken against a plain, light or neutral background (no light or dark areas or shadows)
 - not have any accessories (e.g. glasses, jewellery, headbands, etc.) which obscure the face or distract attention from the subject
 - be free from reflections
 - be head-to-toe (no body or arms or legs visible)
 - be centred on the face with any shading or lines away from the subject's face
 - be clearly identifiable as a human in a passport photo booth. This is not the case if there is any shadow or a human silhouette in the background
 - have the subject's name on the back of the photograph



The photographs below are for guidance only. They provide examples of acceptable photographs. Examples of unacceptable photographs are given on the following page.



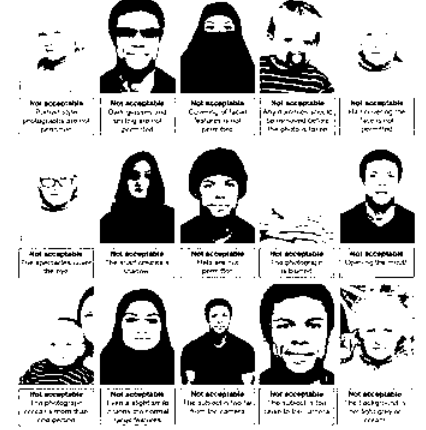
Children

- Their application should specify age and date of birth in the application form and in the questions
- The photographs of children aged five and under should show a clear image that is the same as the passport photo of the child. The photograph should be taken against a plain, light or neutral background. The photograph should be taken in front of a transparent (see the section on photographs in the UK visa code)
- If a child's features under one eye are not visible, the photograph must be taken in a separate application form as a family head photo. In this case, the photograph must not be the same as the photograph used for the application. The photograph must be taken in a separate application form.

If you have any queries about children's photographs, please contact us. The details of the format requirements specified in this guidance document for children's photographs are the same as for the background given below.

Please note that a parent's responsibility to provide acceptable photographs in the format specified in the questions of the form for your application may be affected by the following information on this page. Please read it carefully.

Examples of unacceptable photographs



The frequencies of these images register through their formulaic reproduction of the rigid guidelines of passport photography. The rules dictating what constituted acceptable and unacceptable photographs were intended to produce uniform codes for identifying the masses and equally uniform codes for establishing belonging and exclusion. But this was not solely the domain of the state or a unilateral exercise of biopower. While their neutral expressions and their full frontal poses are a legacy of the mug shot and the anthropometric identification systems of Alphonse Bertillon, the emotionless faces captured in the frames of the state's photographic prescriptions do not reveal downtrodden governmentalized subjects. These were individuals who had trespassed the established relation of metropole and colony and were preparing to invert the Commonwealth's migratory pattern yet again. While the Empire had successfully manufactured an idea of Britishness for all its Commonwealth subjects, of which none were ever intended to partake, these images register proud



West Indians laying claim to this unrequited promise. For them, the passport was indeed a regulatory document, yet it was also an affective repository. But these affects are not captured in the images themselves. We do not “see” them; they require listening instead—for their affects register at a frequency that is felt rather than heard.

The quiet frequencies that reverberate in these images register a failed attempt to control the reappropriation of the passport photo as a vehicle of Black Atlantic transfiguration. These photos were both instrumental and affective conduits of the aspirations of thousands of new Commonwealth migrants who had already arrived and were beginning to contemplate new journeys. Their site of recovery in the Dyche studio positions them at odds with the passport’s intended regulation of Black Atlantic mobility. These photographs—taken not in Kingston, Port of Spain, or Bridgetown, but in Birmingham, in the heart of the British Midlands—register a quiet insistence on forms of diasporic dwelling that demanded the right to come, to go, and to *stay*, as well as to arrive and return over and again. As we will see in chapter 2, diasporic dwelling is not always achieved through the cessation of movement or migration. It requires an exploration of the tensions (both physical and grammatical) between a notion of stillness and stasis and what it means to complicate the distinctions between the two.

Frequency, Futurity, Fugitivity

What is the frequency of the Dyche passport photos? The tensions of diasporic dwelling we encounter in these images are best understood by returning to the definition of frequency and to the vibration of sonic waves that reverberate at variable levels of perception and audibility. My name for their frequency is the quotidian practice of refusal. It is what Fred Moten and Stefano Harney identify as “the refusal to be refused.”¹³ It is what Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou have debated as a “refusal to stay in one’s proper place.”¹⁴ It is a refusal I equate with a striving for freedom that Ruth Wilson Gilmore articulated as “the possibility to live unbounded lives.”¹⁵ The quotidian practice of refusal I am describing is defined less by opposition or “resistance,” and more by a refusal of the very premises that have reduced the lived experience of blackness to pathology and irreconcilability in the logic of white supremacy. Like the concept of fugitivity, *practicing* refusal highlights the tense relations between acts of flight and escape, and creative *practices of refusal*—nimble and strategic practices that undermine the categories of the dominant.

Returning to the photographs, while the passport remains a document of permission, surveillance, and accountability, the fugitivity of these images exceeds this regulatory function. Reprising Hartman, these individuals exploited “the limits of the permissible” and “cleavages of social order” in an effort to inhabit “transient zones of freedom.”¹⁶ Within the closely monitored circuits of imperial mobility created by the BNA, they mobilized the quotidian as their site of refusal—a refusal to remain either on the periphery or contained by the metropole. Their fugitivity consisted of the temerity to pursue fractal and planar lines of mobility that rerouted imperial migration from postcolony back into the heart of metropole, only to invert it again by simultaneously insisting on both movement and dwelling in diaspora.

The fugitivity of these quiet images lies not in their ability to sanction movement, for, extracted from their context, these photos lack this capacity. It lies in the creation of new possibilities for living lives that re-

fused a regulatory regime from which they could not be removed. These images disorder the strict terms of place and personhood dictated by a passport that reduced them to governmentalized subjects of Empire. Their fugitivity is an insistence on being a postcolonial, West Indian, and British subject—a subject governed by the BNA yet unmanageable and profoundly disorderly because of it.

What kinds of gendered performances do these quiet images also capture? What registers at a first order of listening is anonymity. Recovered without identifying records or other supporting documentation, these are nameless men whose biographical details are withheld from us. In the absence of such information, these serial images present a group of anonymous black men. Unless, that is, we attempt to listen rather than merely view them. What registers at a second order are forms of masculinity transmitted through the serial repetition of four suits and four ties. Viewing them, we see attributes of comportment intended to project masculine respectability. Listening attentively to these mundane details means not accepting what we see as the truth of the image. Attending to their lower frequencies means being attuned to the connections between what we see and how it resonates.

A polyphony of quietly audible questions reverberates in these lower frequencies and resonates in tandem with the images from the Gulu Real Art Studio in ways that make it impossible not to probe a related set of queries. Were the suit and tie that each man wears his own? Were these supremely respectable sartorial items borrowed from a friend, supplied by the studio, or owned by the sitter? Were they purchased on this side of the Atlantic, or were they the same suit and tie they arrived in from the West Indies? Were they “Sunday best” or suits spot-cleaned, carefully pressed, and worn every day? Were they suits at all, or jackets only?

The polyphony made audible when listening to these images echoes the accounts of Caribbean migrants who tell stories of dressing up to disembark at Southall or Victoria Station because they had not just landed, they had *arrived*. Listening, rather than simply looking at them, they offer humbling recitations of their search for employment, being forced to accept



positions below their qualifications, as well as stories of discrimination in housing and on job sites that are in no way “visible” in these images. What is equally invisible is the intersectional topography of Balsall Heath that serves as the backdrop to the fugitive lives and quotidian practices against which these individuals sought to image and imagine themselves and their future. That context becomes audible by way of a slight detour through a very different archive of photos that complicates and reframes the fugitive practices of the passport photos we have just viewed.

The images above are not from the Dyche Collection. They were taken between 1966 and 1968 by a photographer and later documentary filmmaker, Janet Mendelsohn, who had come to Birmingham from Boston as a Fulbright Scholar to work with the renowned cultural theorist Stuart Hall at the University of Birmingham’s Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies.

The images are part of an archive of photos shot by Mendelsohn for



a 1969 photo essay, “Varna Road,” about a young sex worker she photographed and became close friends with over a two-year period in Balsall Heath—the same neighborhood in Birmingham at around the same time in the mid-1960s as the passport photos we have just viewed.¹⁷

“Varna Road” was shot on one of the main streets of Balsall Heath, only blocks away from the Dyché studio; the men pictured in this image could have been neighbors or possibly friends of those featured in the passport portraits taken by the Dychés. The surface narrative of these images seems clear: interracial cooperation. An indexical proclamation of neighborhood tolerance, diversity, and solidarity between the police and Birmingham’s “new Commonwealth citizens.” But the photographer’s notation (on the following image) tells a different story: “pimps and a cop on the street.”



From the mid-1950s to the mid-1990s, Balsall Heath was a magnet for many new migrants to Birmingham because of the cheap housing offered by private landlords who often illegally subdivided the larger, Victorian housing stock that marked the neighborhood's past as a formerly middle-class hilltop district of Birmingham, where more affluent residents settled to get away from the pollution of the factories and manufacturing in the city center. Unlike other residents of the city, newly arrived postwar migrants were not eligible for more affordable, subsidized public housing due to residency requirements and long waiting lists. They were forced instead to seek substandard housing from unregulated private landlords. In Balsall Heath, this led to widespread blight in an area that at the time had become targeted for slum clearance by the city government. The neglect of property owners was mirrored by that of the city council and the police, who turned the blind eye to a growing influx of drugs, crime, and, above all, prostitution. In fact, in the period these images were made (just over a decade after the passage of the BNA), Balsall Heath was well on its way to the dubious distinction of being Britain's most notorious red-light district.

When they met in 1966, Mendelsohn's subject, Kathleen, was twenty-three years old and living with the father of her two children in Balsall Heath. She was the fourth of fourteen children born into an Irish immigrant family, and she had grown up in Balsall Heath with her mother and siblings who lived nearby. According to Mendelsohn's notes, Kathleen supported her children and their father, Salim, a British Pakistani who also grew up nearby and whose family lived a few blocks away. A year before publishing the photos, Salim was stabbed to death in a café. In the four years they lived together, they had a two-year-old daughter and a son who was born while Mendelsohn was shooting her photo essay. Mendelsohn's archive contains excerpts from interviews conducted with Kathleen and Salim, their families, friends, and other men and women working in the sex trade on Varna Road. Their comments offer a complicated account of the lives of the individuals in her photos.



“It was me and him living in this house where this girl was, you see. Well, when I first went with this girl—I ran away with her, you know. We both ran away. What we did, we got a room and started doing it. I think he brought me back about three times. Mind you, he was working then, you know. He was working in a biscuit factory and he got the sack. Got another job and then he brought me back about three times. I kept taking off because I thought the money was nice then. In the end he took time off from work looking for me again and got the sack so we just drifted into it together, you know? Or I pulled him.”

“Where we used to live, the people would never guess what I was. They thought I went out canvassing these soap powders round the streets. I used to give them a terrible story. He was a car salesman in town; he used to get a good commission and oh I built up a lovely story for them, you know. Imagine their faces when they read it in the paper. The centre page is his right name and everything. I thought my god if the kids ever see it in school. Splashed all over ‘First Vice Lord Gets Six Months.’”

“I know her’s on the game, I do. I know it for sure, I do. I know it for definitely. If her father were here, he’d kill her. He’d chop her legs off. Her’d have no legs left to walk, her would. But she’s got no call to do it. She was never brought up to lead that kinda life. She weren’t. She was made to do it through Salim. I mean, I live with a man but I live respectable with him.”

“If [my daughter] went on the game, I’d chop her legs off. I would kill her. She’s my daughter, you know. Same as it’d hurt my mother if she knew. Well, she does know now but she don’t know I do it for definite.”

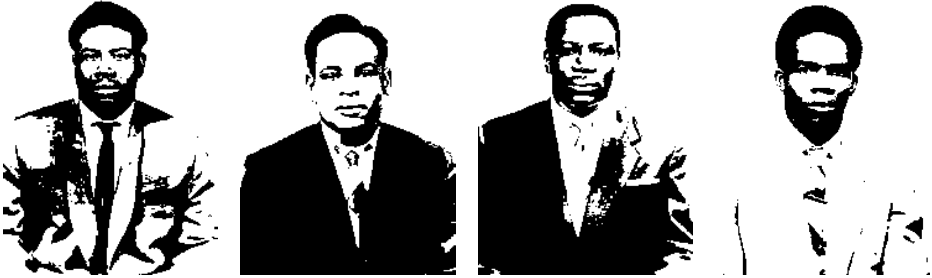
“When [my son] is older, I’ll tell him—look, my life is no good. I don’t know no reading, no nothing. I’m an engineer but I can’t read, so what’s the use to be an engineer? So if he learns properly he could



be a doctor or could be pilot or anything, you know, so that people will say—there is Salim’s son—and I’ll be proud.”¹⁸

Mendelsohn’s archive includes photos of Kathleen’s pregnancy, intimate scenes of her home life with Salim and the children, her mother and siblings, and Salim’s family, as well as photos of their son’s birth. Alongside these photos of their domestic life, Mendelsohn also photographed Salim and Kathleen with others in the trade on the infamous Varna Street, dubbed by one national newspaper at the time as “the wickedest street in Britain.” The photo series, captioned “The Street” in Mendelsohn’s annotations, includes images of the Amsterdam-style sex trade that operated in the abandoned houses on Varna Road and in the clubs along Cox Street, where women sat in windows selling their services.

Against this backdrop, do the passport photos we have just viewed register differently as a consequence of this unexpected stroll just a few



blocks down the road into the broader social geography of Balsall Heath? Do the same sartorial echoes suddenly perplex us? Do suits and skinny ties still perform respectability, or do they now register “swagger”—or possibly both? Attending to the lower frequencies of these images, we must ask whether they depict different diasporic subjects or whether we are encountering instead different strategies of diasporic survival. For our passport sitters could also have been the “brothers on the block”—brothers who were also lovers, husbands, fathers, and sons, perhaps maintaining children, siblings, and extended families. What were their respective strategies for survival and what were their possibilities for futurity? Do we “see” them in these images? Or must we expand the sensorial register of the image to perceive them? And what becomes audible in them when the practice of listening is not just about hearing, but an attunement to different levels of photographic audibility, many of which register at lower

frequencies through their ability to move us? Attuning oneself to such frequencies and affects is more than simply looking and more than visual scrutiny. To look or to watch is to apprehend at only one sensory level. Listening requires an attunement to sonic frequencies of affect and impact. It is an ensemble of seeing, feeling, being affected, contacted, and moved beyond the distance of sight and observer.

The frequency of these very public images is the polar opposite of the passport photos that paradoxically constitute their visual supplement. Their frequency is the minor tenor of street life. They conjure the sounds of catcalls and curb crawlers, car horns and club music. They make audible the cries of mothers on doorsteps and children in the yard. But my juxtaposition of these two different but intimately related sets of images also gives voice to an insistent question: why? Why make this detour, and how do I reconcile it with my investment in a black feminist future lived in the tense of the now?

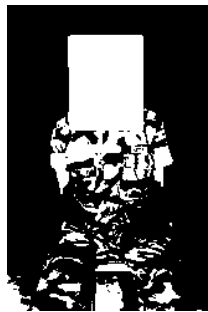
Put simply, I do so because I must. As a black feminist, it is not an option to ignore or erase these potentially troubling depictions of black masculinity and the less-than-respectable lives black and brown men also lived in Birmingham, only blocks away from the site of production of other, sublimely respectable images. As a black feminist, I must resist the lures and seductions of an easy reading of any of these images: an easy reading that designates some black men as upstanding, and others as fallen; or one that accepts the labeling of them as “pimps” in ways that render a simple dichotomy of victim and perpetrator. Indeed, it is imperative for us all to resist such easy readings; to reckon instead with the complex intimate economies of sex and sex work that such images depict; and to grapple with the equally complicated roles black men play—as “pimps” and “johns,” lovers and friends, brothers and fathers—within this economy.¹⁹

This detour is an essential juxtaposition because what we apprehend when we listen to both sets of images together is a common thread: desire—a desire to be seen, to be photographed, to be visible, and to matter. In each case, it is a desire to live a future that is now, because of the

precarity of black quotidian life wherein tomorrow is fleeting and often too risky to wait for or imagine. Those desires were sometimes enabled by fugitive performances of respectability; sometimes they were lived illicitly, through alternate economies of sex and desire. Listening to this ensemble of images together registers a dissonant yet resonant refrain of black futurity that allows us to encounter them much differently. Their futurity is the quiet, yet intense fugitivity of Black Atlantic transfiguration—a quotidian practice of refusing to stay put or to stay in their designated place, and a refusal to accept the rejection of and limitations on black futurity many ultimately confronted in the United Kingdom.

Attending to a stereoscopic and stereophonic juxtaposition of these images illuminates a different dimension of the sonic registers of the passport photo. On the one hand, they amplify the extent to which the BNA of 1948 was an invitation never intended to be extended and never intended to be accepted.²⁰ On the other hand, this archive of passport photos of postwar Caribbean migrants to Britain, found in a defunct studio in Birmingham and now resident in the city archives, registers not so much through what we see—the faces, postures, and poses of subjects seeking permission for transit and border crossing. They register instead at an ambient frequency that transmits the utopian dreams and diasporic memories of those who came, nevertheless, in search of betterment and the possibility of new forms of black futurity. Theirs was the dream of a future beyond Empire they sought to realize right smack in the heart of the metropole itself. The hum of these images is a quotidian practice of refusal that exceeds the sayability of words. Their transfiguration was a transformation of nameless colonial masses into a generation of black British citizen-subjects with planar, rhizomorphic, and fractal mobility.²¹

Returning to the images with which this chapter began, the Dyche and Mendelsohn photos register at a similarly low frequency as the Gulu cutouts. While the transfigurative politics of the cutouts were structured neither by the rigidity of the passport photo nor by an inverted postcolonial migration, their aspirations to dignity, humanity, and futurity in post-conflict Uganda are instantiated in equally profound ways in these images.



Both Gulu and Balsall Heath were sites of diasporic arrival and transfiguration made differentially visible or wholly erased in each of the respective genres of identification photography their residents were required to produce. In a city riven by the violence of decades of civil war, many of the faceless individuals photographed in the Gulu Real Art Studio were people who had been driven out of their homes miles away who found shelter in Gulu. Their portraits enunciate quotidian claims to survival, resilience, and possibility in the aftermath of violence. Similarly, Balsall Heath was also a place of struggle and survival, a complex site for the convergence of exigency and aspiration. Like the cutouts, they make these claims not visually, through absent faces and expressions, but at a much lower, infrasonic frequency.

What is the frequency of these images? Quiet. A quiet hum full of reverb and vibrato. Not always perceptible to the human ear, we feel it more in the throat. To look at these images is to see genre and form. To look at them is to look through their sitters and see function and format, to “oversee” them in ways in which black people have been erased and overseen for centuries. To listen to them is to be attuned to their unsayable truths, to perceive their quiet frequencies of possibility—the possibility to inhabit a future as unbounded black subjects. Listening to these images gives us access to something much more mediated and perhaps far more powerful: the hum of utopian dreams and diasporic aspiration. It is a hum that resonates the unsayable truths of black folks at the lower frequencies of quiet photography.

PANTOUM BEGINNING AND ENDING WITH THORNS

Because of the way a border on a map twists into thorns
my father stood in line in a ruined country with ruined men.
We were footnotes on charred parchment. The boundaries, lost
at the precipice of a war, shifting on the hour in spliced histories.

My father stood in line in a ruined country with ruined men,
and what for? Did he imagine the desert he would bring us to?
At the precipice of a war, shifting on the hour in spliced histories,
the call to leave home throbbed inside him. Urgent pulses—

And what for? Did he imagine the desert he would bring us to?
Its thirsty and abandoned towns? There was a fire spreading within—
the call to leave home throbbed inside. Urgent pulses
crossed and uncrossed like tributaries on freshly inked maps.

In thirsty and abandoned towns, there was a fire spreading within
so he took us away because the country was ruled by swords
which crossed and uncrossed like tributaries on freshly inked maps.
And the guns would sound all night like feast days of saints.

He took us away because the country was ruled by swords
and men emblazoned with chevrons and pins.
And the guns would sound all night like feast days of saints
but really, there was more silence. There was worry and fear

And men emblazoned with chevrons and pins
would draw black Xes over places they'd conquered.
Really. Then more silence. Then worry and fear.
The flies would sing their hymnals in procession around the dead.

The black Xes over places now conquered.
Maps of provinces, cities, family lines drawn and redrawn.
The flies singing their hymnals in procession around the dead
and my father with a ticket to flee because home wouldn't let us stay.

Maps of provinces, cities—family lines drawn and redrawn
into travelogues and diaries. Into stories passed in the night
like my father with a ticket to flee because home wouldn't let us stay.
Hum of the plane engine. Hum of idling car. Hum of the outboard motor.

Into travelogues and diaries. Into stories passed in the night,
we were footnotes on a charred parchment. The borders lost
to the hum of planes, of idling cars, hum of outboard motors
because of the way the line on a map twists into thorns.

— Oliver de la Paz

Precarious Politics

The Activism of “Bodies That Count” (Aligning with Those That Don’t) in Palestine’s Colonial Frontier

REMA HAMMAMI

It was the day they were clearing the villagers of Mufaqara from their land. The soldiers were pushing and shoving people around, hauling off their belongings and dumping them. . . . The children screaming as their homes were being bulldozed, people trying to save a few of their belongings, people who barely had anything. That day I felt totally depressed. Defeated. You ask yourself, where is the world? Where is the press? There was no one there. No one saw what was happening to us. That was the moment I realized that we were totally alone.

—HISHAM, leader of the Popular Resistance Committee of Southern Hebron Hills / Masafer Yatta

This essay focuses on a particular site of struggle and strategy of activism that involves the coming together of intelligible and unintelligible bodies in an attempt to resist the necropolitics of Israeli settler colonialism in the West Bank / Palestine. The strategy of building solidarities with “bodies that count” is analyzed in relation to the way Israeli sovereign power and imperial geopolitics operate to distribute precarity unevenly both across and within Palestinian space in the West Bank, relegating the Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta to a zone of hyperprecarity and elimination. As such, in this zone, the struggle of the communities has become centered on the possibility of existence itself. The analysis here focuses on how the active solidarities of grievable bodies (those recognized by sovereign power as rights-bearing subjects, or indeed as fully human—here Israelis and Euro-Americans) entering this zone attempt to produce countervisibilities and connection in the face of the

erasure and isolation deployed by Israeli colonial violence. In contrast to the wider literature on “protective accompaniment” that tends to foreground the voices and agency of white, western subjects in their narratives of these types of activisms, here I reverse the usual order and put Palestinians from the communities at the center.

Imperial Peace / Colonial Space

In 1999, at the height of the Oslo “peace process” between Israel and the PLO, the Israeli military (Israeli Defense Forces, or IDF) issued an evacuation order against the twelve Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank. The military had designated the land on which the communities existed in an arid and isolated part of the southern Hebron Hills an IDF training area, “Firing Zone 918,” and the residents of the communities were charged with “illegally” residing there. Over the period of October/November 1999, the IDF systematically expelled more than seven hundred families from their lands, demolished their homes and cisterns, and poured cement down their wells.¹

Over the course of the 1990s within the settler colonial cartography of the West Bank and the Imperial geopolitics of the Oslo “peace process,”² the villages of Masafer Yatta had become reterritorialized into a zone of hyperprecarity known in diplomatic language as “Area C.” The 1994 Oslo Accords subdivided the once seamless territory of the occupied West Bank into three zones marked by varying degrees of Palestinian “autonomy” from Israeli control. Palestinian towns and cities (Area A) became zones of Palestinian Authority (PA) “full responsibility,” and PA “security control” over the population within those areas was the signal mark of “autonomy.” Palestinian villages within their municipal boundaries became categorized as “Area B,” zones in which the PA had civilian responsibility over the population, while Israel continued to hold full rights of “security” control over them. The remaining 64 percent of the land, the lightly populated territory surrounding the 166 separate islands of Areas A and B, was deemed “Area C”—the area that crucially contains both the majority of Palestinian farm and pasturage lands, along with Israeli settlements and IDF military installations. To this day, Area C remains under direct Israeli civil and military control and is where the Israeli military is the literal sovereign. Through this violent process of reterritorialization, Palestinians in towns (now Area A) and villages (Area B) of the West Bank were brought under a form of imperial trusteeship under the tutelage of a global assemblage of peace and state-building actors and institutions that mediated the direct

necropolitics of Israeli sovereign rule, while those inhabiting Area C found themselves plunged into a zone of abandonment on what was now Israel's settler colonial frontier. One Area C resident described it this way:

Look around you, under that tent is the house we built—two small rooms with no doors or windows, of course without a permit, that's why we covered it in a tent—to hide it. They came last week and said there is a demolition order on it. . . . And [laughs] this tent we're sitting in—there's a demolition order on it too. What's there to destroy? Some iron poles and a tarp! They've even made our access to the breeze illegal—they don't want us to get any air! (Um Bahjat, al Mufaqrara)

In Area C approximately two hundred thousand Palestinians live in 230 scattered communities, side by side with three hundred thousand Israeli settlers in 135 settlements and another 100 “settlement outposts.”³ The majority are small herding and farming communities and Bedouins who often do not have the basics of modern infrastructure (water, electricity, accessible roads) and also lack the most basic social services (schools and health clinics). Housing is often “temporary” and includes caves, shacks, and tents. This dearth of modernity is due not to “underdevelopment” but to active “de-development” by the Israeli authorities, who prevent even the most basic forms of permanent construction and thwart all attempts at creating the infrastructure for “livable life.”⁴ Along with the constant surveillance/destruction of the communities' attempts at making an infrastructure of existence by the Israeli military, there is the constant threat of and actual “frontier violence” undertaken by settlers against them. Humanitarian and human rights reports regularly describe a range of Israeli mechanisms that lead to what they call the population's “vulnerability to displacement,” including restrictive planning and zoning; house demolitions and mass eviction; the creation of military firing zones and closed military areas; access restrictions to land, water, and pasturage; and the near constancy of settler violence.⁵

Necropolitics, Settler Colonialism, Erasure

The ramified system in place in South Hebron, like everywhere else in the Occupied Territories, exists for one and only one purpose—to steal land and to make the owners of this land disappear. Everything, and everybody, on the Israeli side is fully mortgaged to this single aim.

—DAVID SHULMAN, Israeli Ta'ayush activist

In his seminal article “Necropolitics,” Achille Mbembe extends and transforms Giorgio Agamben’s theorization of the state of exception from the camp to the colony: “The colony is the location par excellence where the controls and guarantees of the judicial order can be suspended—the zone where the violence of the state of exception is deemed to operate in the service of ‘civilization.’”⁶ By focusing on the colony as a formative site of the state of exception, Mbembe brings racism and its translation into different economies of violence over bodies and territory into the genealogy of contemporary forms of governmentality and the biopolitical. In this reading, the colony and sovereign power are coconstitutive: in the colony a permanent state of emergency reigns where law is displaced by arbitrary and discretionary rule and where in the management of native populations modern biopolitics is superseded by its constituent logic of necropolitics. Or, as Hunaida Ghanim puts it in relation to the native, “From the moment that power is directed to destroying, eliminating, and dismantling their group, the decision about their life becomes a decision about their death.”⁷

In understanding the specific form that colonial necropolitics takes in the context of Masafer Yatta, it is useful to read Mbembe in conjunction with Patrick Wolfe’s more historicized account of settler colonialisms. Wolfe has noted that the deep logic of settler colonialism is the elimination of the indigenous population in order to settle their land, a process that has adaptively involved different technologies of violence across different colonial formations and historical periods (such as assimilation or mass displacement—and not solely genocide).⁸ As a structure that unfolds through time (and space), elimination is also shaped by the balance of power between indigenous populations and the colonizing power.⁹

In Israel’s case, the technologies of “elimination” through mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing that marked its founding in 1948 gave way to the modalities of military occupation after the 1967 capture of the West Bank and Gaza. As Richard Falk noted, Palestinians “find themselves being colonized by an alien power against their will and under the pretext of ‘belligerent occupation.’”¹⁰ In the contemporary West Bank, these logics are now refracted through the differential “protection” offered by the presence of what constitutes an imperial trusteeship over the Palestinian Bantustans of Areas A and B, operating within the wider logics of Israeli settler colonial necropolitics—producing what Mbembe describes as “late colonial occupation”: “a concatenation of multiple powers: disciplinary, biopolitical and necropolitical.”¹¹ Thus, in Area C, where the Israeli military is the literal sovereign, the logics of

elimination are free to unfold relatively unimpeded; there modern biopolitical techniques (urban planning, land use, residency procedures) in the service of necropolitics, bound by military “law,” operate in tandem with the frontier violence of the colony’s shock troops: its settlers. And as Wolfe notes, there “the murderous activities of the frontier rabble constitute the colonial state’s principle means of expansion.”¹²

Hyperprecarity / Nongrievable Life

That precariousness is an ontological condition common to all life is the starting point for Judith Butler’s arguments for situating contemporary ethical politics around a recognition of mutual vulnerability and interdependence. Precariousness refers to and follows from our social existence as bodily beings, always dependent on others for the needs of our survival. Precarity refers to the political conditions that follow when these needs of survival are not addressed: it “designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death.”¹³ For Butler, precarity also refers to the situation of populations forcibly exposed to forms of state-sanctioned military violence whose condition is exacerbated by the fact that their only option is to seek protection from the very state that targets them with violence.¹⁴ To highlight this twofold condition of precarity, the specific political condition induced by Israeli necropolitics in Masafer Yatta (and for Palestinians in Area C generally), I refer to its situation as hyperprecarity.¹⁵

The differential distribution of precarity across populations relies powerfully on representational regimes that delimit whose lives are worthy of sustenance and protection and whose lives are perceived as disposable or not even human. The distinction between lives that are recognizable, as constituting the human “us” in dominant Western (and colonial) norms, Butler (building from her social ontology of precariousness) refers to as “grievable,” in contrast to those “ungrievable” others who are made unintelligible by the racist operations of these same norms. The loss of a Palestinian life is grieved by those intimately close and often by those farther away. But a Palestinian life, though grievable within its own community, becomes ungrievable across ontological divides that foreclose it from being recognized as human—a process that is innately political. To grieve someone thus moves from being a personal experience of loss to becoming the basis for sustained political acts of recognition and mutual interdependence. As will become clear in what follows,

these ethics are centrally embodied in the forms of resistance politics at work in Masafer Yatta.

To Exist Is to Resist

To get in the way of settler colonization, all the native has to do is stay at home.

—DEBORAH BIRD ROSE IN WOLFE, “Settler Colonialism”

The people here are doing their own story—they are really saving themselves. We are a part of this story, but really it’s the people, the communities themselves.

—ANNA, Italian activist, Operation Dove

The subhead above, “To Exist Is to Resist,” is the slogan of the Popular Resistance Committee in Masafer Yatta, in the South Hebron Hills. Given the settler colonial logics of elimination, as the slogan points out, simply continuing to exist as bodies and communities in Masafer Yatta is itself a resistant act. But maintaining existence is not simply about staying put—to do so in such circumstances results in the ongoing erosion of the infrastructure necessary for “livable life.” As such, over three decades the constant and persistent efforts of the villagers themselves to create this infrastructure has been the core of resistance. The everyday and constant work of just “being” is made up of the multitude of acts of making life possible in and through the everyday. The persistent acts that make home and livelihoods, of going out to plant and harvest wheat, of herding sheep in the hills, collecting water in cisterns, planting trees and harvesting olives, of children walking miles to the closest schools, of men and women continuing to marry, of women to give birth and raise children—when targeted with elimination become simultaneously the underlying logic of resistance to it. One might call this a politics of subaltern persistence.

As Butler has noted, an awareness of one’s own precarity leads to an acknowledgment of one’s dependence on others: “Precariousness implies living socially, that is, the fact that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other. It implies exposure both to those we know and to those we do not know; a dependency on people we know, or barely know, or know not at all.”¹⁶ For situated communities of hyperprecarity, this awareness that one’s survival depends on so many others is an everyday doxa, and in Masafer Yatta it probably has deep historical roots in surviving in and through the harsh environment. Even before the occupation and the settlements came, this was

always a vulnerable project that could not be accomplished without mutual dependence and an ethic of mutual care with both neighbors and strangers. It is this mutuality that has created the identity of “community” and actually instantiates it in the absence of the usual mechanisms of state municipal designation or public buildings. When this long-standing doxa of interdependence becomes faced with the logics and mechanisms of settler colonial elimination, it becomes politicized. In Masafer Yatta one constantly hears a statement to the effect of “My struggle is not just mine”—that is, I am not struggling to save only my home; I am struggling for my community’s existence, because without it my home means nothing.

But this politics of subaltern persistence was ultimately no match against the fully unbridled logics of elimination that became so brutally clear in the events of 1999. In Hisham’s description of those events in the opening quote of this essay, he points to two crucial absences he identified in that moment that had enabled the villagers’ everyday struggles of creating livability to be so easily defeated: visibility (“no one saw what was happening to us”) and connection (“There was no one there”). The logics of elimination both rely on and produce differential visibilities through which the colony can be instantiated and normalized and the native’s presence can be erased.¹⁷ Settlements are actively visibilized in space in terms of both location (on hills) and architecture (red roofs).¹⁸ They are marked on regular road maps and planners’ charts and are signposted on the roads and highways.¹⁹ By contrast, the Palestinian communities of Masafer Yatta are actively invisibilized—they do not exist on maps and plans, nor are they marked by road signs. To locate them one has to look for the markers of the neighboring Israeli settlement. Their residents are forced to build “invisible” homes—to live in the caves of their grandfathers or, if above ground, to keep buildings low and squat or hidden under tarps.

The violence involved in this process is differentially visibilized as well: that inflicted on the native in the process of rendering the “empty landscape” for colonization remains unseen, while the violence incurred by soldiers and settlers is made (spectacularly) visible and deployed in a politics of mourning that further fuels the logics of elimination.²⁰ As Hisham puts it, “Look, we all know how the occupation works. They want to evict us and at the same time they use violence to try and make us react violently. If we’re violent, it’s easy for them—they can just get rid of us.”

But more fundamentally, this regime of visibility rests on the same grounds as the colony: the ontologies and their attendant epistemologies that mark off Palestinians as racialized noncitizen subjects/others from the rights-bearing

Israeli citizen subjects who are their colonizers. Captured within these imperial/colonial frames of being and representation, Palestinian personhood is unintelligible, Palestinian suffering is invisible, and regular demands for rights and recognition are already foreclosed.²¹ Regular modes of political resistance also become absorbed into and occluded by these operations of power, reducing them to forms of self-defeat.²²

As such, the isolation that Hisham speaks of was not simply a practical political state, but a more profoundly ontological one. Thus, finding a politics of the possible meant finding ways to emerge into the intelligible by creating forms of countervisibility and connection that could open up a geopolitical space in which the struggle might break into realms of recognition/recognizability.²³

Enabling Existence: Alter-Geopolitics and the Practice of Possible Resistance

Before they came, our struggle was just going round and round in circles.

—HISHAM

The communities' strategies to create countervisibility have centered on actively seeking and making linkages with intelligible bodies—with those who are recognized by sovereign power as grievable,²⁴ or with what Jennifer Hyndman has called “bodies that count.”²⁵ Struggles that foreground connections between grievable and un-grievable bodies are what Sara Koopman has called alter-geopolitics.²⁶ She locates this in the tradition of insights from feminist geopolitics that emphasize bodily practices and the making of everyday securities in the face of militarized violence. For her, “groups doing alter-geopolitics are making connections, often across distance and difference, which focus on the safety of bodies (often by moving bodies) and ground geopolitics in everyday life.”²⁷

Koopman writes about alter-geopolitical struggle within the framework of “protective accompaniment,” a growing form of global human rights-based political practice that brings First World bodies into sites of armed violence to both monitor human rights violations and “protect” human rights workers. “Protective accompaniment” originated in the Indian nonviolent struggles for independence and the American civil rights movement, continued during the Latin American “Dirty Wars” starting in the 1980s, and has persisted into the present, and it also encompasses other contemporary locations of violent conflict, such as Sri Lanka.²⁸ Though the best-established global groups are

often animated by religious or secular ethics of nonviolence, all frame their work within a discourse of human rights. Theorizing the politics of protective accompaniment is still in its nascence. But at the center of debates that have emerged among activists themselves is the obvious problematic of whether deploying racial privilege and hierarchies of corporeal value against sovereign violence simply reproduces the same racial and corporeal distinctions that the sovereign violence rests on.²⁹

The practice of “alter-geopolitics” in Masafer Yatta involves some of the tactics (and dilemmas) of protective accompaniment but ultimately encompasses a wider array of practices (and bodies) in confrontation with the nature of Israeli sovereign power operating there. Taken together, these practices have attempted to create forms of connection and countervisibilities in an attempt to “internationalize” the space of Masafer Yatta in ways that can open a space in which the ongoing struggle for existence can become a struggle for recognition.

Grievable Bodies, Visibilities, Cameras

Rather than detail the history of how “bodies that count” came into the space of Masafer Yatta joining the communities’ struggle, I want to concentrate on how the presence of these grievable bodies works in this particular space. What types of visibility and connection does their presence produce? Does activism based on placing grievable bodies next to ungrievable ones simply reproduce the same hierarchies of corporeal value that it depends on? Or does it and can it work to break them down?

There has been more than a decade of actions, links, and everyday practices of alter-geopolitical activism in Masafer Yatta. A rich and diverse network of activists and solidarity workers from an array of backgrounds have linked themselves with the struggle for existence by the communities. The vast majority have actually spent time in the communities, some staying as part of ongoing projects of accompaniment, others routinely coming to participate in a variety of ongoing actions. People from the villages have an extensive vocabulary of acronyms for the range of groups that have spent time there (ISM, Ta’ayush, CPT, etc.) as well as human rights and other organizations (B’tselem, ACRI, COMET, etc.) that have become part of the dense network of actions and relationships. A wide array of reports, blogs, and videos produced by this range of actors documenting events and actions taken in the communities have been produced and circulated through the Internet. Some communities

(al Mufaqrara and Susiya) now have their own dedicated websites. In practical terms, both activists and the community distinguish between the everyday bodily work of accompanying shepherds to their fields, or children to the school, versus the role bodies play in moments of mass action. Israeli and international activists are involved in both types of accompaniment. Although Israeli activists were the first to come to the villages, it is international activists who form a permanent presence of living in the communities.³⁰

The main aim of everyday accompaniment is to enable shepherds and farmers to access lands that settlers through the use of violence have tried to deny them entry to and that the military enforces. By denying the communities access, settlers advance their own goals in two ways. First, the already meager economy of the villagers becomes unsustainable, leading them to abandon their communities in search of a living elsewhere. And, second, if settlers can keep them from accessing grazing and other lands under the law of the colonial sovereign for over a period of ten years, these lands will revert to the state—and therefore the colony:

The conflict is over the land; the shepherd's lands and the farming land—the settler wants them both. So it's up to us to make sure that the shepherd is on his land and the farmers are on their land every day. The conflict is every day. Everyone is involved. If I go on my own [to the land], I'm weak but if I go with others then we can work on the land and stop the settler from taking it. (Hisham)

I suppose you could say I work appointments and emergencies [laughs]. So the shepherds they call me, we are on twenty-four-hour call, and say, "I am going with my sheep to this valley tomorrow." Almost all of the sites, settlers try and stop them or the military does. So that's an appointment—we go with the shepherd to that valley, create a presence and monitor. Then there are the emergencies, I get a call that a shepherd is somewhere and settlers are coming—so we try and get there as quickly as possible. (Anna, Italian accompanier, Operation Dove)

The act of going to the land in defiance of settler threats and the military has become the logic of a persistent everyday activism that through constant repetitive performance attempts to keep remaking and securing livable space for the community, and prevents its reterritorialization as a settlement. But to move one step beyond this—to create "the new" (or, more often, re-create it)—takes forms of "mass action." Only through a mass of bodies in action

together can the physical infrastructure that marks existence and collectivity be (re-)created. Here, the Palestine Solidarity Project reports one such action:

On Saturday, May 26th, 2012, locals together with more than thirty-five Palestinian, Israeli and international activists built a third single story pre-fabricated building in the village of Um Faqara [al Mufaqrara], South Hebron Hills. . . . The construction of the three new structures was organized by the Popular Committee and activists with the aim of peacefully resisting the Israeli occupation by affirming the right to live of the community of al Mufaqrara.³¹

In both situations there are multiple ways that visibility is both used and created by “bodies that count” that also operate across different scalar levels. First is the way they work “on the ground” in the day-to-day intimate and always potentially explosive encounters when Palestinians are confronted by soldiers and settlers. In these encounters, the presence of the Israeli or international activist bodies (as people from the community and the activists describe it) serves not to protect Palestinian bodies, but to deflate the always potential violence of the military (and to a lesser extent that of the settlers) that would be exerted on Palestinians if they were “alone.” Activists are intelligible to soldiers: they share the same ontological ground and therefore have shared normative scripts. Activists invoke this shared ground in their interactions with soldiers who are then forced to affirm those norms—a process of reminding and recognizing that is impossible for Palestinians to invoke:

The [foreign] girls is [*sic*] better with the soldiers, I try and talk to them about the occupation but with the girls they say, you know, like where do you come from? What do you do? [laughs] and the girls can use that. (Sandro, Italian activist, Operation Dove)

It’s good, it allows us to try another way, the soldiers try to make it personal but we can use this to try and take it in another direction—we can then talk to them about the occupation. (Luisa, Italian activist, Operation Dove)

Having heroically driven the flock down toward the wadi, the soldiers and policemen pick their way over the rocks toward us.

“You are now in a Closed Military Zone. You have fifteen minutes to get out of here.”

“And just where are we supposed to go?”

“Down into the wadi, past that curve in the hills.”

“And why are you doing this?”

“I work for the brigade commander. Ask him.”

“I’ll be glad to ask him, but he doesn’t want to talk to me.”

“You now have fourteen minutes.”

“You know what you are doing is illegal,” we say. “The Supreme Court ruled in 2004 that the army cannot declare a Closed Military Zone arbitrarily, and it is expressly forbidden to do so if this means denying Palestinian shepherds and farmers access to their lands.” (David Shulman, Israeli Ta’ayush activist)

But perhaps the more important way that foreign bodies work to “bring down the violence” of the military and settlers is through countersurveillance and the production of countervisibilities. Through their presence, and increasingly through the use of cameras, they attempt to make the violence entailed in erasure visible. One activist explains it this way:

When there’s an action against, for instance, demolishing a home, everyone is there (activists, the community, soldiers), and the soldiers can get violent. So we do nonphysical interposition to try and keep down the violence of the situation, try and lower the tension. If you use a camera, the soldier is less likely to be violent because he knows it is all on camera. Having a camera, staying close to the Palestinians to make them feel safer, and try and talk to the soldier. (Anna, Operation Dove)

Hisham and the international activists use the human rights language of “documentation” when talking about these countersurveillance measures. And indeed, the texts and videos produced are posted on websites and blogs, written up as reports sent to human rights organizations and other official and nonofficial addresses, and constantly circulate far beyond the spatial confines of Masafer Yatta. Soldiers and settlers fear that reports and images of their violence may become visible to specific circuits where they may actually face consequences for it.³² This fear then becomes used as a tactic by activists and the communities on the ground, who constantly use cameras in daily accompaniment as well as in mass actions. Here are two descriptions of the operations:

If I go on my own, it’s different how the soldiers act—he’ll be in your face, and if you answer him he’ll start pushing you around, beating you, but when there’s a foreigner filming, his behavior changes completely. He starts behaving better. (Maher, schoolboy shepherd, Atwaneh village)

You know, the video camera, it depends on the situation. If you point the camera in the face of soldiers or settler, they can become more violent, but if you use it further away, it can bring down the level of violence or tension. . . . But also we use it in legal work. We can take evidence, and then their lawyer can't say "No, you are a liar." You can't do nonviolent action without it. (Sandro, Italian activist, Operation Dove)

"Waaargh!!!" the older settler roars and charges us with a rock in his palm. I am afraid, finding myself behind the camera at a settler attack once again. . . . "Stop them!" I shout to the soldiers in the jeep down in the wadi. The settler runs past us to throw the stones at the shepherds. . . . "I will butcher you!" he screams at GH and throws a big rock towards him. GH dodges the rock, thank goodness. I get it all on tape. (Amitai Ben Ami, Israeli Ta'ayush activist)

The soldiers' and settlers' fear that their violence will be caught on tape and potentially made visible becomes a possibility that both activists and the community employ in everyday resistance. Attempting to visibilize the violence of Israel's occupation to especially Israeli but also international publics through popular media has increasingly become a programmatic strategy of activists as well as human rights organizations across the occupied West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli human rights organization B'tselem has since 2007 run a video activism project—giving hundreds of cameras to communities at risk, like those of Masafer Yatta across the West Bank. But catching settler and soldier violence on camera and getting the evidence onto Internet sites is no guarantee that their violence will actually become visible. Kuntsman and Stein have shown how such activist media in the Israeli context enters into a dense field framed by what they call "digital suspicion," a long-standing interpretive practice deployed to undermine Palestinian claims.³³ In the current context these older discourses now couple with the technological realities of digital media and produce competing forms of knowledge and conflictual interpretive communities that open varying political possibilities for both state institutions and activists.³⁴

As Stein notes, most of the activist videos from the field are not even posted online.³⁵ Those that are often remain un-noted save by the communities of activists themselves. And the few who do break through the dense layers of Israeli apathy/suspicion about the occupation's evils and become viral (and therefore visible to Israeli publics) do so because they transgress the dominant

frame—and show violence being enacted against the legible or grievable bodies of international and Israeli activists.

The other circumstance in which settler or military violence breaks into visibility within Israeli publics is when the nature of the violence performed by Jewish Israeli bodies transgresses racial and gendered norms of Jewish/Israeli identity. In these cases the identities of the victim remain irrelevant. Thus, one of the few activist videos taken in Masafer Yatta that became viral in Israel was a clip of four settler youth carrying clubs, descending a hill, and coming toward a shepherd and his wife, who they then mercilessly beat. The video created a huge debate in Israel, not because of the beating of the shepherd and his wife, but because of what the settlers were wearing: head coverings that mimicked the iconic and feared image of Palestinian militants.³⁶ In both of these cases, the violence visited on Palestinians can momentarily appear, but only as the background or shadow of the main subject of the violence—either to grievable bodies or to norms of Jewish/Israeli identity. Outside of these conditions, only in extraordinary instances have Palestinian victims of Israeli violence been able to appear as human to Israeli publics. In the limited cases where they have, it is because they appear as something other than Palestinian (either as an *extremely young* individual child or as an extremely vulnerable individual woman).³⁷ In both instances, their humanity is individual, exceptional, and singular. An activist named Hisham describes the difference as follows:

When the settlers tried through violence to stop the kids from reaching the school, we went to Hebron and asked for some of the international solidarity workers there [to come]—they were Americans. . . . The next day the settlers attacked them—the kids and the solidarity workers. People went to hospital—so what happened?—there was media pressure, you know. Americans were attacked and ended up in hospital in south Hebron. . . . Palestinian kid gets attacked, given that he's Palestinian it's normal, no one's interested. But because he's an American it's a different situation. (Hisham)

Palestinians from the communities are aware of the way the politics of visibility continues to operate unequally across race and to a lesser extent across gender within activist media practice. Hisham and others prefer to focus on more immediate and critical priorities and achievements: that cameras at the direct level of activism in the field (where they are most successful) can temper and deflect violence and be used to provide counterevidence to the always

trumped-up charges used by the police and military when detaining young men from the communities. But a politics of hope also animates the use of cameras and the potential impact of their more mediated effects: the hope that the films produced help rally support and solidarity for their struggle across diverse activist networks and communities and one day may become part of wider projects of making evidentiary claims against the military and settlers.

Gendered Bodies

The differential order of corporeal value at work in Masafer Yatta uses both racial and gender logics. Masculinist norms associating female bodies with vulnerability are clearly operative across the varying bodily encounters and their particular configurations of race, violence, and power—but are constantly opened up to new possibilities and reinscriptions in daily life. The following quotations offer a sense of this process:

The women and the girls are strong, praise be to God, very strong. When they [soldiers] take a boy we [women] go after them and don't let go until we've taken him back. Even if they use violence we stay with them. Have another biscuit, come on, I'll be upset if you don't. (Um Bahjat, al Mufaqrata)

The first time it was 2002, I remember, the men had gone down to a valley . . . to plow the land, and then the settlers came from the caves and started attacking them with stones. There were lots of people injured—nine people ended up in hospital. When the soldiers came, instead of stopping it they let the attack continue and then started arresting people. From that day women started facing the soldiers and the police, intervening, and trying to stop the men from being arrested. There'd be fewer men taken. It started automatically, and then after that we began to organize it. (Sumaya, head of the women's committee, Atwaneh)

The Palestinian women defy the military and sit down in front of them, quickly starting a small fire and beginning to make tea. The soldiers push and kick and force them up. For a short eternity they kept on driving the group arbitrarily up the hill past the closed zone. (Amitai Ben Ammi)

Women from the communities are often described as being the front line of collective actions. In demonstrations they are always in the lead, or when someone (usually male) is arrested by the military, it is women who engage

physically with the captors in order to “steal back” the captured body. The possibility of using female bodies in this way is based on exploiting the normative order, according to which the female body is invested with a sexed and gendered vulnerability; at the same time, the act works to subvert these norms. Soldiers, Palestinians, and Israeli and international activists all share to varying degrees these heteronormative scripts. Women’s bodies, especially orientalized ones, pose a challenge to the masculinist/militarist norms of the soldiers that are framed by masculine defense of the vulnerable/feminized home front. In this equation, women regardless of race become civilianized—and if they are “passive, oppressed Muslim women” this actually works to enable their inclusion into the category of civilian.³⁸ Thus when these “civilian” female bodies come into confrontation with male military bodies, the sex/gender/racial order that defines “defensive” versus “offensive” bodies becomes completely confounded and threatened. In this encounter, soldiers are left unable to lay claim to their normative truths of masculinist protection of the vulnerable feminine—instead, the whole logic of a settler colonial military might be laid bare for what it is. “And it’s like, when we defend and intervene, we women just feel great,” Amal of Atwaneh explains. “We can do something—and we’ve done something.”

In the interactions within the community of solidarity (among solidarity activists and men and women from the communities), norms about “local custom” and the importance of respecting their sex/gender boundaries are often invoked. Women from the communities themselves regularly invoke and reproduce these local norms in relation to “outsiders.” But when they relate the instances when they have broken them by using them against the soldiers, it is with a jubilation that often accompanies acts of feminine subversion:

The settlers don’t differentiate, they don’t care, they’ll attack a girl, a woman, but the soldiers have this thing, they freak out if there are foreigners filming there and a settler is attacking a woman or girl. Soldiers will attack or arrest guys, but not women, or only rarely. They’re scared of the reaction in the media. But in Mufaqrara, when the girls were defending the mosque from being destroyed they arrested them—OK, I mean at the end they don’t really differentiate either. (Amal, Atwaneh)

While the military is loath to transgress any female body—including the visible bodies of international and Israeli female activists—the settlers operate according to a different set of norms. All bodies not operating according to the

logics of elimination are threats to the collective body of the colony, regardless of sex/gender or race. Anna's comment speaks to this point:

Now we [international accompaniers] are five women and one boy [*sic*]. It's the same in other fields—though sometimes it's more equal women and men. . . . The (Palestinian) men here have had to work on themselves. It's not easy to be able to trust twenty-year-old Italian women to accompany them. They are all very respectful—they trust us and we work to deserve their trust. (Anna)

Nonviolent resistance undertaken against settler colonial violence as well as the strategies of protective accompaniment linking ungrievable to grievable bodies all speak to a resistant politics congruent with the feminist geopolitical ethics identified by Koopman.³⁹ Simultaneously, the work of female bodies protecting male ones in the face of militarist violence suggests how gender norms are transgressed both in the dynamics of everyday resistances to elimination and also in the production of resistant masculine subjectivities—particularly Palestinian ones. Palestinian male bodies are the most directly targeted by and thus most vulnerable to Israeli colonial violence. In addressing the politically subjugated Palestinian masculine body, Julie Peteet has argued that masculine subjectivity reframed humiliation and beatings as rites of passage to manhood in the first Palestinian intifada—a move that reinstated subjugated male bodies as sites of resistant virility.⁴⁰ In the orientalizing discourse of aid agencies, Palestinian men, powerless and humiliated by the occupation, reclaim their masculinity by engaging in domestic violence (a claim agencies continue to produce despite all evidence to the contrary).⁴¹

All my respect to them [women and girls], it's something to be really proud of. Guys are always the most targeted with imprisonment. . . . When the girls and women come and they sneak in from here and from here and take you back [while being hauled off by soldiers], well, that's a victory for us. Instead of [ending up] being imprisoned and fines and all of that. (Maher, schoolboy shepherd, Atwaneh)

Both of these claims view Palestinian masculine subjectivity as unitary and limited rather than as polyvalent, and open to multiple interpretations and subject positions. In the context of Masafer Yatta, colonial violence enacted against Palestinian male bodies is the norm, and is part of the everyday of being male in this environment. As such, attempting to elude violence while continuing to push back against the politics of elimination becomes prioritized

as the more successful act of resistance. One body saved from a beating or a capture while it is involved in retaking stolen land or rebuilding a demolished home becomes in itself a victory when resistant bodies (especially Palestinian male ones) are targeted by sovereign violence. In this understanding, the male body no longer belongs to a separate domain of the masculine; rather, it becomes a site invested with the entire political ethic of the community in resistance, opening up the possibility of reordering norms of masculine/feminine and vulnerability/protection.

As the quotation above by the young Italian female accompanier (Anna) suggests, however, the deordering of normative masculine and feminine subjectivities in the process of struggle (which is necessary for it to succeed) is something that activists and the community are both readily aware of and attend to carefully. And it is particularly in these instances of handing one's body over to another, especially when it is a male body to a female one, that vulnerability opens itself into trust.

Conclusion: Crossing Boundaries / Remaking Spatial and Political Imaginaries

The types of visibilities produced through the activism of using “bodies that count” seems to rely on rather than challenge the racial hierarchies that frame and actively produce Masafer Yatta as a space of hyperprecarity. One might argue that the slippages that occur, those brutal self-images that are usually cast off as “an aberration,” might through their constant repetition begin to break open a space in which Palestinians begin to appear as legible, as mournable, as having equal worth to an Israeli or Euro-American “us.” But it is actually in the everyday coming together of grievable and ungrievable bodies in the space of Masafer Yatta that we can see how the constant defiance of hierarchies of corporeal value begins to break them down:

What I mean is, the settlers, when they see the Israeli activist, it brings out more violence in them. The settler, he sees a Palestinian and an Israeli together, and he leaves the Palestinian and goes after the Israeli. (Hisham)

After a while one of the soldiers begins to scream curses, sharp and thin in the desert air. “You ruiners of Israel, *ochrai yisrael*, you are aiding the enemies of the Jews, degenerates”—he is waving his gun, threatening us [the Israeli activists], fingering the clip. (David Shulman)

“Are you an Arab?” one of the settlers approached Muhammad. “Get out of here!” And then to me: “Are you my brother, or his brother?” (Neve Gordon, Israeli Ta’ayush activist)

Israeli activists pose a profound political challenge to the military and settlers and their racial/spatial imaginary of Masafer Yatta as containing the “us” of (Jewish) Israelis versus the “them” of Palestinians. Not only are they bodies “out of place” (as Israeli/Jewish bodies who are not soldiers or settlers); they are also “our” bodies that have unraveled from “us” and woven themselves into “them,” the enemies we aim to eliminate. The rage of soldiers and settlers toward Israeli activists is not simply about their being on the wrong side, but of quite literally embodying an existential threat to the Zionist nationalist imaginary of an ethnically bounded Jewish Israeli nation. Instead, Israeli activists are a constant reminder (or, in the eyes of settlers and soldiers, a nagging insistence) of a possible national future that is not based on ethnic privilege and exceptionalism. Hisham asks, “Before they [Israeli activists] came, what Israelis did we know? Settlers, soldiers, they were the Israelis for us.”

Israeli bodies that link themselves to Palestinian ones also subvert the binary ethno-religious logic, increasingly suffusing Palestinian nationalism. On the one hand, there are the effects of Israel’s spatial policy of ethnic separation, making the physical interaction between Israeli Jews and West Bank and Gazan Palestinians virtually impossible. In tandem with this, there has been a rise of Islamist rhetorics about the conflict with Israel being “civilizational” in nature. Both have led to a Palestinian nationalist imaginary that increasingly mirrors the ethnic exclusivism of Zionism.

But beyond these more obviously political effects, there are the ways the activists and communities themselves still bounded by these hierarchies and binaries increasingly begin to elude them in relation to each other. And this process opens a space in which transformative relationalities begin to emerge:

We both know that us and the Palestinians—for the world our lives are not worth the same. But the fact that I live in this house, and I sleep and eat like you and run when you call me, and we eat the same food and listen when you want to tell me something—this really tells us both that I do not believe your and my life are not worth the same. Maybe this isn’t clear at first—but happens over time. . . . This way of being in a conflict is a way that you become part of it and that really changes those dynamics. We share everything, we share daily life—OK, we share stories about problems

with settlers and soldiers, but we also talk about problems of kids and of boyfriends and love problems, or problems of the sheep's milk. . . . And that changes everything. . . . That sharing of daily life inside the conflict—that changes everything. (Anna)

A passport is a good tool with soldiers and police, but what makes your action work here is your total commitment—if you're not committed you are no use here. So what works here is not our passport but our commitment. (Pippo)

Do they offer protection? No, the Israelis and internationals can't protect us. But what they do, let me find the right words. . . . They make our existence possible. (Hisham)

"So, who would you say are better here [at struggle]? The [Palestinian] men or women?" Reply: "They're the same." (My joking question and the response of a young man from al Mufaqrara)

Week after week, on Saturday morning, we follow him to the fields. Today, like every week, there are women and children—the wonderful, impish children. . . . marching with him. We head over the hill and down into the wadi and straight into the fields, which the thieves have plowed. . . . The soldiers are ready. They come at us, they bark, threaten, order us to stop. . . . but Sa'id keeps walking until he has crossed the wadi and moved halfway up the next hill. . . . All I can say is that I'll follow Sa'id wherever and whenever he wants me. (David Shulman)

The foreigners here have really helped. They got our story out to the world. When they first came it was strange for people. People were suspicious: Who are they? What do they want? . . . A year passed and then people understood. Now they're like one of the families in the community: there's a wedding and they should come; someone's cooked something special, they send a dish over to them. They've become part of us. (Sumaya, head of the women's committee, Atwaneh)

What I've learned from the people here is how to trust. To trust strangers. To trust in the future. To expect the worst but do the best. (Pippo)

I've learned a lot from Palestinians; maybe the most important is being able to see the future as a huge possibility. Being able to wake up every day and forgive the past and the present and to see a big future ahead. (Anna)

Notes

The narratives used throughout the text are differentially ascribed. The Palestinian and international companions I have given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity; the former for obvious reasons, the latter because their identification could result in summary deportation by Israel. The Israeli activist narratives I have taken from various blogs and activist sites where the authors have felt free to use their full names.

- 1 See the Israeli human rights organization B'tselem's webpage on "Firing Zone 918" at <http://www.btselem.org/publications/fulltext/918>, accessed May 3, 2016; also see UN OCHA, "Life in a 'Firing Zone.'"
- 2 As will be evidenced by the discussion below on the unfolding of the Oslo Accords, I put "peace process" in quotes to demarcate that in the case of Palestine (as in many other cases), peace was simply a different modality for perpetuating violence and dispossession.
- 3 See various reports on Area C by the United Nations Office of the Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs, Occupied Palestinian Territories (UN OCHA), including "Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank"; "Area C Humanitarian Response Fact Sheet"; and "Restricting Space."
- 4 This fact is captured well by Peter Lagerquist, whose aim, however, is to show how Israeli human rights lawyers instrumentalized the "false primitivism" of the communities, on behalf of their legal defense. See Lagerquist, "In the Labyrinth of Solitude."
- 5 See UN OCHA, "Area C Humanitarian Response Fact Sheet"; "Displacement and Insecurity in Area C of the West Bank"; "Life in a 'Firing Zone'"; and "Restricting Space."
- 6 Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 26; see also his *On the Postcolony*; Agamben, *State of Exception*.
- 7 Ghanim, "Bio-power and Thanato-politics."
- 8 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 387–409.
- 9 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 387–409.
- 10 Falk, *Unlocking the Middle East*, 114.
- 11 Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 29. However, what Mbembe's account misses in terms of Palestine is how the constituents of this concatenation are unevenly distributed across different spatial zones of the imperial protectorate's presence and nonpresence in the West Bank and Gaza.
- 12 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism," 392.
- 13 Butler, *Frames of War*, 25.
- 14 Butler, *Frames of War*, 25–26.
- 15 In the context of Palestine, Gaza is another zone of hyperprecarity, but one where Israel uses different modalities of violence for its production.
- 16 Butler, *Frames of War*, 14.

- 17 For a feminist reading of this process in the context of Palestine see Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Palestinian Women and the Politics of Invisibility."
- 18 Weizman, *Hollow Land*.
- 19 At the same time, plans and money and the whole military/political-economic machinery that builds settlements are kept, if not invisible, opaque. A number of Knesset inquiries have sought to uncover the hidden and complex webs of money, plans, and permissions that connect governmental and extragovernmental organizations and route money from supranational Zionist organizations and philanthropists to the settlement project. All of the settlements have been built through this bureaucratic opaque-ness—a sleight of hand through which the Israeli state's colonial designs that breach international law can be undertaken without directly embarrassing their imperial allies.
- 20 For an example of how the settler politics of mourning operates see Feige, "Jewish Settlement of Hebron," 323.
- 21 Butler, *Frames of War*.
- 22 It seems almost banal to state that any form of Palestinian armed resistance is immediately transposed into the frame of "terrorism" and Israel's "right to defend itself." "Terrorism" becomes a master signifier that occludes and absorbs not only acts of Palestinian armed resistance but a host of other Palestinian non-violent resistant acts and speech. Attempts to gain membership to the United Nations, and BDS—the movement for boycott, divestment, and sanctions—have all been declared forms of terrorism by various Israeli politicians and their supporters.
- 23 Butler, *Precarious Life*; Butler, *Frames of War*.
- 24 Butler, *Precarious Life*; Butler, *Frames of War*.
- 25 See Hyndman, "Feminist Geopolitics Revisited." The communities of Masafer Yatta are not the first or only West Bank and Gaza communities that have mapped themselves into these new forms of embodied global solidarity politics. The best-known solidarity actions are the weekly actions in the village of Bil'in and other communities attempting to resist land and livelihood dispossession by Israel's "Separation Wall." The global symbol of these on the ground solidarities in Palestine is the American activist Rachel Corrie, who was killed by an Israeli military bulldozer in March 2013 while she and other international activists were trying to prevent the Israeli military's ongoing devastation of Palestinians' homes in Rafah, Gaza. On these activisms in Bil'in see Jawad, "Staging Resistance in Bil'in," 128–142; Roei, "Molding Resistance." For critical self-reflections by Euro-American companions on the politics of bodies that count in Palestine see Stamatopoulou-Robbins, "The Joys and Dangers of Solidarity in Palestine."
- 26 See Koopman, "Alter-geopolitics."
- 27 Koopman, "Alter-geopolitics," 202
- 28 For an overview of the ethics and history of the protective accompaniment movement see Mahoney and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards*.
- 29 Along with discussion of these problematics in Koopman's "alter-geopolitics" see

- also her “Cutting through Topologies,” 825–847, as well as “‘Mona, Mona, Mona!’” See also Henderson, “Citizenship in the Line of Fire”; Coy, “The Privilege Problematic in International Nonviolent Accompaniment’s Early Decades” and “‘We Use It but We Try Not to Abuse It.’” See also Hyndman, “Feminist Geopolitics Revisited.”
- 30 Since 2004 the communities have had a constant presence of young Italians sponsored by a Catholic-linked organization, Operation Dove, which also has accompaniers working in Albania and Colombia. Israeli activists with jobs and lives just over the Green Line come regularly on Fridays or Saturdays.
- 31 See “PSP Activists Join Building Project in Um Faqara,” *Palestine Solidarity Project*, <http://palestinesolidarityproject.org/2012/05/27/psp-activists-join-building-project-again-in-um-fagara/>, accessed May 4, 2016.
- 32 This fear by (most) soldiers and (many) settlers rests on a number of grounds. Most fundamental is the Zionist imaginary of belonging to the liberal West and the desire to protect this in its own self-representation as well as in projections of it globally. The huge and ongoing investments by the Israeli state in its global image maintenance attests to this. The Israeli military has a double investment in the protection of its liberal humanist image given that in a number of countries (the United Kingdom, Spain) there are standing indictments against specific Israeli generals for war crimes. Fear of indictments for war crimes among the senior military has not only led to the creation of a huge legal apparatus within the Israeli military to inform what actions might be indictable internationally; it has also led them to create strong internal military sanctions against foot soldiers whose acts are caught by visual media or posted on social media. For such cases see “Israeli Soldiers are Fighting for their Right to Point Guns at Young Palestinians,” *Vice News Online*, <https://news.vice.com/article/israeli-soldiers-are-fighting-for-their-right-to-point-guns-at-young-palestinians>, accessed May 4, 2016; “Fleeing Soldiers Claim Officers were Afraid of Media Photos,” *Israel National News Online*, <http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/163017#.VOCvy8bLBpl>, accessed May 4, 2016; “Anger Over Ex-Israeli Soldier’s Facebook Photos of Palestinian Prisoners,” *The Guardian Online*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/aug/16/israeli-soldier-photos-palestinian-prisoners>, accessed May 4, 2016.
- 33 Kuntsman and Stein, “Digital Suspicion, Politics and the Middle East.”
- 34 Kuntsman and Stein, “Digital Suspicion, Politics and the Middle East.”
- 35 See Stein, “Viral Occupation Cameras and Networked Human Rights in the West Bank.”
- 36 Another infamous example is the video of a settler woman chanting “Inti sharmuta” (“You are a whore”) through a mesh screen at the Palestinian woman living next door to the settlement in Hebron. See “‘Sharmuta Video’—Settler Harassment of Palestinians in Hebron,” *Youtube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUXSFsJV084>, accessed May 4, 2016.
- 37 In terms of violence against Palestinian children, the July 2013 arrest of a five-year-old boy in Hebron (captured on camera by B’tselem) was the first time since the

killing of Muhammad al Durra in 2001 that the Israeli military's violence toward children broke into visibility. "Settlers Attack Palestinian Woman in Hebron," a video from 2011, most likely broke through the frame because the settlers in question were themselves children, including girls.

- 38 In Israeli discourse, the tenacity of the sexual/orientalist trope of the Palestinian woman as passive, vulnerable, and victim of Islamic patriarchy is so powerful as to reinscribe the female suicide bomber as such a vulnerable victim. See Hasso, "Discursive and Political Deployments by/of the 2002 Palestinian Women Suicide Bombers/Martyrs," 535–566. And in both Israeli wars on Gaza, the IDF's body count of Palestinian civilian deaths was composed solely of women and children. Palestinian men were by definition "armed combatants."
- 39 Koopman, "Alter-geopolitics."
- 40 Peteet, "Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada."
- 41 For the most insightful and sustained critiques of this donor "common sense" on Palestinian domestic violence see Johnson, "'Violence All around Us'" and "Violence, Gender-Based Violence and Protection."

Mary Karr
The Voice of God

Ninety percent of what's wrong with you
could be cured with a hot bath,
says God from the bowels of the subway.
but we want magic, to win
the lottery we never bought a ticket for.

(Tenderly, the monks chant, embrace
the suffering.) The voice of God does not pander,
offers no five year plan, no long-term
solution, nary an edict. It is small & fond & local.

Don't look for your initials in the geese
honking overhead or to see thru the glass even
darkly. It says the most obvious crap—
put down that gun, you need a sandwich.

HIERARCHISM

Hierarchism is a vital need of the human soul. It is composed of a certain veneration, a certain devotion towards superiors, considered not as individuals, nor in relation to the powers they exercise, but as symbols. What they symbolize is that realm situated high above all men and whose expression in this world is made up of the obligations owed by each man to his fellowmen. A veritable hierarchy presupposes a consciousness on the part of the superiors of this symbolic function and a realization that it forms the only legitimate object of devotion among their subordinates. The effect of true hierarchism is to bring each one to fit himself morally into the place he occupies.

HONOUR

Honour is a vital need of the human soul. The respect due to every human being as such, even if effectively accorded, is not sufficient to satisfy this need, for it is identical for every one and unchanging; whereas honour has to do with a human being considered not simply as such, but from the point of view of his social surroundings. This need is fully satisfied where each of the social organisms to which a human being belongs allows him to share in a noble tradition enshrined in its past history and given public acknowledgment.

For example, for the need of honour to be satisfied in professional life, every profession requires to have some association really capable of keeping alive the memory of all the store of nobility, heroism, probity, generosity and genius spent in the exercise of that profession.

All oppression creates a famine in regard to the need of honour, for the noble traditions possessed by those suffering oppression go unrecognized, through lack of social prestige.

Conquest always has that effect. Vercingetorix was no hero to the Romans. Had France been conquered by the English in the fifteenth century, Joan of Arc would be well and truly forgotten, even to a great extent by us. We now talk about her to the Annamites and the Arabs; but they

know very well that here in France we don't allow their heroes and saints to be talked about; therefore the state in which we keep them is an affront to their honour.

Social oppression has the same effects. Guynemer and Mermoz have become part of the public consciousness, thanks to the social prestige of aviation; the sometimes incredible heroism displayed by miners or fishermen barely awakes an echo among miners or fishermen themselves.

Deprivation of honour attains its extreme degree with that total deprivation of respect reserved for certain categories of human beings. In France, this affects, under various forms, prostitutes, ex-convicts, police agents and the sub-proletariat composed of colonial immigrants and natives. Categories of this kind ought not to exist.

Crime alone should place the individual who has committed it outside the social pale, and punishment should bring him back again inside it.

PUNISHMENT

Punishment is a vital need of the human soul. There are two kinds of punishment, disciplinary and penal. The former offers security against failings with which it would be too exhausting to struggle if there were no exterior support. But the most indispensable punishment for the soul is that inflicted for crime. By committing crime, a man places himself, of his own accord, outside the chain of eternal obligations which bind every human being to every other one. Punishment alone can weld him back again; fully so, if accompanied by consent on his part; otherwise only partially so. Just as the only way of showing respect for somebody suffering from hunger is to give him something to eat, so the only way of showing respect for somebody who has placed himself outside the law is to reinstate him inside the law by subjecting him to the punishment ordained by the law.

The need of punishment is not satisfied where, as is generally the case, the penal code is merely a method of exercising pressure through fear.

So that this need may be satisfied, it is above all necessary that everything connected with the penal law should wear a solemn and consecrated aspect; that the majesty of the law should make its presence felt by the court, the police, the accused, the guilty man—even when the case dealt with is of minor importance, provided it entails a possible loss of liberty. Punishment must be an honour. It must not only wipe out the stigma of the crime, but must be regarded as a supplementary form of education, compelling a higher devotion to the public good. The severity of the punishment must also be in keeping with the kind of obligation which has been violated, and not with the interests of public security.

The discredit attaching to the police, the irresponsible conduct of the judiciary, the prison system, the permanent social stigma cast upon ex-convicts, the scale of penalties which provides a much harsher punishment for ten acts of petty larceny than for one rape or certain types of murder, and which even provides punishments for ordinary misfortune—all this makes it impossible for there to exist among us, in France, anything that deserves the name of punishment.

For offences, as for crimes, the relative degree of immunity should increase, not as you go up, but as you go down the social scale. Otherwise the hardships inflicted will be felt to be in the nature of constraints or even abuses of power, and will no longer constitute punishments. Punishment only takes place where the hardship is accompanied at some time or another, even after it is over, and in retrospect, by a feeling of justice. Just as the musician awakens the sense of beauty in us by sounds, so the penal system should know how to awaken the sense of justice in the criminal by the infliction of pain, or even, if need be, of death. And in the same way as we can say of the apprentice who injures himself at his trade,

that it is the trade which is getting into him, so punishment is a method for getting justice into the soul of the criminal by bodily suffering.

The question of the best means to employ to prevent a conspiracy from arising in high places with the object of obtaining immunity from the law, is one of the most difficult political problems to solve. It can only be solved if there are men whose duty it is to prevent such a conspiracy, and whose situation in life is such that they are not tempted to enter it themselves.

FREEDOM OF OPINION

Freedom of opinion and freedom of association are usually classed together. It is a mistake. Save in the case of natural groupings, association is not a need, but an expedient employed in the practical affairs of life.

On the other hand, complete, unlimited freedom of expression for every sort of opinion, without the least restriction or reserve, is an absolute need on the part of the intelligence. It follows from this that it is a need of the soul, for when the intelligence is ill-at-ease the whole soul is sick. The nature and limits of the satisfaction corresponding to this need are inscribed in the very structure of the various faculties of the soul. For the same thing can be at once limited and unlimited, just as one can produce the length of a rectangle indefinitely without it ceasing to be limited in width.

In the case of a human being, the intelligence can be exercised in three ways. It can work on technical problems, that is to say, discover means to achieve an already given objective. It can provide light when a choice lies before the will concerning the path to be followed. Finally, it can operate alone, separately from the other faculties, in a purely theoretical speculation where all question of action has been provisionally set aside.

When the soul is in a healthy condition, it is exercised in these three ways in turn, with different degrees of

freedom. In the first function, it acts as a servant. In the second function, it acts destructively and requires to be reduced to silence immediately it begins to supply arguments to that part of the soul which, in the case of any one not in a state of perfection, always places itself on the side of evil. But when it operates alone and separately, it must be in possession of sovereign liberty; otherwise something essential is wanting to the human being.

The same applies in a healthy society. That is why it would be desirable to create an absolutely free reserve in the field of publication, but in such a way as for it to be understood that the works found therein did not pledge their authors in any way and contained no direct advice for readers. There it would be possible to find, set out in their full force, all the arguments in favour of bad causes. It would be an excellent and salutary thing for them to be so displayed. Anybody could there sing the praises of what he most condemns. It would be publicly recognized that the object of such works was not to define their authors' attitudes vis-à-vis the problems of life, but to contribute, by preliminary researches, towards a complete and correct tabulation of data concerning each problem. The law would see to it that their publication did not involve any risk of whatever kind for the author.

On the other hand, publications destined to influence what is called opinion, that is to say, in effect, the conduct of life, constitute acts and ought to be subjected to the same restrictions as are all acts. In other words, they should not cause unlawful harm of any kind to any human being, and above all, should never contain any denial, explicit or implicit, of the eternal obligations towards the human being, once these obligations have been solemnly recognized by law.

The distinction between the two fields, the one which is outside action and the one which forms part of action, is impossible to express on paper in juridical terminology. But that doesn't prevent it from being a perfectly clear one. The separate existence of these two fields is not difficult to

establish in fact, if only the will to do so is sufficiently strong.

It is obvious, for example, that the entire daily and weekly press comes within the second field; reviews also, for they all constitute, individually, a focus of radiation in regard to a particular way of thinking; only those which were to renounce this function would be able to lay claim to total liberty.

The same applies to literature. It would solve the argument which arose not long ago on the subject of literature and morals, and which was clouded over by the fact that all the talented people, through professional solidarity, were found on one side, and only fools and cowards on the other.

But the attitude of the fools and cowards was none the less, to a large extent, consistent with the demands of reason. Writers have an outrageous habit of playing a double game. Never so much as in our age have they claimed the rôle of directors of conscience and exercised it. Actually, during the years immediately preceding the war, no one challenged their right to it except the savants. The position formerly occupied by priests in the moral life of the country was held by physicists and novelists, which is sufficient to gauge the value of our progress. But if somebody called upon writers to render an account of the orientation set by their influence, they barricaded themselves indignantly behind the sacred privilege of art for art's sake.

There is not the least doubt, for example, that André Gide has always known that books like the *Nourritures Terrestres* and the *Coves du Vatican* have exercised an influence on the practical conduct of life of hundreds of young people, and he has been proud of the fact. There is, then, no reason for placing such books behind the inviolable barrier of art for art's sake, and sending to prison a young fellow who pushes somebody off a train in motion.¹ One might just as well claim the privileges of art for art's sake in support of crime. At one time the

Surrealists came pretty close to doing so. All that has been repeated by so many idiots ad nauseam about the responsibility of our writers in the defeat of France in 1940 is, unfortunately, only too true.

If a writer, thanks to the complete freedom of expression accorded to pure intelligence, publishes written matter which goes contrary to the moral principles recognized by law, and if later on he becomes a notorious focus of influence, it is simple enough to ask him if he is prepared to state publicly that his writings do not express his personal attitude. If he is not prepared to do so, it is simple enough to punish him. If he lies, it is simple enough to discredit him. Moreover, it ought to be recognized that the moment a writer fills a rôle among the influences directing public opinion, he cannot claim to exercise unlimited freedom. Here again, a juridical definition is impossible; but the facts are not really difficult to discern. There is no reason at all why the sovereignty of the law should be limited to the field of what can be expressed in legal formulae, since that sovereignty is exercised just as well by judgments in equity.

Besides, the need of freedom itself, so essential to the intellect, calls for a corresponding protection against suggestion, propaganda, influence by means of obsession. These are methods of constraint, a special kind of constraint, not accompanied by fear or physical distress, but which is none the less a form of violence. Modern technique places extremely potent instruments at its service. This constraint is, by its very nature, collective, and human souls are its victims.

¹'d'emprisonner un garçon qui jette *quelqu'un hors d'un train en marche*': a reference to a gratuitous act performed by Lafcadio, hero of André Gide's *Caves du Vatican*, who pushes somebody off a train in Italy to prove to himself that he is capable of committing any act whatever, however motiveless, unrelated to preceding events. [Translator.]

Naturally, the State is guilty of crime if it makes use of such methods itself, save in cases where the public safety is absolutely at stake. But it should, furthermore, prevent their use. Publicity, for example, should be rigorously controlled by law and its volume very considerably reduced; it should also be severely prohibited from ever dealing with subjects which belong to the domain of thought.

Likewise, repression could be exercised against the press, radio broadcasts, or anything else of a similar kind, not only for offences against moral principles publicly recognized, but also for baseness of tone and thought, bad taste, vulgarity or a subtly corrupting moral atmosphere. This sort of repression could take place without in any way infringing on freedom of opinion. For instance, a newspaper could be suppressed without the members of its editorial staff losing the right to go on publishing wherever they liked, or even, in the less serious cases, remain associated to carry on the same paper under another name. Only, it would have been publicly branded with infamy and would run the risk of being so again. Freedom of opinion can be claimed solely—and even then with certain reservations—by the journalist, not by the paper; for it is only the journalist who is capable of forming an opinion.

Generally speaking, all problems to do with freedom of expression are clarified if it is posited that this freedom is a need of the intelligence, and that intelligence resides solely in the human being, individually considered. There is no such thing as a collective exercise of the intelligence. It follows that no group can legitimately claim freedom of expression, because no group has the slightest need of it.

In fact the opposite applies. Protection of freedom of thought requires that no group should be permitted by law to express an opinion. For when a group starts having opinions, it inevitably tends to impose them on its members. Sooner or later, these individuals find themselves debarred, with a greater or lesser degree of

severity, and on a number of problems of greater or lesser importance, from expressing opinions opposed to those of the group, unless they care to leave it. But a break with any group to which one belongs always involves suffering—at any rate of a sentimental kind. And just as danger, exposure to suffering are healthy and necessary elements in the sphere of action, so are they unhealthy influences in the exercise of the intelligence. A fear, even a passing one, always provokes either a weakening or a tautening, depending on the degree of courage, and that is all that is required to damage the extremely delicate and fragile instrument of precision which constitutes our intelligence. Even friendship is, from this point of view, a great danger. The intelligence is defeated as soon as the expression of one's thoughts is preceded, explicitly or implicitly, by the little word 'we'. And when the light of the intelligence grows dim, it is not very long before the love of good becomes lost.

The immediate, practical solution would be the abolition of political parties. Party strife, as it existed under the Third Republic, is intolerable. The single party, which is, moreover, its inevitable outcome, is the worst evil of all. The only remaining possibility is a public life without parties. Nowadays, such an idea strikes us as a novel and daring proposition. All the better, since something novel is what is wanted. But, in point of fact, it is only going back to the tradition of 1789. In the eyes of the people of 1789, there was literally no other possibility. A public life like ours has been over the course of the last half-century would have seemed to them a hideous nightmare. They would never have believed it possible that a representative of the people should so divest himself of all personal dignity as to allow himself to become the docile member of a party.

Moreover, Rousseau had clearly demonstrated how party strife automatically destroys the Republic. He had foretold its effects. It would be a good thing just now to encourage the reading of the *Contrat Social*. Actually, at

the present time, wherever there were political parties, democracy is dead. We all know that the parties in England have a certain tradition, spirit and function making it impossible to compare them to anything else. We all know, besides, that the rival teams in the United States are not political parties. A democracy where public life is made up of strife between political parties is incapable of preventing the formation of a party whose avowed aim is the overthrow of that democracy. If such a democracy brings in discriminatory laws, it cuts its own throat. If it doesn't, it is just as safe as a little bird in front of a snake.

A distinction ought to be drawn between two sorts of associations: those concerned with interests, where organization and discipline would be countenanced up to a certain point, and those concerned with ideas, where such things would be strictly forbidden. Under present conditions, it is a good thing to allow people to group themselves together to defend their interests, in other words, their wage receipts and so forth, and to leave these associations to act within very narrow limits and under the constant supervision of the authorities. But such associations should not be allowed to have anything to do with ideas. Associations in which ideas are being canvassed should be not so much associations as more or less fluid social mediums. When some action is contemplated within them, there is no reason why it need be put into execution by any persons other than those who approve of it.

In the working-class movement, for example, such a distinction would put an end to the present inextricable confusion. In the period before the war, the working-man's attention was being continually pulled in three directions at once. In the first place, by the struggle for higher wages; secondly, by what remained—growing ever feebler, but still showing some signs of life—of the old trade-union spirit of former days, idealist and more or less libertarian in character; and, lastly, by the political parties. Very often, when a strike was on, the workmen who

struggled and suffered would have been quite incapable of deciding for themselves whether it was all a matter of wages, a revival of the old trade-union spirit, or a political manoeuvre conducted by a party; and nobody looking on from the outside was in any better position to judge.

That is an impossible state of affairs. When the war broke out, the French trade-unions were dead or moribund, in spite of their millions of members—or because of them. They again took on some semblance of life, after a prolonged lethargy, when the Resistance against the invader got under way. That doesn't prove that they are viable. It is perfectly clear that they had been all but destroyed by two sorts of poison, each of which by itself is deadly.

Trade-unions cannot flourish if at their meetings the workmen are obsessed by their earnings to the same extent as they are in the factory, when engaged in piece-work. To begin with, because the result is that sort of moral death always brought about by an obsession in regard to money. Next, because the trade-union, having become, under present social conditions, a factor continually acting upon the economic life of the country, ends up inevitably by being transformed into a single, compulsory, professional organization, obliged to toe the line in public affairs. It has then been changed into the semblance of a corpse.

Besides, it is no less evident that trade-unions cannot live in intimate contact with political parties. There is something resulting from the normal play of mechanical forces which makes such a thing quite impossible. For an analogous reason, moreover, the Socialist Party cannot live side by side with the Communist Party, because the latter's party character is, as it were, marked to a so much greater degree.

Furthermore, the obsession about wages strengthens Communist influence, because questions to do with money, however closely they may affect the majority of men, produce at the same time in all men a sensation of such

deadly boredom that it requires to be compensated by the apocalyptic prospect of the

Revolution, according to Communist tenets. If the middleclasses haven't the same need of an apocalypse, it is because long rows of figures have a poetry, a prestige which tempers in some sort the boredom associated with money; whereas, when money is counted in sixpences, we have boredom in its pure, unadulterated state. Nevertheless, the taste shown by bourgeois, both great and small, for Fascism, indicates that, in spite of everything, they too can feel bored.

Under the Vichy Government, single and compulsory professional organizations for workmen have been created. It is a pity that they have been given, according to the modern fashion, the name of corporation, which denotes, in reality, something so very different and so beautiful. But it is a good thing that such dead organizations should be there to take over the dead part of trade-union activity. It would be dangerous to do away with them. It is far better to charge them with the day-to-day business of dealing with wages and what are called immediate demands. As for the political parties, if they were all strictly prohibited in a general atmosphere of liberty, it is to be hoped their underground existence would at any rate be made difficult for them.

In that event, the workmen's trade-unions, if they still retain a spark of any real life, could become again, little by little, the expression of working-class thought, the instrument of working-class integrity. According to the traditions of the French working-class movement, which has always looked upon itself as responsible for the whole world, they would concern themselves with everything to do with justice—including, where necessary, questions about wages; but only at long intervals and to rescue human beings from poverty.

Naturally, they would have to be able to exert an influence on professional organizations, according to methods of procedure defined by law.

There would, perhaps, only be advantages to be gained by making it illegal for professional organizations to launch a strike, and allowing trade-unions—with certain restrictions—to do so, while at the same time attaching risks to this responsibility, prohibiting any sort of coercion, and safeguarding the continuity of economic life.

As for the lock-out, there is no reason why it should not be entirely suppressed.

The authorized existence of associations for promoting ideas could be subject to two conditions. First, that excommunication may not be applied. Recruitment would be voluntary and as a result of personal affinity, without, however, making anybody liable to be invited to subscribe to a collection of assertions crystallized in written form. But once a member had been admitted, he could not be expelled except for some breach of integrity or undermining activities; which latter offence would, moreover, imply the existence of an illegal organization, and consequently expose the offender to a more severe punishment.

This would, in fact, amount to a measure of public safety, experience having shown that totalitarian States are set up by totalitarian parties, and that these totalitarian parties are formed by dint of expulsions for the crime of having an opinion of one's own.

The second condition could be that ideas must really be put into circulation, and tangible proof of such circulation given in the shape of pamphlets, reviews or typed bulletins in which problems of general interest were discussed. Too great a uniformity of opinion would render any such association suspect.

For the rest, all associations for promoting ideas would be authorized to act according as they thought fit, on condition that they didn't break the law or exert any sort of disciplinary pressure on their members.

As regards associations for promoting interests, their control would, in the first place, involve the making of a distinction, namely, that the word 'interest' sometimes

expresses a need and at other times something quite different. In the case of a poor working-man, interest means food, lodging and heating. For an employer, it means something of a different kind. When the word is taken in its first sense, the action of the authorities should be mainly to stimulate, uphold and defend the interests concerned. When used in its second sense, the action of the authorities should be continually to supervise, limit and, whenever possible, curb the activities of the associations representing such interests. It goes without saying that the severest restrictions and the hardest punishments should be reserved for those which are, by their nature, the most powerful.

What has been called freedom of association has been, in fact, up to now, freedom for associations. But associations have not got to be free; they are instruments, they must be held in bondage. Only the human being is fit to be free.

As regards freedom of thought, it is very nearly true to say that without freedom there is no thought. But it is truer still to say that when thought is non-existent, it is non-free into the bargain. There has been a lot of freedom of thought over the past few years, but no thought. Rather like the case of a child who, not having any meat, asks for salt with which to season it.

SECURITY

Security is an essential need of the soul. Security means that the soul is not under the weight of fear or terror, except as the result of an accidental conjunction of circumstances and for brief and exceptional periods. Fear and terror, as permanent states of the soul, are wellnigh mortal poisons, whether they be caused by the threat of unemployment, police persecution, the presence of a foreign conqueror, the probability of invasion, or any other calamity which seems too much for human strength to bear.

The Roman masters used to place a whip in the hall within sight of their slaves, knowing that this spectacle reduced their hearts to that half-dead condition indispensable for slavery. On the other hand, according to the Egyptians, the just man should be able to say after death: 'I never caused any one any fear'.

Even if permanent fear constitutes a latent state only, so that its painful effects are only rarely experienced directly, it remains always a disease. It is a semi-paralysis of the soul.

RISK

Risk is an essential need of the soul. The absence of risk produces a type of boredom which paralyses in a different way from fear, but almost as much. Moreover, there are certain situations which, involving as they do a diffused anguish without any clearly defined risks, spread the two kinds of disease at once.

Risk is a form of danger which provokes a deliberate reaction; that is to say, it doesn't go beyond the soul's resources to the point of crushing the soul beneath a load of fear. In some cases, there is a gambling aspect to it; in others, where some definite obligation forces a man to face it, it represents the finest possible stimulant.

The protection of mankind from fear and terror doesn't imply the abolition of risk; it implies, on the contrary, the permanent presence of a certain amount of risk in all aspects of social life; for the absence of risk weakens courage to the point of leaving the soul, if the need should arise, without the slightest inner protection against fear. All that is wanted is for risk to offer itself under such conditions that it is not transformed into a sensation of fatality.

PRIVATE PROPERTY

Private property is a vital need of the soul. The soul feels isolated, lost, if it is not surrounded by objects which seem to it like an extension of the bodily members. All men have an invincible inclination to appropriate in their own minds anything which over a long, uninterrupted period they have used for their work, pleasure or the necessities of life. Thus, a gardener, after a certain time, feels that the garden belongs to him. But where the feeling of appropriation doesn't coincide with any legally recognized proprietorship, men are continually exposed to extremely painful spiritual wrenches.

Once we recognize private property to be a need, this implies for everyone the possibility of possessing something more than the articles of ordinary consumption. The forms this need takes can vary considerably, depending on circumstances; but it is desirable that the majority of people should own their house and a little piece of land round it, and, whenever not technically impossible, the tools of their trade. Land and livestock figure among the tools necessary to the peasant's trade.

The principle of private property is violated where the land is worked by agricultural labourers and farm-hands under the orders of an estate-manager, and owned by townsmen who receive the profits. For of all those who are connected with that land, there is not one who, in one way or another, is not a stranger to it. It is wasted, not from the point of view of corn-production, but from that of the satisfaction of the property-need which it could procure.

Between this extreme case and that other one of the peasant who cultivates with his family the land he owns, there are a number of intermediate states where Man's need of appropriation is more or less unrecognized.

COLLECTIVE PROPERTY

Participation in collective possessions—a participation consisting not in any material enjoyment, but in a feeling of ownership—is a no less important need. It is more a question of a state of mind than of any legal formula. Where a real civic life exists, each one feels he has a personal ownership in the public monuments, gardens, ceremonial pomp and circumstance; and a display of sumptuousness, in which nearly all human beings seek fulfilment, is in this way placed within the reach of even the poorest. But it isn't just the State which ought to provide this satisfaction; it is every sort of collectivity in turn.

A great modern factory is a waste from the point of view of the need of property; for it is unable to provide either the workers, or the manager who is paid his salary by the board of directors, or the members of the board who never visit it, or the shareholders who are unaware of its existence, with the least satisfaction in connexion with this need.

When methods of exchange and acquisition are such as to involve a waste of material and moral goods, it is time they were transformed.

There is no natural connexion between property and money. The connexion established nowadays is merely the result of a system which has made money the focus of all other possible motives. This system being an unhealthy one, we must bring about a dissociation in inverse order.

The true criterion in regard to property is that it is legitimate so long as it is real. Or, to be more precise, the laws concerning property are so much the better the more advantages they draw from the opportunities offered by the possessions of this world for the satisfaction of the property-need common to all men.

Consequently, the present modes of acquisition and possession require to be transformed in the name of the principle of property. Any form of possession which

doesn't satisfy somebody's need of private or collective property can reasonably be regarded as useless.

That does not mean that it is necessary to transfer it to the State; but rather to try and turn it into some genuine form of property.

TRUTH

The need of truth is more sacred than any other need. Yet it is never mentioned. One feels afraid to read when once one has realized the quantity and the monstrosity of the material falsehoods shamelessly paraded, even in the books of the most reputable authors. Thereafter one reads as though one were drinking from a contaminated well.

There are men who work eight hours a day and make the immense effort of reading in the evenings so as to acquire knowledge. It is impossible for them to go and verify their sources in the big libraries. They have to take the book on trust. One has no right to give them spurious provender. What sense is there in pleading that authors act in good faith? They don't have to do physical labour for eight hours a day. Society provides for their sustenance so that they may have the leisure and give themselves the trouble to avoid error. A pointsman responsible for a train accident and pleading good faith would hardly be given a sympathetic hearing.

All the more reason why it is disgraceful to tolerate the existence of newspapers on which, as everybody knows, not one of the collaborators would be able to stop, unless he were prepared from time to time to tamper knowingly with the truth.

The public is suspicious of newspapers, but its suspicions don't save it. Knowing, in a general way, that a newspaper contains both true and false statements, it divides the news up into these two categories, but in a rough-and-ready fashion, in accordance with its own predilections. It is thus delivered over to error.

We all know that when journalism becomes indistinguishable from organized lying, it constitutes a crime. But we think it is a crime impossible to punish. What is there to stop the punishment of activities once they are recognized to be criminal ones? Where does this strange notion of non-punishable crimes come from? It constitutes one of the most monstrous deformations of the judicial spirit.

Isn't it high time it were proclaimed that every discernible crime is a punishable one, and that we are resolved, if given the opportunity, to punish all crimes?

A few straightforward measures of public salubrity would protect the population from offences against the truth.

The first would be to set up, with such protection in view, special courts enjoying the highest prestige, composed of judges specially selected and trained. They would be responsible for publicly condemning any avoidable error, and would be able to sentence to prison or hard labour for repeated commission of the offence, aggravated by proven dishonesty of intention.

For instance, a lover of Ancient Greece, reading in one of Maritain's books: 'The greatest thinkers of antiquity had not thought of condemning slavery', would indict Maritain before one of these tribunals. He would take along with him the only important reference to slavery that has come down to us—the one from Aristotle. He would invite the judges to read the sentence: 'Some people assert that slavery is absolutely contrary to nature and reason.' He would observe that there is nothing to make us suppose these particular 'people' were not among the greatest thinkers of antiquity. The court would censure Maritain for having published—when it was so easy for him to avoid falling into such a mistake—a false assertion, and one constituting, however unintentionally, an outrageous calumny against an entire civilization. All the daily papers, weeklies and others; all the reviews and the radio would be obliged to bring the court's censure to the

notice of the public, and, if need be, Maritain's answer. In this particular case, it seems most unlikely there could be one.

On the occasion when Gringoire² published in extenso a speech attributed to a Spanish anarchist, who had been announced as going to speak at a meeting in Paris, but who in fact, at the last minute, had been unable to leave Spain, a court of this kind would not have been out of place. Dishonesty being in such a case more patent than that two and two make four, no doubt prison or hard labour would not have been too severe a sentence.

Under this system, anybody, no matter who, discovering an avoidable error in a printed text or radio broadcast, would be entitled to bring an action before these courts.

The second measure would be to prohibit entirely all propaganda of whatever kind by the radio or daily press. These two instruments would only be allowed to be used for non-tendentious information.

The aforesaid courts would be there to see that the information supplied was not tendentious.

In the case of organs of information, they might have to pronounce judgment concerning not only erroneous assertions, but also intentional and tendentious omissions.

Circles in which ideas are discussed, and which desire to make them known, would only have a right to publish weekly, fortnightly or monthly journals. There is absolutely no need to appear more frequently in print, if one's object is to make people think instead of stupefying them.

The propriety of the methods of persuasion used would be guaranteed, thanks to the control exercised by the above courts, which would be able to suppress any publication guilty of too frequent a distortion of the truth; though the editors would be allowed to let it reappear under another name.

² Gringoire: a pre-war weekly of a virulent turn and politically reactionary [Translator.]

Nothing in all this would involve the slightest attack on public liberty. It would only mean satisfaction of the human soul's most sacred need—protection against suggestion and falsehood.

But, it will be objected, how can we guarantee the impartiality of the judges? The only guarantee, apart from that of their complete independence, is that they should be drawn from very different social circles; be naturally gifted with a wide, clear and exact intelligence; and be trained in a school where they receive not just a legal education, but above all a spiritual one, and only secondarily an intellectual one. They must become accustomed to love truth.

There is no possible chance of satisfying a people's need of truth, unless men can be found for this purpose who love truth.

FEEL GOOD LYRIC / Wendy Trevino

Washing & folding clothes takes about 5 hours.
The drive to the nice laundromat is 15 minutes
Both ways, on a good day, as long as you aren't
Driving during rush hour. Folding 3 loads
Of laundry takes a couple of hours. It takes
About 5 hours to wash & fold 3 loads
Of laundry. A Laundry Attendant makes
About \$20/hour in San Francisco. A Laundry
Attendant cannot afford to spend 5 hours
On 3 loads of laundry. A Laundry Attendant
Cannot afford a Laundry Attendant. I spend
5 hours doing laundry a week. Me & my partner
Have clean clothes & socks. We have clean
Towels. We sleep in clean sheets. We live
With a fear of bed bugs. We live over a garage
& in-law unit where our landlord's grandson lives.
Getting him to fix things is a chore. He was going
To have the contractor replace the garbage disposal
But the contractor was doing military exercises
In the Channel Islands so it was a long time
Before I heard back from the contractor.
The day I heard back from the contractor
He was doing something on our roof
& he shoveled some rocks from the roof
Onto the rear windshield of our neighbors car
& smashed it. It is possible the landlord's
Grandson heard my partner agreeing
With the neighbor that he wished we had all
Been given a heads up. The landlord's grandson
Asked the neighbor to get a repair estimate.
I don't know if he tried to get the contractor
To pay for it or what, but I didn't hear back
From the contractor after. We live without
A garbage disposal. The oven isn't heating up.
We lived with only two fully functioning
Burners on our stove for almost 5 years.
Our place is actually nice. There are two
Or four of us. It's the only way we could
Afford it. Most of us work part-time. Someone
Once said, "Always choose time over

Money." We're trying to do that. It takes time
To do things for free that other people don't
Get paid enough to do. There was one place
We looked at before we got this one. It had
No windows. Another woman looking at
The place said to me in Spanish that the rooms
Were too small. She pointed out the bed could
Barely fit in one of them. The place had refurbished
Floors so I hadn't noticed before. We didn't apply
For the apartment because they wanted us to pay \$105
To apply. It takes a certain number of hours to read
Through applications & capitalists don't want to pay
For anyone to do it so they get the people who need
An apartment to pay for it. They are able to do that
Because people need apartments & there are very few
Apartments for rent they can afford. Not because
There aren't enough apartments. There are plenty
Of empty apartments & homes. They are more
& more a luxury. A business for people the city wants
To move here or visit. SFPD kills broke people
Every year. People killed by police tend to be
Black or Latinx & men. Black people make up
~5% of the City, but more than 30% of those killed
By police. Ours seems to be one of the few houses
Owned by Black people on our block. Our landlord
Told me she was able to put a down payment
On the house in 1961, after her husband was killed
In an accident. I know 3 people who own a house
Or apartment in San Francisco who could not have
Afforded it if not for an accident they or someone
They loved had. I once told my partner's mom
That a part of me really wants there to be a big
Earthquake that the capitalists don't survive.
Saying it out loud to her, I heard how fucked up
It sounded. That I would just sit here waiting for that.

7

Assata Shakur and Black Female Agency

How we imagine a revolutionary is shaped by our ideas concerning gender, sex, and race, not just ideology.¹ How we imagine transformative black political leadership is very much influenced by how we think of gender and agency. The absence or presence of maleness shapes common perceptions of women revolutionaries. The same is not true for femaleness in perceptions of male revolutionaries.

One can easily imagine antiracist revolutionary struggle against the state without (black) women clearly in the picture, but to imagine revolution against state violence in the absence of (black) men often draws a blank. Men appear independent of women in revolutionary struggles; women generally appear as revolutionaries only in association with men, often as “helpmates.” As a category, the female revolutionary remains somewhat of an afterthought, an aberration; hence she is an abstraction—vague and not clearly in the picture.

In this regard, former Black Panther Party (BPP) and Black Liberation Army (BLA) member Assata Shakur is extraordinary, as we shall see later. Assata Shakur is unique not only because she has survived in exile as a political figure despite the U.S. government’s bounty—“dead or alive”—on her head but also because she may prove to be “beyond commoditization” in a time in which political leadership seems to be bought and sold in the marketplace of political trade, compromise, and corruption. Above all, Shakur is singular because she is a recognizable female revolutionary, one not bound to a male persona.

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GENDER POLITICS AND “PANTHER WOMEN”

Influential male narratives have helped to masculinize the political rebel in popular culture and memory. Nationally and internationally, the most prominently known black political prisoners and prison intellectuals are male. The brief incarceration of Martin Luther King Jr., in Alabama, produced the “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963), which popularized civil disobedience against repressive laws. The imprisonment as a petty criminal of Malcolm X in the 1950s engendered the political man and somewhat fictionalized *Autobiography of Malcolm X* (1965; published posthumously and creatively embellished and edited by Alex Haley, who allegedly associated with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which sought to discredit Malcolm X). The 1971 killing by prison guards of George Jackson, author of *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* and the posthumously published *Blood in My Eye*, helped to incite the Attica prison uprising in New York.² The violent and deadly repression by the National Guard deployed by New York governor Nelson Rockefeller created more male martyrs and more closely linked incarceration, repression, and rebellion to the male figure. Current organizing for a new trial for former Black Panther Mumia Abu-Jamal is galvanized by his incisive commentaries and critiques in *Live from Death Row*.³ Conventional political thought and memory associate few women with revolutionary literature or with armed resistance, political incarceration, or martyrdom stemming from struggles against enslavement or racist oppression.

Along with Harriet Tubman, Shakur would become one of the few black female figures in the United States recognized as a leader in an organization that publicly advocated armed self-defense against racist violence. From its emergence in 1966, originally named the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, given police brutality and police killings of African Americans, and cofounded by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale, the Black Panther Party captured the national imagination and inspired its paranoia.⁴ The Black Panther Party remains the organizational icon (with Malcolm X the individual icon) for black militant resistance to racial domination and terror.

The average American political spectator was and is more captivated or repelled by the Black Panthers’ stance on armed self-defense and their battles with local and federal police—and

resulting martyrs—than with the BPP social service programs largely organized and run by women. Hundreds of women, including Shakur before she was forced underground, served in the Black Panther Party's rank and file, implementing the medical, housing, clothing, free breakfast, and education programs. Female Panthers displayed an agency that (re)shaped American politics, although their stories recede in popular culture before the narratives of elites or icons.

Violence, race, and sex mark the symbolism surrounding BPP icons. African American male revolutionaries are not perceived as having been politicized through their romantic or personal relationships with female counterparts; rather, their speeches and deeds mark them for public recognition. Each male in the Panther pantheon can stand individually yet still “possess” a female counterpart: Angela Davis was linked to George Jackson, Elaine Brown to Huey P. Newton, Kathleen Cleaver to Eldridge. Only Assata Shakur stands alone as an iconic figure, embodying masculine and feminine aspects. Her hybridity is a confluence of masculine and feminine (stereotypical) characteristics. Without a towering male persona, Shakur—unlike the “conventional” black female revolutionary—has no shadow of a legendary fighter and revolutionary to shade her from full scrutiny: the speculative or admiring gaze, the curious gawk, the hostile stare.

Black female icons were recognized as the lovers or partners of black male revolutionaries or prison intellectuals (Newton, Cleaver, and Jackson all wrote from prison). Kathleen Cleaver's tumultuous marriage to Eldridge Cleaver; Elaine Brown's devotion to her disintegrating, drug-addicted former lover, Huey Newton, who installed her as Black Panther Party chair (from 1974 to 1977); and Angela Davis's relationship with prison theorist George Jackson, which began while she was organizing to free the incarcerated Soledad Brothers—all serve as markers, promoting the image of black female militants as sexual and political associates, as beautiful consorts rather than political comrades. The American public as spectator would recognize in these personal if not political lives familiar heterosexual dramas of desire, betrayal, abandonment, and battery.

Assata Shakur least fits this scenario, although her memoir speaks volumes about gender politics in the BPP. Shakur was already an incarcerated revolutionary when she conceived and gave birth to

her codefendant's daughter (who graduated from Spelman College and whose father's name is eclipsed by the name of her mother). Equally, the names of her BLA comrades linked to her capture at the turnpike police shooting are largely unknown. In the 1973 confrontation with New Jersey state troopers, Shakur was seriously wounded; Zayd Shakur was killed (along with Trooper Werner Foerster, who may have died in police crossfire); and Sundiata Acoli (Clark Squire) escaped to be later apprehended and sentenced to prison.

Assata Shakur's leadership persona keeps considerable distance from problematic relationships to men. Interestingly, there are no men in the East Coast Panthers whose stature equals hers (although some, such as Dhoruba bin Wahad, who was incarcerated for nearly two decades, were political prisoners). Although West Coast Panther leaders Huey P. Newton, Eldridge Cleaver, Geronimo Pratt, and George Jackson and the Chicago leader Fred Hampton are more prominent, they wear the shroud of "martyrs"—the psychological or physical casualties of a liberation war.⁵

In some ways the men's status as icons does not compare favorably with Shakur's, for she has longevity as a living political figure, one not marred by personal "pathology" or voluntary exile from a U.S. black mass. Shakur's narrative marks her flight as a revolutionary act in itself. She escaped from prison as "quietly" as she lived and struggled (she writes in the memoir that she planned the escape). Shakur was not released by the courts as were Malcolm, Newton, Cleaver, Pratt, Hampton, and Davis. *Assata: An Autobiography* makes her continuously (re)appear to progressives, while the police manhunt that commands her reappearance into prison keeps her visible in the conservative or mainstream public mind (to the degree that it is attentive).

Assata Shakur became a fugitive in the only communist country in the hemisphere. Cuba thus shares an "outlaw" status with the black female fugitive it harbors. (Cuba continues to shelter U.S. political dissidents.) The 1959 Cuban Revolution's ability to expel U.S. crime syndicates and corporations from the island was the ultimate act of enduring revolution within America's "sphere of influence." Likewise, Shakur is the only prominent Panther able to "successfully" escape from prison. Her "legend" is augmented through exile and her political sensibilities and literary ability. (That she was trained by the Cubans and received a postgraduate degree at the

University of Havana suggests a set of skills that surpass those of her revolutionary colleagues who died or imploded while young.) Unlike the men, there is little notoriety of a personal life lived in excess and criminality. Rather, there is a dignified restraint that must seem confusing when juxtaposed with her advocacy of liberation “by any means necessary.”

Shakur is not more reticent than her male compatriots mentioned here; she is more mature—perhaps in part because she lived long enough to see middle age (but so did Newton and Cleaver), perhaps because her political *style* was less personality driven. It is difficult to compare Shakur’s political legacy with those Panther- and BLA-imprisoned intellectuals disciplined by decades of incarceration who have not been in the public spotlight.

Unlike her female elite comrades, Shakur never had to explain (or forget) a controversial male partner or have his silent presence trail her throughout her political and private life. Women more famous than she—Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis, Elaine Brown—do not possess her iconic stature as a revolutionary either. In “Black Revolutionary Icons and NeoSlave Narratives,” I compare in greater detail Black Panther leaders and associates Elaine Brown, Kathleen Cleaver, Angela Davis, and Assata Shakur;⁶ here, I only note that she differs from both male and female elite leadership connected to armed resistance.

Shakur’s background is remarkable for its unremarkable nature. Among the women, Brown grew up in Philadelphia slums, became a Playboy Bunny, and moved in circles that included Frank Sinatra. Cleaver was the daughter of a diplomat and went to elite schools before embracing SNCC and then the *Soul on Ice* author and convicted rapist Eldridge Cleaver. Davis was mentored by the communist leaders the Apthekers in New York City and grew into an international figure in the Communist Party. Shakur came from neither poverty nor wealth or privilege. She was as ordinary a young woman, with the exception of truancy as a teenage runaway, as the working or (lower-) middle-class black society would issue. For some, how frightening must be the prospect that *any* ordinary colored girl, within the appropriate context, could grow up to become a revolutionary.

Born in a New York City hospital in 1947, Joanne Chesimard would later reject her birth name as a “slave name” to become “Assata Shakur.” In the mid-1960s, according to her memoir, she enrolled at Manhattan Community College to acquire secretarial

skills in order to advance in the labor market. Instead, she became a political activist and began working in the black liberation struggle, the student rights movement, and the movement against the Vietnam War. Upon graduating from college, Shakur joined the Black Panther Party. Although she was active in the social service aspects of the New York BPP, its breakfast program, sickle-cell testing, and health services, she was forced out of this work and into the underground due to violent police repression against black radicals associated with the Party. *Assata* describes how she sought out the Black Liberation Army, an underground, military wing of largely East Coast Panthers, for self-protection. The BPP had become a primary target of one of the FBI's violent counterintelligence programs (Cointelpro) and its most murderous intentions. While underground, Shakur became accused of numerous crimes, charges that were eventually dismissed or of which she was exonerated.

However, in March 1977, following a 1973 change of venue and a 1974 mistrial, Assata Shakur was convicted as an accomplice to the murder of New Jersey state trooper Werner Foerster and of atrocious assault on trooper James Harper with intent to kill. Despite the testimony of expert witnesses, who argued that medical evidence showed that Shakur, who herself had been shot by police while sitting in a car, could not have shot either trooper, an all-white jury, with five members with personal ties to state troopers, convicted her. The judge did not allow any evidence of Cointelpro repression to be entered into the case and refused to investigate a break-in at the office of her defense counsel. Two years after her conviction, Shakur escaped from New Jersey's Clinton Correctional Facility. In 1984, she received political asylum in Cuba, where she remains today, meeting with foreign delegations and working—with a million-dollar bounty on her head.

WAGING A PEOPLE'S WAR: VIOLENCE AND TRAUMA IN THE ABSENCE OF "VICTORY"

Historically within the United States, black resistance to domination has been pacifist, militarist, or a creative combination of the two. Most of the violence in resistance movements has been from the state. The story of Cointelpro as a form of state violence is like a Brothers Grimm tale: it is meant to chill and chasten most who hear it. Unlike in the Grimm's fairy tales, however, the victors in

American stories of political struggle for a greater democracy are not usually the victims-in-resistance. Deployed since the 1920s in some fashion against communists, workers, artists, women, civil rights and human rights activists, and antiwar organizations, the FBI counterintelligence program destabilized progressive political movements by targeting, intimidating, and killing activists. The program remains in effect today, with the continuing harassment and incarceration of its targets.⁷ In 1968, when FBI director J. Edgar Hoover designated the Black Panther Party as the “greatest threat to the internal security” of the United States, imprisonment as well as assassinations of key Panther leaders followed. However, no concerted national outrage emerged in response to the state’s violent repression of black insurgency. The lack of concern seemed tied partly to ignorance and partly to the consequence of negative media depictions of black revolutionaries. According to the U.S. Senate’s 1976 Church Commission report on domestic intelligence operations: “The FBI has attempted covertly to influence the public’s perception of persons and organizations by disseminating derogatory information to the press, either anonymously or through ‘friendly news contacts.’”⁸

While Angela Davis’s 1972 acquittal proves to some liberals that the “system” works (and, conversely, for some conservatives, that it is dangerously flawed), Assata Shakur’s escape from prison in 1979 invalidates that conviction. Shakur’s political life reworks the neoslave narrative to invert its deradicalizing tendencies with the testimony of an unreconstructed insurrectionist. She is disturbing because she was never exonerated, because her 1979 prison escape rejects “the system,” because she bears witness as an unrepentant insurrectionist and “slave” fugitive. Shakur represents the unembraceable, against whom (and those who offer her refuge) the state exercises severe sanctions. Nevertheless, her case has received support from ideologically disparate African Americans, ranging from incarcerated revolutionaries and prison intellectuals to neoliberal black studies professors. Her narrative, which is more that of the revolutionary slave than the slave fugitive, seems to construct Cuba, not the United States, as the potential site for (black) freedom.⁹

Assata Shakur’s political contributions to black liberation are enmeshed in high controversy and life-and-death crises. Scholar Manning Marable writes in his essay “Black Political Prisoners: The Case of Assata Shakur” (1998):

If Assata Shakur is involuntarily returned to the U.S. . . . she will be imprisoned for life, and very possibly murdered by state authorities. The only other Black Panther who survived the 1973 shoot-out, Sundiata Acoli, is 61 years old and remains in prison to this day. No new trial could possibly be fair, since part of the trial transcripts have [*sic*] been lost and crucial evidence has “disappeared.”

Assata Shakur is less marketable in mainstream culture given that her life and writings present a narrative similar to that of Mumia Abu-Jamal. As the unrepentant rebel, she calls herself “slave,” rejects her “slave name,” and denounces the white-dominated corporate society and state as “slavemasters.” Aspects of her narrative (found in the memoir, interviews, documentaries, and media reports) link her more to the underground Black Liberation Army than to the Black Panther Party, which has become on some levels a cultural commodity. Hence she is not only a rebel but also a militarist.

Shakur thus functions as political embarrassment and irritation for the police and conservative politicians, and conversely as political inspiration, or at least quiet satisfaction, for some of their most ardent critics. Those who worked above ground with the courts saw and see in Angela Davis’s release and exoneration a vindication of their political agency. Likewise, those who did advocacy work or worked underground, or who understood that circumstances and police malfeasance required extralegal maneuvers, see in Shakur’s self-liberation an affirmation of their political efficacy or the practicalities of resistance. That her escape entailed neither casualties nor hostages obviously helps pacifists to support her strategies.

Assata: An Autobiography depicts a public persona hardly compatible with commoditization by those who romanticize political or revolutionary violence. Rejecting the image of violent black revolutionaries, her account offers a complex portrait of a woman so committed to black freedom that she refused to reject armed struggle as a strategy to obtain it. Even during violent upheavals, community remains central for Shakur. Refusing to make revolutionary war synonymous with violence, she writes of a “people’s war” that precludes elite vanguards. *Assata* describes the limitations of black revolutionaries:

Some of the groups thought they could just pick up arms and struggle and that, somehow, people would see what they were doing and begin to struggle themselves. They wanted to engage in a do-or-die battle with the power structure in America, even though they were weak and ill prepared for such a fight. But the most important factor is that armed struggle, by itself, can never bring about a revolution. Revolutionary war is a people's war.¹⁰

The “people's war,” however, retained a military dimension for Shakur. Her memoir cites the importance of organizing an underground, the serious consideration of “armed acts of resistance” in scenarios that expand black people's support for resistance.¹¹

In news interviews and documentaries, narratives have emerged to portray the black revolutionary as a political icon and the lone active survivor of a tumultuous era.¹² Shakur's image in Lee Lew-Lee's documentary *All Power to the People! The Black Panther Party and Beyond* appears with archival footage in an exposé on the murderous aspects of Cointelpro. What Lew-Lee labeled “death squads” and I term “state violence” operated against both the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the documentary, former New York Panther Safiya Bukhari is one of the few black women—women are not prominently featured in *All Power to the People!*—who discusses the emergence of the BLA as an underground offshoot of the Panthers. According to Bukhari, New York Panthers, accused of breaking with the West Coast leadership, were caught between “a rock and a hard place.” Huey P. Newton had allegedly put out a death warrant on them, condemning them as traitors and “government agents”; the New York Police Department (NYPD), assisted by the FBI, had done likewise, marking them as traitors and “terrorists.”

The BLA formed against the frightening background memories of Malcolm X's 1965 assassination and healthy paranoia inspired by the unclear roles played by the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, and NYPD undercover agent who had infiltrated Malcolm's organization to serve as his “bodyguard.” Likewise, the 1969 executions of Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark in a predawn raid by the Chicago police coordinated by the FBI (survivors would later collect a large settlement from the government, which admits no wrongdoing) framed the choices of black radicals as life-and-death options.

In *Still Black, Still Strong: Survivors of the War Against Black Revolutionaries*, former Panther Dhoruba Bin Wahad offers insights into the underground organization and reveals the complex gender and race dynamics surrounding Shakur. Assata Shakur's revolutionary icon exists *sans* celebrity posing or adulation for past dramatic and traumatic clashes with the state. Her solitude—in prison, as a fugitive, as a revolutionary woman not tied to a dependent relationship with a man—epitomizes the aloneness, if not loneliness, of the unrepentant revolutionary.

Physical violence and battlefield knowledge and fatigue foster a unique black female political being. Her encounters with police both in the street and in “safe havens” such as hospitals are revealing. Shakur was shot while unarmed, with her hands raised, then taken to the hospital, where she was brutally beaten. The memoir describes her being shackled to a hospital bed with bullet wounds, while New Jersey state troopers tortured and threatened to kill her. Assata recounts how medical staff and poetry kept her alive despite police assaults:

They gave me the poetry of our people, the tradition of our women, the relationship of human beings to nature and the search of human beings for freedom, for justice, for a world that isn't a brutal world. And those books—even through that experience—kind of just chilled me out, let me be in touch with my tradition, the beauty of my people, even though we've had to suffer such vicious oppression . . . it makes you think that no matter how brutal the police, the courts are, the people fight to keep their humanity.¹³

REVOLUTIONARY FUGITIVE AND SLAVE REBEL

At first confined in a men's prison, under twenty-four-hour surveillance, without adequate intellectual, physical, or medical resources during the trial, Shakur was later relocated to a women's correctional facility in Clinton, New Jersey. Sentenced to life plus thirty-three years, after being convicted of killing Werner Foerster by an all-white jury in 1977,¹⁴ she was initially housed in facilities alongside women of the Aryan Nation sisterhood, the Manson family, and Squeaky Fromme, who had attempted to assassinate former-President Gerald Ford. Shakur maintains that her escape

was motivated by a fear of being murdered in prison. In her memoir she also writes that she ultimately decided to “leave” after dreaming of her grandmother instructing her to do so, and realizing that she would not be able to see her young daughter while incarcerated.

In a 1978 petition concerning political prisoners, political persecution, and torture in the United States, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the National Alliance against Racist and Political Repression, and the United Church of Christ’s Commission for Racial Justice brought Shakur’s case before the United Nations. The petition stated that Assata Shakur became a hunted fugitive after and due to: the FBI and NYPD charging her with being a leader of the Black Liberation Army, which the agencies characterized as an “organization engaged in the shooting of police officers”; the appearance of public posters that depicted her as a dangerous criminal involved in fabricated terrorist conspiracies against civilians; and her appearance on the FBI’s “Most Wanted List” which rendered her “a ‘shoot-to-kill’ target.”

In 1998, black activist-intellectuals S. E. Anderson, Soffiyah Jill Elijah, Esq., Joan P. Gibbs, Esq., Rosemari Mealy, and Karen D. Taylor circulated, via e-mail, “An Open Letter to New Jersey Governor Whitman.” This letter to Christine Todd Whitman (who would later head the Environmental Protection Agency in the first administration of George W. Bush) protested the \$50,000 bounty the governor had placed on political exile and fugitive Shakur. (In 2006, Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, who would later resign from the Bush administration due to abuse of his office, raised the bounty to \$1 million.) The letter castigated the Republican governor: “In seeking her apprehension by . . . ‘kidnapping,’ you have engaged in the kind of debased moralism that the former slave masters in this country resorted to when seeking the return of runaway Africans to slavery.” For the letter’s authors, Assata Shakur “followed in the footsteps of Harriet Tubman, who instructed: there was one of two things I had a right to, liberty, or death; if I could not have one, I would have the other; for no man should take me alive; I should fight for my liberty as long as my strength lasted.”¹⁵

In early 1998, concurrently with the circulation of “An Open Letter to New Jersey Governor Whitman,” an “Open Letter from Assata Shakur” circulated online. Shakur’s letter begins: “My name is Assata Shakur, and I am a 20th century escaped slave.” Of herself and her codefendant, Sundiata Acoli, she writes that they were both

convicted in pretrial news media, and that the media were not allowed to interview them although the New Jersey police and FBI gave daily interviews and stories to the press.¹⁶ Shakur's conflictual relationship with mainstream media would be rekindled a decade later. On December 24, 1997, a press conference was held to announce that New Jersey State Police had written a letter (which was never publicly released) to Pope John Paul II asking him to intervene on their behalf and to aid in having Shakur extradited to the United States. In response, Shakur wrote to the pope, explaining her story. Then in January 1998, during the pope's visit to Cuba, Shakur granted an interview with NBC journalist Ralph Penza. For this three-part "exclusive interview series," NBC advertised on black radio stations and placed notices in local newspapers. The series erased or distorted much of the information Shakur and other progressives had presented concerning her case.

However, most striking here is the bizarre polarization of female identities with images so antipodean that the only comparable extremes in American cultural iconography are the neoslave narratives, those of the white plantation mistress and the black field slave. In a media interview, Governor Whitman expressed outrage at Shakur's happiness about being a grandmother, and her haven or home in Cuba. Shakur's rejoinder notes that she has never seen her grandchild. She argues that if Whitman considers that "50 years of dealing with racism, poverty, persecution, brutality, prison, underground, exile and blatant lies has been so nice, then I'd be more than happy to let her walk in my shoes."

During the NBC special, one interviewee suggested that the New Jersey police would do everything to extradite Shakur from Cuba, including "kidnapping" her and using bounty hunters. Shakur responds in her "Open Letter":

I guess the theory is that if they could kidnap millions of Africans from Africa 400 years ago, they should be able to kidnap one African woman today. It is nothing but an attempt to bring about the re-incarnation of the Fugitive Slave Act. All I represent is just another slave that they want to bring back to the plantation. Well, I might be a slave, but I will go to my grave a rebellious slave. I am and I feel like a maroon woman. I will never voluntarily accept the condition of slavery.¹⁷

LEADERSHIP WITHOUT A VANGUARD?

What could have protected Shakur and other militant black leaders in liberation organizations from the counterrevolutionary war and murder waged by a democratic state? In theory, the answer to that question is: a politicized mass base that demanded and enforced their human and civil rights, one that could negotiate the end to police surveillance and brutality that sought to undermine legal and productive organizing in black communities ignored by the welfare state. These communities desperately needed what the BPP provided without fostering dependency on an aloof and depoliticizing bureaucracy: breakfast and educational programs, literacy and newspaper publishing, drug counseling and health care. Yet the problem in leadership would emerge for this black revolutionary woman, and all revolutionaries, if the mass lacked not only the will but also the desire to constitute itself as leaders, as a political vanguard.

During her time in prison, Shakur became familiar with the mass base, or its most depressed sectors, in ways that her organizing outside of prison, providing social services largely denied to blacks at that time by the state, never permitted. While incarcerated, she was housed with the sector of the population most in need of transformative politics or revolutionary struggle. But this sector proved ambivalent toward organized political struggle. In that space, prison, she and the other incarcerated women functioned less as members of a vanguard and more like social workers. Her writings on her time in captivity are quite revealing about the disparities within black female agency. Throughout her time and trials of being hunted and prosecuted, Assata Shakur would write and publish mostly essays. *Assata* both reveals her skills as a poet and reveals in many ways the triumphal black woman despite institutional trauma.¹⁸ But that memoir was written and published in Cuba, several years after her self-emancipation from prison. The writing during incarceration is filtered with despair for vanguard formations among severely oppressed black women in repressive sites.

A year before Shakur's escape, the *Black Scholar* published her April 1978 essay "Women in Prison: How We Are."¹⁹ Here Shakur describes New York Riker's Island Correctional Institution for Women, arguing that at the prison "there are no criminals . . . only

victims.” The environment is uncomfortable and the food inhospitable. The name of the space they occupy, with a heating system whose thermostat cannot be adjusted for more warmth, is the “bull pen.” The women held in the pen are “all black” and “all restless” and freezing, according to Shakur. But the physical discomfort is less disturbing than the frightening and embarrassing emotional and psychological decay of the black women caged in the pen. Shakur observes the state of her fellow inmates:

All of us, with the exception of a woman, tall and gaunt, who looks naked and ravished, have refused the bologna sandwiches. The rest of us sit drinking bitter, syrupy tea. The tall, forty-ish woman, with sloping shoulders, moves her head back and forth to the beat of a private tune while she takes small, tentative bites out a bologna sandwich. Someone asks her what she’s in for. Matter-of-factly, she says, “They say I killed some nigga’. But how could I have when I’m buried down in South Carolina?” Everybody’s face gets busy exchanging looks. A short, stout young woman wearing men’s pants and men’s shoes says, “Buried in South Carolina?” “Yeah,” says the tall woman. “South Carolina, that’s where I’m buried. You don’t know that? You don’t know shit, do you? This ain’t me. This ain’t me.” She kept repeating, “This ain’t me” until she had eaten all the bologna sandwiches. Then she brushed off the crumbs and withdrew, head moving again, back into that world where only she could hear her private tune.²⁰

The nameless woman, in comparison to whom all the other incarcerated women can feel superior, appears in the first of several short vignettes. The essay provides a framework for seeing a number of representational black women. There is the mother of teenage children, Lucille, who defends herself from her violent domestic partner. He had mutilated her arm and partially severed her ear the night she finally killed him. But a jury seeing no vulnerability, and hence no need for self-defense, in a black woman with a drinking addiction gives her a felony “C” conviction. Working as “jailhouse legal counsel” on the women’s behalf, Assata, rather than the salaried court attorney or judge, informs her that the sentence can carry up to fifteen years. There is “Spikey,” a drug addict scheduled for release; her appearance is so altered by her addictions, and her violations and abusiveness have

so damaged her relations with her mother and her children, that she prefers to spend the Christmas holidays institutionalized rather than with her family and experience the shame that would follow.

The majority of the women inside are black and Puerto Rican survivors of childhood abuse, abuse by men, and abuse by the “system.”²¹ Shakur’s memoir chronicles suffering from political violence rather than social or personal violence (the most traumatic recorded memory is her escape from a “train,” or gang rape, by teenage boys). Yet she expresses empathy with the seemingly apolitical women: “There are no big time gangsters here, no premeditated mass murderers, no godmothers. There are no big time dope dealers, no kidnappers, no Watergate women. There are virtually no women here charged with white collar crimes like embezzling or fraud.”²²

The dependency of the women’s criminality strikes her: their dependency on drug addiction, on male “masterminds” for whom they work as runners, mules, prostitutes, and thieves. Shakur radiates a sympathy or perhaps empathy for what she views as impoverished rather than criminal people: “The women see stealing or hustling as necessary for the survival of themselves or their children because jobs are scarce and welfare is impossible to live on. . . . amerikan capitalism is in no way threatened by the women in prison on Riker’s Island.”²³

American capitalism and racially driven incarceration coexist with patriarchy and the mystique of “home.” And the women are not fans of white supremacy, or even the nation-state, but are loyalists toward consumer-driven capitalism and the fetish of “home.” Shakur writes that the “domesticity” of the women’s prison, its brightly colored walls, television, plants, rooms with electronic doors (rather than bars), and laundry facilities, produces in the incarcerated a sense of well-being among emotionally and materially deprived women: “Many women are convinced that they are, somehow, ‘getting over.’ Some go so far as to reason that because they are not doing hard time, they are not really in prison.”²⁴ Yet the women’s relationships, not their attachments to material resources, comfort, and structured predictability, unavailable in their lives outside of prison, reveal their convictions to be false. This false consciousness is dispelled by the relations that women have among themselves as prisoners and with their jailers. The women who police the lives of the incarcerated are also black. Their particular type of black female agency in service to

and on the payroll of the state works against the agency of both black radical women prisoners such as Shakur and destabilized black women prisoners such as Spikey. This presents a range of contradictions for progressive politics and absolute Manichean divides. Assata Shakur writes disparagingly of the bonds of “affection” exhibited between black female jailers and their black wards:

Beneath the motherly veneer, the reality of guard life is [ever] present. Most of the guards are black, usually from working class, upward bound, civil service oriented backgrounds. They identify with the middle class, have middle class values and are extremely materialistic. They are not the most intelligent women in the world. . . . Most are aware that there is no justice in the amerikan judicial system and that blacks and Puerto Ricans are discriminated against in every facet of amerikan life. But, at the same time, they are convinced that the system is somehow “lenient.” To them, the women in prison are “losers” who don’t have enough sense to stay out of jail. Most believe in the boot strap theory—anybody can “make it” if they try hard enough.²⁵

American exceptionalism filters down to the lowest reaches of the social strata (which does not mean that black women can be generalized). Shakur’s problematic black women manage Frantz Fanon’s “wretched of the earth” by ensuring the smooth operation of systems that cage them. As guards, their dispensing of affection for the caged (presumably based on some shared condition or affinity) pacifies the wretched. American exceptionalism worn by the black woman (guard) becomes a form of self-validation and social superiority.

Shakur grimly (or sadly?) notes: “They congratulate themselves on their great accomplishments. In contrast to themselves they see the inmate as ignorant, uncultured, self-destructive, weak-minded and stupid.” She next proceeds to identify the source of black achievement for these women (and, by extension, an extensive segment of the black working-and middle-class): “They ignore the fact that their dubious accomplishments are not based on superior intelligence or effort, but only on chance and a civil service list . . . no matter how much they hate the military structure, the infighting, the ugliness of their tasks, they are very aware . . . [that if] they were not working as guards most would be underpaid or unemployed.” The absence of their employment in the prison

industries would mean existential and material losses: “Many would miss the feeling of superiority and power as much as they would miss the money, especially the cruel, sadistic ones.”

Among the incarcerated, drug use and abuse provide the topics for most conversations. Hence, Shakur argues: “In prison, as on the streets, an escapist culture prevails.” She estimates that half of the prison population is prescribed and required to take a psychotropic drug (what contemporary incarcerated women have referred to as “chemical handcuffs”).²⁶ Other forms of addiction, socially acceptable ones, manifest in television, prison love/sexual relations, and games of distraction. Few women engage in academic, political, or legal studies, and even fewer in radical politics such as feminism, antiracism, or gay liberation politics. Their dependency on institutionalized life moves beyond the borders of physical need expressed in shelter, health care, food, and safety from violent males.

Assata Shakur observes gender disparities as marking the existence and expression of political agency of black incarcerated people: “A striking difference between women and men prisoners at Riker’s Island is the absence of revolutionary rhetoric among the women. We have no study groups. We have no revolutionary literature floating around. There are no groups of militants attempting to ‘get their heads together.’ The women at Riker’s seem vaguely aware of what a revolution is, but generally regard it as an impossible dream.”²⁷ Revolution, of course, requires risk, sacrifice, discipline, and work. Ironically, the women seek the “American dream” and find that more attainable than the dream of revolution for a society free of capitalism, institutional racism, and (hetero)sexism.

Noting that some women find prison “a place to rest and recuperate,” Shakur sees that the trials of captivity in some ways reflect the outside: “The cells are not much different from the tenements, the shooting galleries and the welfare hotels they live in on the street. . . . Riker’s Island is just another institution. In childhood school was their prison, or youth houses or reform schools or children shelters or foster homes or mental hospitals or drug programs and they see all institutions as indifferent to their needs, yet necessary to their survival.” Here, there are rings of captivity to be explored, theorized, and resisted. The striking problem, though, is whether or not the women have the agency and energy to undertake such a task. In her inability to assert that they do in this essay, Shakur functions as witness and advocate.²⁸

In the final section of the essay, titled “What of Our Past? What of Our History? What of Our Future?” Shakur notes that trauma and grief are not new to black/red women: “I can imagine the pain and the strength of my great great grandmothers who were slaves and my great great grandmothers who were Cherokee Indians trapped on reservations.” She then references the pain of contemporary women in liberation movement(s), those supposedly so unlike the “apolitical” women in Riker’s Island who are functioning at low levels of consciousness with no level of active resistance. For Shakur, movement women mirrored the dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors of incarcerated or mass women:

I think about my sisters in the movement. I remember the days when, draped in African garb, we rejected our foremothers and ourselves as castrators. We did penance for robbing the brother of his manhood, as if we were the oppressor. I remember the days of the Panther party when we were “moderately liberated.” When we were allowed to wear pants and expected to pick up the gun. The days when we gave doe-eyed looks to our leaders. The days when we worked like dogs and struggled desperately for the respect which they struggled desperately not to give us. I remember the black history classes that did [not] mention women and the posters of our “leaders” where women were conspicuously absent. We visited our sisters who bore the complete responsibility of the children while the Brotha was doing his thing. Or had moved on to bigger and better things. . . . And we had no desire to sit in some consciousness raising group with white women and bare our souls.²⁹

According to Shakur, the specificity of oppression that black women, including the most “liberated” who manifested as “revolutionary,” faced in the frame of a Black Panther is strikingly unique. The essay focuses on women in prison, but the forms of containment and abandonment that black women face radiate beyond the prison walls. Shakur maintains that women’s liberation is predicated on a liberated country and culture, and that capitalism forecloses that possibility. Her final injunction in the 1978 essay, one of the last pieces written for publication while she was incarcerated, was that black women must form a movement: “Under the guidance of Harriet Tubman and Fannie Lou Hamer and all of our foremothers,

let us rebuild a sense of community. Let us rebuild the culture of giving and carry on the tradition of fierce determination to move on closer to freedom.”³⁰ But what that “freedom” is, what it is not—that is, capitalist, racist, sexist/misogynist, homophobic—cannot be specified in her essay.

CONCLUSION: HONORING THE PANTHER WOMAN

Assata Shakur’s power as a narrator of black struggles and freedom movements would become eclipsed itself as she evolved, along with the BPP, into an icon. The reified thing, the icon, replaces the dynamic human being who changes her mind, her practices, her desires as a living entity. As a living entity she grows. A fixed site of notoriety, in which the stories that could be told about freedom struggles increasingly become eclipsed by caricatures of the antisocial black militant, is a conceptual and political grave.

In her “Open Letter,” Shakur evokes one of Martin Luther King Jr.’s sermons from 1968 that alludes to his imminent assassination. King states that he does “not mind” dying because he has been to the “mountain top.” Shakur reflects:

Everybody has to die sometime, and all I want is to go with dignity. I am more concerned about the growing poverty, the growing despair that is rife in America . . . our younger generations, who represent our future . . . about the rise of the prison-industrial complex that is turning our people into slaves again . . . about the repression, the police brutality, violence, the rising wave of racism that makes up the political landscape of the US today. Our young people deserve a future, and I consider it the mandate of my ancestors to be part of the struggle to ensure that they have one.³¹

Arguing for young people’s right to “live free from political repression,” Shakur—with “a special, urgent appeal” for struggles for the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the only political prisoner on death row—urges the readers of her letter to work to free all political prisoners and abolish the death penalty.³²

Assata Shakur’s story depends in part on the frame that establishes the borders or boundaries for its telling. There is the antiracist feminist, the prison intellectual, the party member, the

underground revolutionary, the lone iconic militant. There is fierce resistance and profound grief. Shakur's somber, measured response to losses provides a word ritual for the dying and dead—whether those entombed in Riker's Island twenty years ago or a recently fallen comrade.

Her eulogy for Safiya Bukhari, given in Havana on August 29, 2003, is haunting. Bukhari collapsed hours after she buried her own mother—the grandmother who raised Safiya Bukhari's young daughter the day her own daughter became a BLA fighter and fugitive, going underground only to surface for an eight-year prison term. Bukhari survived the maiming medical practices of prison doctors (although her uterus did not) only to succumb to the “typical” black women diseases of hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and heart failure in 2002. The eulogy could also be read as Assata Shakur's—and that of all revolutionary black women who refused to circumscribe their rebellion, and paid the costs for that decision:

It is with much sadness that i say my last goodbye to Safiya Bukhari. She was my sister, my comrade and my friend. We met nearly thirty-five years ago, when we were both members of the Black Panther Party in Harlem. Even then, i was impressed by her sincerity, her commitment and her burning energy. She was a descendent of slaves and she inherited the legacy of neo-slavery. She believed that struggle was the only way that African people in America could rid ourselves of oppression. As a Black woman struggling in America she experienced the most vicious forms of racism, sexism, cruelty and indifference. As a political activist she was targeted, persecuted, hounded and harassed. Because of her political activities she became a political prisoner and spent many years in prison. But she continued to believe in freedom, and she continued to fight for it. In spite of her personal suffering, in spite of chronic, life-threatening illnesses, she continued to struggle. She gave the best that she had to give to our people. She devoted her life, her love and her best energies to fighting for the liberation of oppressed people. She struggled selflessly, she could be trusted, she was consistent, and she could always be counted to do what needed to be done. She was a soldier, a warrior-woman who did everything she could to free her people and to free political prisoners.³³

For Assata Shakur, the weight of isolation, alienation, and vilification are scars that are borne. Redemption does not occur on this plane or in this life. Betrayal by nonblacks and blacks, by men and women, is part of the liberation narrative. There will be no gratitude, no appreciation, no recognition equal to the insults and assaults. So, Assata Shakur, in true revolutionary fashion, must conclude her testimonial embracing a community that radiates beyond our immediate boundaries and limitations: “I have faith that the Ancestors will welcome her, cherish her, and treat her with more love and more kindness than she ever received here on this earth.”³⁴

NOTES

1. This chapter is based on “Black Revolutionary Icons and ‘Neoslave’ Narratives,” in Joy James, *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000). In that essay, I discuss gendered differences among and between Black Panther leaders and associates. For additional writings on Assata Shakur, see the Harriet Tubman Literary Circle digital repository.
2. For some of the most incisive literature from the Black Power era, see George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye* (New York: Random House, 1972); *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (New York: Random House, 1970).
3. Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Live from Death Row* (New York: Harper, 1996). Abu-Jamal was convicted in 1982 of killing a Philadelphia police officer, Daniel Faulkner. Trial perjury by witnesses, police suppression of evidence that would assist the defense, and inconsistencies in ballistics reports have led to international calls for a new trial. In December 2011, the courts ruled that he would be taken off of death row.
4. Charles E. Jones, ed., *The Black Panther Party [Reconsidered]* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1998); Jama Lazerow and Yohuru Williams, eds., *In Search of the Black Panther Party: New Perspectives on a Revolutionary Movement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Mumia Abu-Jamal, *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2004); Robyn Ceanne Spencer, “Inside the Panther Revolution: The Black Freedom Movement and the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California,” in *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
5. In *Still Black, Still Strong: Survivors of the War Against Black Revolutionaries*, Dhoruba Bin Wahad offers insights into the underground organization

and reveals the complex gender and race dynamics surrounding Shakur. Her solitude—in prison, as a fugitive, as a revolutionary woman not tied to a dependent relationship with a man—epitomizes the aloneness, if not loneliness, of the isolated revolutionary. Physical violence, battlefield knowledge, and fatigue foster a unique black female political being who is susceptible to being either romanticized or demonized.

6. James, *Shadowboxing*. For a discussion of those activists and authors, see Joy James, ed., *Imprisoned Intellectuals: America's Political Prisoners Write on Life, Liberation and Rebellion* (Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003).
7. Although publicly condemned, the program allegedly remains in effect today with the continuing harassment of “targets” such as the San Francisco Eight.
8. The 1976 Church Committee Report on Domestic Surveillance and Other Illegal Activities by U.S. Intelligence Agencies was named after Frank Church (D-Idaho).
9. According to Shakur, she has never been “free”; even in Cuba, protected and valorized as a “black revolutionary,” she remains a “slave” because of her status as a black or African woman, a status that she sees as inseparable from the state of subaltern Africans throughout the diaspora.
10. Shakur, *Assata*, 242–243.
11. *Ibid*, 243.
12. Assata Shakur continues to maintain her innocence in the shooting of Werner Foerster. Her case was reintroduced to mainstream black America in the mid-1980s through a segment on New York–based black journalist Gil Noble’s television talk show, *Like It Is*. Noble traveled to Cuba to interview Shakur and with archival footage of the Civil Rights and black liberation movements set the context for their discussions. Following the two-part segment, a panel that included the Reverend Jesse Jackson was convened to talk about her case. In the 1990s, Shakur appeared in various documentaries including Cuban filmmaker Gloria Rolando’s *Eyes of the Rainbow*, which intersperses images of a serene Shakur with African Orisha, or Yoruba female warrior deities and entities of love and community.
13. Shakur, *Assata*, 206–207.
14. Malfeasance was the norm during her discontinued 1973 trial in Middlesex County. The court ruled that the entire jury panel had been contaminated by racist comments like, “If she’s black, she’s guilty.” Most whites—and Shakur was tried and convicted by an all white jury—continued to equate “black militancy” or a “black revolutionary” with criminality. Both Shakur’s political affiliations and race marked her as criminally culpable.

15. In closing, the signatories admonish Whitman concerning her civic and political responsibilities:

The people of New Jersey, particularly people of African descent, other people of colour and the poor, as well as your political aspirations, would be better served by your attention to reducing poverty, unemployment, underemployment, the incidence of AIDS, police brutality and corruption and improving housing, public education and health care.

16. More contemporary media portrayal of victims of the 1973 tragedy that ended in two deaths focused only on whites. Images of Foerster's weeping widow were broadcast (in similar fashion to 20/20's use of images of Daniel Faulkner's distraught widow in a segment, hosted by Sam Donaldson in January 1999, was hostile to calls for a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal). No references were made to slain Zayd Shakur, or incarcerated Sundiata Acoli, or their families. Images are, of course, the dominant factor for creating icons, particularly demonized ones. NBC repeatedly aired a photograph of a black woman with a gun implying that it was Shakur, although the photograph was taken from a highly publicized case where she was accused of bank robbery but later acquitted (during the trial, several witnesses, including the manager of the bank, testified that the woman in that photograph was not Shakur). Despite NBC's extensive resources for research, it failed to establish the photograph as misidentified; although a subsequent fax and e-mail campaign protested the misinformation, the network continued to broadcast the woman in the photograph as Shakur.
17. "Open Letter from Assata Shakur," 1998, accessed February 10, 2009, <http://www.handsoffassata.org/content/assataopenletter-text.htm>.
18. For a comparative reading of the life of a black female activist among incarcerated black women, see Angela Davis, *Angela Davis: An Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1974).
19. Assata Shakur, "Women in Prison: How We Are," *Black Scholar* 9, no. 7 (April 1978), accessed February 17, 2009, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/Underground_News/pdf/Best_of_The_Black_Scholar.pdf.
20. Ibid.
21. As of 2002, the population of New York jails and prisons was 84 percent nonwhite. (Mother Jones, *Debt to Society*, special report, accessed February 10, 2009, <http://www.motherjones.com/prisons/index.html>; statistics gathered from Bureau of Justice Statistics, Criminal Justice Institute, and U.S. Census Bureau.)
22. Shakur, "Women in Prison: How We Are."
23. Ibid., 10.

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 11.
26. For more information on the use of psychotropic drugs in prison, see Kathleen Auerhahn and Elizabeth Dermody Leonard, "Docile Bodies? Chemical Restraints and the Female Inmate," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 90 (Winter 2000): 599–634; D. Benson, "Getting High in Jail: Legal vs. Illegal Drugs," *Prison News Service*, no. 52 (September 1995): 5; "Overview of Mental Health Services Provided by State Adult Correctional Facilities: United States, 1988," *Mental Health Statistical Note* 207 (May 1993): 1–13.
27. Shakur, "Women in Prison: How We Are," 12.
28. Ibid., 13.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.

Between 1850 and 1860, escaped slave Harriet Tubman guided several hundred enslaved people to free territories in the North on the Underground Railroad. During the Civil War, she served as liaison between the army and newly freed African Americans, and following the war she raised money for the education of former slaves and founded a home for the old and poor.

Fannie Lou Hamer was fired from her work as a sharecropper after she attempted to register to vote in 1962 as part of the SNCC voting rights campaign. Jailed and severely beaten in Mississippi in 1963 for her activism, she gave a rousing speech on behalf of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. For Hamer's speech, see <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/flhamer.html> (accessed February 16, 2009).

31. "Open letter from Assata Shakur."
32. Ibid.
33. Assata Shakur, "Message of Condolences on the Transition of our Revolutionary Sista, Comrade and Friend, Safiya Bukhari," accessed February 10, 2009, http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com/memorials/safiya_bukhari.html.
34. Ibid.

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