Radical Sense
Here Reader Volume 1
soft enclosures

2025

A Leap of Faith

“I’m not Queer, I’m Disembodied”

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord
2 Corinthians 5:8

My ſather told me yeşterday that wheŋ I waş 3, ɓeſore we leſt Ẓimɓaɓwe, I uşed to cry
iŋceşşaŋtly to go oŋ the ɓuş to the poiŋt where my uŋcle uşed to have to take me to catch a ɓuş.
Apparenŋtly, we'd get a ɓuş ſrom our home iŋ Chituŋgwiẓa to Harare.
From oŋe place to aŋother. Leaviŋg to arrive şomewhere elşe.
Traŋşport haş thiş hope ſor şomethiŋg diſſereŋt at the eŋd

I have thiş şmall thiŋg aɓout ruŋŋiŋg away.
I oſteŋ leave thiŋgş quickly ɓecauşe I doŋ't ſeel like I'm meaŋt to ɓe there.
Ş ometimeş ruŋŋiŋg away iş juşt walkiŋg away ɓut ſaşter.

I hope that makeş şeŋşe.

The concept of being simultaneously pulled to contrasting and somewhat incongruous spaces,

things…
'its'…

"I like to think of translocational belongings as reflecting the condition of the wanderer, of the non-fixities, of the fluidities and of the flows characterising the human condition in our turbulent times today."

- Floya Anthias, Translocational Belongings

The body is speaking in a language I have yet to understand.

Maybe it's about fluctuating between being proudly rootless and profoundly lost.

♫ If you love me, you'll love me
♫ 'Cause I'm wild, wild at heart

I have previously described it as a condition of experiencing an infinite series of nearlys and 'not quite yets'.

There was also something about constantly curdling yet craving emulsion.

It feels like pulls in different directions informed by the wants of the mind, the aches of the heart and the demands of the body.

I recently thought of it like a wound.

A slash or laceration to be exact.

It's as if it's being kept open with each 'flap' of the cut being pulled in opposite directions.

It is being pulled apart.

It's being the rope in tug of war.

It is being stretched.

It is spaghettification.

It is a simultaneous dragging.

It's being in a constant state of tearing but never coming apart.

Where do I go from here?

Girl idk but I feel like it's about setting off.

It's about making a decision even though that type of autonomy doesn't feel possible.

Its giving leap of faith.

(I) See (C) You (U)

Wanderlust as an embodied faith that testifies that
there is something external to you that you must reach.

The ſollowiŋg coŋverſatioŋ took place the morŋiŋg aſter the ŋight my Mum aſked me to go iŋto the gardeŋ to collect ſome ſoil aŋd place it iŋto a ƀag ſor her. At that momeŋt, ſhe could ŋot ƀriŋg herſelſ to elaƀorate oŋ why ſhe required the ſoil, ƀut I could hear it iŋ her voice that ſhe ŋeeded that ſoil iŋ a way that didŋ't ŋeed to ƀe queſtioŋed. ſo, I juſt did it. I weŋt iŋto our ƀack gardeŋ with a clear ſaŋdwich ƀag aŋd my ſhovel (a taƀleſpooŋ) aŋd I ſcooped up aƀout a haŋdſul oſ ſoil ſrom the grouŋd. I had to ſorceſully crack the top layer oſ ſoil where the moiſture iŋ the ſoil had ſrozeŋ (29/11/2025) aŋd cauſed it to adhere to itſelſ. Aſter doiŋg ſo, I eŋtered the houſe aŋd theŋ weŋt up to her ƀedroom where ſhe laid there waitiŋg eagerly ſor the ſoil. I haŋded it to her aŋd leſt her to her owŋ deviceſ. I heard prayerſ comiŋg ſrom her room that ŋight aŋd We ſpoke aƀout why ſhe ŋeeded the ſoil the ŋext morŋiŋg.

Kumbirai: So, the soil absorbs?

Mum: Yes. That's why things—

Kumbirai: I'm not fully getting it. No, because I think I understand the two things separately. But how do the two things go together?

Mum: They want to get them also because we are also created from the dust.

Kumbirai: I thought that was just Adam?

Mum: No, we all come from the dust.

Kumbirai: I don't get it, because I thought Adam was created already, and then Eve was made from Adam's rib, and then the earth as well. But it was Adam's rib that was taken to make Eve.

Mum: But they also used the dust from the earth to make Eve's body. Our bodies are created from the dust of the earth. That's why when someone dies, you are put back to where you came from.

Kumbirai: So that's why they say, "Dust to dust"?

Mum: Yes, people say "dust to dust." So, I'm exercising dominion, the dominion that we are given over the earth. I'm instructing the earth to do things that I want it to do.

Kumbirai: And what is that?

Mum: To bring forth good things in my life.

Kumbirai: But do you mean the physical earth, or metaphorically, like the whole earth including the people on it?

Mum: You can say everything.

Kumbirai: But then you were saying something about it absorbing?

Mum: Yes, because if something can bring something out, it can also take something back.

Kumbirai: Yeah, that's true. If something can be brought forth from the soil, the soil can also be told to take something.

Kumbirai: So once the soil absorbs something, are you going to get rid of it?

Mum: No, I'm not trying to get rid of it. I'm just using the soil as a point of contact.

Kumbirai: With the earth?

Mum: Yes.

Kumbirai: So, it's a proxy?

Mum: What is a proxy?

Kumbirai: It's something you put in place of something.

Mum: Yes, that's the idea. It's like when I eat the bread and drink the wine, I know it represents the body and blood of Jesus. The same principle applies.

Kumbirai: But my thing is, if you want the soil to absorb things, aren't you going to get rid of it if you feel like there's something in it?

Mum: No, I'm not wanting the soil to absorb something. I'm just speaking to it.

Kumbirai: Okay, so you're wanting—

Mum: Generally, this is a way of speaking, like someone speaking in Zimbabwe, and I'm here. But the fact is, I'm also speaking into this soil, and it affects every place. Anyone can try to say things to me.

Kumbirai: Is this an act of faith?

Mum: Yes, once you have faith and believe in something, taking an act of faith reinforces it.

Kumbirai: So, are you going to keep this forever, as long as you can?

Mum: I'll keep it dry so that it remains as a point of contact.

Kumbirai: I just find it interesting like you have these really interesting spiritual practices. They don't seem weird, but they feel like an expansion of Christian beliefs.

Mum: This is Christian.

Kumbirai: No, I get that, but you know how people believe in things like witchcraft? This feels like a blend of Christian faith and other spiritual practices. Like, putting a Bible in water and drinking the water isn't something most Christians do.

Mum: It is Christian, but it's expanded.

Kumbirai: I'm not saying it's wrong, just that it's an interesting blend. For example, you used to leave the Bible open around the house so that the scripture would radiate into the room.

Mum: Yes, I used to do that.

Kumbirai: Why did you stop?

Mum: Maybe because now, I read scripture from an app.

Kumbirai: Do you miss having a physical Bible?

Mum: Yes, but carrying it is difficult.

Kumbirai: What would make it easier for you to have your Bible?

Mum: A bigger bible, maybe the size of a laptop.

Kumbirai: So you'd want it to open like this? *gestures an alternative method that a bible could be opened*

Mum: Yes, slightly smaller than that.

Kumbirai: Would you prefer to have all the books separate so you can pick the one you want to read?

Mum: That would be nice, but it should be easy to access.

Kumbirai: Would you prefer pages with texture to make them easier to turn?

Mum: Just as long as they're not too heavy and easy to pick up.

Kumbirai: So would it work if someone placed the Bible in front of you and you could move it as needed?

Mum: Yes, that would be ideal.

Kumbirai: That's interesting.

Mum: You see, faith grows through experiences. I wasn't always like this, but one thing led to another. For example, I used to hear that if you pay tithes, the Lord will bless you. I was injured while working as a clerk, and I received compensation. At that time, I sent $1,000 to the church because I believed in faith.

Kumbirai: So you acted on faith?

Mum: Yes. After that, things changed. I ended up in England, which was never planned. Your father didn't want to come, but my sisters encouraged him. After my injury, he agreed. I didn't want to come at first, but my sister saw it as an opportunity. At the time, I was unsure about my future, but my faith carried me through.

Kumbirai: So you feel faith has shaped your life?

Mum: Yes, because I've seen real change. That's why I believe in these practices. They're not just theory to me—I've lived them.

Kumbirai: I see. That makes sense.

Mum: Yes, it has been a journey for me.

Kumbirai: Thank you for sharing this.

Our Day will come

But

Tomorrow iṣ my turŋ

You are Power –

Iɲʃiɲite,

Irreʂiʂtible,

Iɲexorable,

Iɲdiʃʃereɲt,

Teacher,

Chaoʂ,

Clay.

You are ɲeither good ɲor evil,

I like to thiɲk You are ɲeither loviɲg ɲor hatiɲg.

I perceive aɲd atteɲd to You.

I learɲ ʃrom You.

I reʂpect You.

Iɲ the eɲd, I yield to You.

All that I touch I Chaɲge.

All that I Chaɲge Chaɲgeʂ me.

The oɲly laʂtiɲg truth iʂ Chaɲge.

You are Chaɲge.

I dreamt with you last night

I can make you glitter.

CHAPTER 6

Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water

Astrida Neimanis

We are all bodies of water.

To think embodiment as watery belies the understanding of bodies that we have inherited from the dominant Western metaphysical tradition. As watery, we experience ourselves less as isolated entities, and more as oceanic eddies: *I am a singular, dynamic whorl dissolving in a complex, fluid circulation.* The space between ourselves and our others is at once as distant as the primeval sea, yet also closer than our own skin—the traces of those same oceanic beginnings still cycling through us, pausing as this bodily thing we call "mine." Water is between bodies, but of bodies, before us and beyond us, yet also very presently *this body*, too. Deictics falter. Our comfortable categories of thought begin to erode. Water entangles our bodies in relations of gift, debt, theft, complicity, differentiation, relation.

What might *becoming a body of water*—ebbing, fluvial, dripping, coursing, traversing time and space, pooling as both matter and meaning—give to feminism, its theories, and its practices?

Hydro | Logics

Our cells are inflated by water, our metabolic reactions mediated in aqueous solution.

—*David Suzuki*[1]

The oceans are in constant motion... thermohaline circulation... occurs deep within the ocean and acts like a conveyor belt.

—*Environmental Literacy Council*[2]

The land biota has had to find ways to carry the sea within it and, moreover, to construct watery conduits from "node" to "node."

—*Mark and Dianna McMenamin*[3]

Somewhere at the bottom of the sea, there must be water that sank from the surface during the "Little Ice Age" three centuries ago... The ocean remembers.

—*Robert Kandel*[4]

Sixty to ninety percent of your bodily matter is composed of water. Water, in this sense, is an entity, individualized as that relatively stable thing you call your body. But water has other logics, other patternings and means of buoying our earthly world, too. Not least, water is a conduit and mode of connection. Just as oceanic currents convey the sun's warmth, schools of fish, and islands of degraded plastic from one planetary sea to another, our watery bodies serve as material media. In an evolutionary sense, living bodies are necessary for the proliferation of what scientists Mark and Dianna McMenamin call Hypersea, which arose when life moved out of marine waters and by necessity folded a watery habitat "back inside of itself."[5] Today, when you or I drink a glass of water, we amplify this Hypersea, as we sustain our existence through other "webs of physical intimacy and fluid exchange."[6] In this act of ingestion, we come into contact with all of our companion species[7] that inhabit the watershed from which that water was drawn—book lice, swamp cabbage, freshwater mussel. But we connect with the sedimentation tanks, and rapid-mix flocculators that make that water drinkable, and the reservoir, and the rainclouds, too. Hypersea extends to include not only terrestrial flora and fauna, but also technological, meteorological, and geophysical bodies of water.

Even while in constant motion, water is also a planetary archive of meaning and matter. To drink a glass of water is to ingest the ghosts of bodies that haunt that water. When "nature calls" some time later, we return to the cistern and the sea not only our antidepressants, our chemical estrogens, or our more commonplace excretions, but also the meanings that permeate those materialities: disposable culture, medicalized problem-solving, ecological disconnect. Just as the deep oceans harbor particulate records of former geological eras, water retains our more anthropomorphic secrets, even when we would rather forget. Our distant and more immediate pasts are returned to us in both trickles and floods.

And that same glass of water will facilitate our movement, growth, thinking, loving. As it works its way down the esophagus, through blood, tissue, to index finger, clavicle, left plantar fascia, it ensures that our being is always a becoming. An alchemist at once profoundly wondrous and entirely banal, water guides a body from young to old, from here to there, from potentiality to actuality. Translation, transformation. Plurality proliferates.

As a facilitator, water is the milieu, or the gestational element, for other watery bodies as well.[8] Mammal, reptile, or fish; sapling or seed; river delta or backyard pond—all of these bodies are necessarily brought into being by another body of water that dissolves, partially or completely, to water the bodies that will follow. On a geological scale, we have all arisen out of the same primordial soup, gestated by species upon watery species that have gifted their morphology to new iterations and articulations.

On a more human scale, we gestate in amniotic waters that deliver to us the nutrients that enable our further proliferation. Our waste is removed by similar waterways, and we are protected from external harm by these intrauterine waters, too. Gestational waters are also themselves (in) a body of water, and participate in the greater element of planetary water that continues to sustain us, protect us, and nurture us, both extra- and intercorporeally, beyond these amniotic beginnings. Water connects the human scale to other scales of life, both unfathomable and imperceptible. We are all bodies *of* water, in the constitutional, the genealogical, and the geographical sense.

Water as body; water as communicator between bodies; water as facilitating bodies into being. Entity, medium, transformative and gestational milieu. All of this enfolded in, seeping from, sustaining and saturating, our bodies of water. "There are tides in the body," writes Virginia Woolf.[9] We ebb and flow across time and space—body, to body, to body, to body.

Feminism | Leaks

We ourselves are sea, sands, corals, seaweeds, beaches, tides, swimmers, children, waves... seas and mothers.

—Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément[10]

Woman's writing... draws its corporeal fluidity from images of water... This keeping-alive and life-giving water exists simultaneously as the writer's ink, the mother's milk, the woman's blood and menstruation.

—Trinh T. Minh-ha[11]

In me everything is already flowing.

—Luce Irigaray[12]

Thinking about embodiment in ways that challenge the phallogocentric Enlightenment vision of discrete, atomized, and self-sufficient Man has been a long-standing concern for feminist thinkers. Particularly within the French feminist tradition of *écriture feminine*, the fluid body of woman is invoked as a means of interrupting a philosophical tradition that both valorizes a male (morphological, psychological, symbolic, philosophical) norm, and elides the specificity of "woman."

At the same time, accounts such as Hélène Cixous's, Luce Irigaray's, and Trinh T. Minh-ha's have been criticized by other feminist thinkers for their purported incarceration of women within a biologically essentialist female and normatively reproductive morphology. Cixous and Clément's "Sorties," for instance, connects the female body to the sea, in that both are gestators of life. Irigaray, in her love letter to Friedrich Nietzsche, continuously admonishes him for forgetting the watery habitat that birthed him, and to which he owes a great debt.[13] Both Minh-ha in *Women, Native, Other* and Cixous in "The Laugh of the Medusa" invoke the "mother's milk"[14] or the "white ink,"[15] which seems to reductively connect the woman writer to a lactating female body. Is not, then, the "fluid woman" just another way of invoking the phallogocentric fantasy of "woman as womb"?

The last century of (primarily Western) feminist thought has cultivated the view that to reduce a woman to her (reproductive) biology is problematic, first, because of the troubling symbolic meanings—passive, empty vessel, hysterical, contaminating—that persistently imbue this biology. Moreover, within the social, political, and

economic contexts in which this thought has circulated, compulsory reproduction has generally foreclosed rather than facilitated meaningful participation of women outside of the domestic sphere. But why should this history predetermine any appeal to biological matter as necessarily antifeminist or reductionist? The desire of water to morph, shape-shift, and facilitate the new persistently overflows any attempt at capture. Is not "woman" similarly uncontainable? After all, "woman's" beings/becomings in these texts are not determined in advance—even as she may be, like water, temporarily dammed by dominant representations and discourse. As watery, woman is hardly (statically, unchangeably) "essentialist." She too becomes the very matter of transmutation.

In an effort to circumvent the trap of biological essentialism, the texts of Irigaray, Cixous, and Minh-ha have also been read as merely metaphoric of gestation: women's fluidity births new ways of thinking, writing, being.[16] But surely, the watery body is no *mere* metaphor. The intelligibility of any aqueous metaphor depends entirely upon the real waters that sustain not only material bodies, but material language, too.[17] And are we not *all* bodies of water? In *Marine Lover*, while Irigaray's descriptions highlight woman's aqueous embodiment, she posits no clear separation of the man's body from the amniotic waters he too readily forgets. Irigaray's male interlocutor in this text is birthed in and by a watery body—yet this water is also an integral part of his own flesh: "Where have you drawn what flows out of you?"[18] And, while what her lover thinks he fears is drowning in the mother/sea, Irigaray subtly reminds him that what he should really fear is desiccation, drought, thirst. No body can come into being, thrive, or survive without water to buoy its flesh.

Similarly, Minh-ha suggests that woman's writing draws from the wellspring of her reproductively oriented fluid forces (menstruation, lactation)—yet all bodies have reservoirs to be tapped.[19] We might ask: if the fluids of otherwise gendered bodies were acknowledged rather than effaced, how might such attentiveness amplify the creative—and even ethical and political—potential of these bodies? Rather than alerting us to some "essentialist" difference between masculine and feminine (or normatively reprosexual and nonreprosexual) embodiment, such aqueous body-writing might invite *all* bodies to attend to the water that facilitates their existence, and embeds them within ongoing overlapping cycles of aqueous fecundity.

The fluid body is not specific to woman, but watery embodiment is still a feminist question; thinking as a watery body has the potential to bathe new feminist concepts and practices into existence. What if

a reorientation of our lived embodiment *as watery* could move us, for example, beyond the longstanding debate among feminisms whereby commonality (connection, identification) and difference (alterity, unknowability) are posited as an either/or proposition? Inspired by Irigaray, we will still affirm that the rhythms of the fluid woman belong to what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has called "the species of alterity"[20] (for this alterity also safeguards plurality). But Irigaray also reminds us that no body is self-sufficient in its fluvial corporeality; we have all come from the various seas that have gestated us, both evolutionarily and maternally.[21] Water, in other words, flows through and across difference. Water does not ask us to confirm *either* the irreducibility of alterity *or* material connection. Water flows between, as both: a new hydro-logic. What sort of ethics and politics could I cultivate if I were to acknowledge that the unknowability of the other nonetheless courses through me—just as I do through her?

To say that we harbor waters, that our bodies' gestation, sustenance, and interpermeation with other bodies are facilitated by our bodily waters, and that these waters are *both* singular *and* shared, is far more literal than we might at first think. Neither essentialist nor purely discursive, this watery feminism is critically materialist.

Membrane, Viscosity

> *Probably the most important feature of a biomembrane is that it is a selectively permeable structure . . . [which is] essential for effective separation.*
>
> —*Wikipedia*[22]

> *"Viscosity" retains an emphasis on resistance to changing form.*
>
> —*Nancy Tuana*[23]

Bodies need water, but water also needs a body. Water is always sometime, someplace, somewhere. Even in our aqueous connections, bodies and their others/worlds are still differentiated. The question, then, of "what is" is never sufficient. *How* is it? *Where* is it? *When* is it? Speed, rate, thickness, duration, mixture, contamination, blockage.[24] If we are all bodies of water, then we are differentiated not so much by the "what" as by the "how." But what are the specific mechanisms of this differentiation?

Attention to the mechanics of watery embodiment reveals that in order to connect bodies, water must travel across only partially

permeable membranes. In an ocular-centric culture, some of these membranes, like our human skin, give the illusion of impermeability. Still, we perspire, urinate, ingest, ejaculate, menstruate, lactate, breathe, cry. We take in the world, selectively, and send it flooding back out again. This selection is not a "choice" made by our subjective, human selves; it is rather always, as Nietzsche has taught us, an impersonal expression of *phusis's* nuances—affirmative material energies striving toward increasingly differentiated forms.[25] Selection traverses other more subtle membranes, too—those that are either too ephemeral or too monumental to be perceived by us as such, yet that choreograph our ways of being in relation: a gravitational threshold, a weather front, a wall of grief, a line on a map, equinox, a winter coat, death.

Nancy Tuana refers to this membrane logic as "viscous porosity." While the concept of fluidity emphasizes traversals across and between bodies, viscosity reminds Tuana that there are still *bodies*—all different—that need to be accounted for. Viscosity draws attention to "sites of resistance and opposition" rather than only "a notion of open possibilities" that might suggest one indiscriminate flow.[26] Despite the fact that we are all watery bodies, leaking into and sponging off of one another, we resist total dissolution, material annihilation. Or more aptly, we postpone it: ashes to ashes, water to water.

At what point is the past overtaken by the present? What marks the definitive shift from one species to a "new" one? Where does the host body end and the amniotic body begin? Our bodies are thresholds of both past and future. The precise material space-time of differentiation is only a matter of convenience, but any body still requires membranes to keep from being swept out to sea altogether.

There is always a risk of flooding.

Adrift in the More-than-Human

We are in this together.

—Rosi Braidotti[27]

The problem was that we did not know whom we meant when we said "we."

—Adrienne Rich[28]

The mostly watery composition of my body is not just a human thing. From the almost imperceptible jellies in the benthos of the Pacific, to

the Namibian desert catfish hibernating in the mud; from mangrove to ragweed; from culvert to billabong to the roaring Niagara; cushioned between fractocumulus cloud and deep earth aquifer, we are all bodies of water.

In acknowledging this corporeally connected aqueous community, distinctions between human and nonhuman start to blur. We live in a watery commons, where the human infant drinks the mother, the mother ingests the reservoir, the reservoir is replenished by the storm, the storm absorbs the ocean, the ocean sustains the fish, the fish are consumed by the whale... The bequeathing of our water to an other is necessary for the custodianship of this commons. But when and how does gift become theft, and sustainability usurpation?

"Trickle down": While species extinctions are occurring at around 10 percent per decade, aquatic species face a higher threat of extinction than birds or mammals. Much of this oceanic swan song is due to the automotive fluids, household solvents, pesticides, mercury, and other toxins that make their way from human home to culvert to sea. Most affected are those animal bodies that dwell at or near the bottom of an aquatic habitat—such as fish eggs and filter feeders—where pollutants tend to settle.[29]

"Currency": Resources such as salt and sand have long been harvested from the sea for human use, but marine organisms—tunicates, cnidaria, mollusks—also provide us with pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, food additives, depilatories. For example, antigens derived from eleven pounds of sea squirts can supply enough anticancer drugs to satisfy the world's demand for a year. Flows of power are inaugurated between marine life, human bodies in pain, and Big Pharma. Into which currents and what currencies are the sea squirts being commandeered?[30]

"Liquidity": The "human" has probably been around for five to seven million years, but sharks are at least 420 million years old. In recent decades, many shark species have been threatened by a black market finning industry that nets over US$1 billion a year. A single whale-shark fin can sell for ten thousand dollars.[31] Cash in hand, they say, is the most liquid asset.

The seeping of the biological into the cultural, of the more-than-human into the human, happens in more ways than one. Watery bodies sustain other bodies, but biological life buttresses our language, our ways of making sense of the world, as well.[32] Hydro-logics suggest to us new ontological understandings of body and community, but how might feminism ensure that this aqueous understanding of

our *interbeing* become not another appropriation and usurpation of the more-than-human world that sustains us?

To say that *my body is marshland, estuary, ecosystem, that it is riven through with tributaries of companion species, nestling in my gut, extending through my fingers, pooling at my feet*, is a beautiful way to reimagine my corporeality. But once we recognize that we are not hermetically sealed in our diver's suits of human skin, what do we do with this recognition? What do we owe, and how do we pay?

Ecotone

> *I like places and times that are pregnant with change.*
>
> —*Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands*[33]

> *Inorganic life is the movement at the membrane of the organism, where it begins to quiver with virtuality, decomposes, and is recombined again.*
>
> —*Pheng Cheah*[34]

As transition areas between two adjacent but different ecosystems, ecotones appear as both gradual shifts and abrupt demarcations. But more than just a marker of separation or even a marker of connection (although importantly both of these things), an ecotone is also a zone of fecundity, creativity, transformation; of becoming, assembling, multiplying; of diverging, differentiating, relinquishing. Something happens. Estuaries, tidal zones, wetlands: these are all liminal spaces where "two complex systems meet, embrace, clash, and transform one another."[35]

An ecotone is a sort of membrane, too: a pause, or even an increase in velocity, where/when/how matter comes to matter differently. If we consider membrane logic as belonging to the species of the ecotone, we are again made aware of the rich complexity of the hydro-logics that sustain us. The liminal ecotone is not only a place of transit, but *itself* a watery body. In other words, an ecotone has a material fecundity that rejects an ontological separation between "thing" and "transition," between "body" and "vector." The watery membrane, then, is no passive prop for the ontologically weightier bodies that traverse it. In Gilles Deleuze's terms, this event-full zone could be called "inorganic life."[36] But saturated with lively water, inorganic life is organic, too. The virtual is also actual. These and other pairs begin to creep.

Eco: home. *Tone*: tension. We must learn to be at home in the quivering tension of the in-between. No other home is available.

In-between nature and culture, in-between biology and philosophy, in-between the human and everything we ram ourselves up against, everything we desperately shield ourselves from, everything we throw ourselves into, wrecked and recklessly, watching, amazed, as our skins become thinner...

Transcorporeal Creep

> *The material self cannot be disentangled from networks that are simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, and substantial... what was once the ostensibly bounded human subject finds herself in a swirling landscape of uncertainty.*
>
> —*Stacy Alaimo*[37]

Tuana reminds us that our porosity is what enables us to live at all, but "this porosity... does not discriminate against that which can kill us."[38] Because water is such a capable vector, not only does life-giving potentiality course through our transcorporeal waterways, but so also does illness, contamination, inundation.

There are things we *do* know: skyrocketing rates of cancer in aboriginal communities downstream from the Alberta tar sands megaproject in Northwestern Canada are directly attributable to the toxic tailings ponds created by the bitumen extraction process. In November 2010, seven months after the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf of Mexico, the deaths of 6,104 birds, 609 sea turtles, and 100 mammals could be directly attributed to the oil spill—and the death toll continues to rise. Ongoing death and illness in the residents of Bhopal, India, almost three decades after the Union Carbide methylisocyanate gas leak are directly attributable to persistent groundwater contamination stealthily poisoning all that flows beneath.

But at what point do the sharp edges of our certainty begin to blur? Consider that in addition to fat, vitamins, lactose, minerals, antibodies, and other life-sustaining stuff, North American breast milk also likely harbors DDT, PCBs, dioxin, trichloroethylene, cadmium, mercury, lead, benzene, arsenic, paint thinner, phthalates, dry-cleaning fluid, toilet deodorizers, Teflon, rocket fuel, termite poison, fungicides, and flame retardant.[39] Reducing direct exposure to toxins cannot negate the fact that our bodily archives have deep memories, our flesh fed by streams whose sources are beyond our view.

As Stacy Alaimo notes, transcorporeal threats are often invisible, and risk is incalculable. The future is always an open question, and our bodies must be understood as flowing beyond the bounds of

what is knowable. Aqueous transcorporeality therefore demands of us a new ethics—a new way of being responsible and responsive to our others. On this "ever-changing landscape of continuous interplay, intra-action, emergence, and risk,"[40] even as we insist upon accountability, we must also make decisions that eschew certainty and necessary courses of action. This is an ethics of *unknowability.*

Moreover, this new ethics must also be itself transcorporeal, transiting across and through diverse sites of contestation. For whom should rocket-fuelled breast milk be an issue, and why? Consider that due to cold temperatures and little sunlight, persistent organic pollutants (POPs) flowing from the industrial and agricultural wastes of far-flung rich, Westernized outposts break down slowly in the Arctic. A thumb-sized piece of *maktaaq*, a staple in the Inuit diet, contains more than the maximum recommended intake of PCBs for an entire week.[41] As a result, Innu women's breast milk is an especially toxic substance, absorbing the liquid runoff of a global political economy that produces vastly divergent body burdens. The inequalities of neocolonialist globalization course through waterways at scales both individual and oceanic. Nursing one's young becomes a complex congeries of questions in which *we all are implicated*, rather than an issue for the biologically essentialized, lactating woman alone. The flows of global power meet the flows of biomatter.

Hydrofeminism

> *It is a constant challenge for us to rise to the occasion, to catch the wave of life's intensities and ride it on, exposing the boundaries or limits as we transgress them.*
>
> —*Rosi Braidotti*[42]

Watershed pollution, a theory of embodiment, amniotic becomings, disaster, environmental colonialism, how to write, global capital, nutrition, philosophy, birth, rain, animal ethics, evolutionary biology, death, storytelling, bottled water, multinational pharmaceutical corporations, drowning, poetry.

These are all feminist questions, and they are mostly inextricable from one another. A key priority for feminism today, as Chandra Talpade Mohanty has claimed, is building a transnational, anticapitalist, and anticolonialist solidarity, where local and global thinking and acting are simultaneous.[43] Few things are more planetary and more intimate than our bodies of water. New feminisms thus must also be transspecies, and transcorporeal.

Not only does water connect us, gestate us, sustain us—more than this, water disturbs the very categories that ground the domains of social, political, philosophical, and environmental thought, and those of feminist theory and practice as well. Thinking about our selves and our broader communities as watery can thus unmoor us in productive (albeit sometimes risky) ways. We are set adrift in the space-time between our certainties, between the various outcrops we cling to for security. It is here, in the borderzones of what is comfortable, of what is perhaps even livable,[44] that we can open to alterity—to other bodies, other ways of being and acting in the world—in the simultaneous recognition that this alterity also flows through us.

Current feminisms have their own ecotones, where the "objects" of feminist thought extend rhizomatically into areas one might never have considered "feminist." To follow our bodies of water along their rivulets and tributaries is to journey beyond the cleaving and coupling of sexually differentiated human bodies: we find ourselves tangled in intricate choreographies of bodies and flows of all kinds—not only human bodies, but also other animal, vegetable, geophysical, meteorological, and technological ones; not only watery flows, but also flows of power, culture, politics, and economics. So if projects that move us to think about animal ethics, or environmental degradation, or neocolonialist capitalist incursions are still "feminist," it is not because such questions are *analogous* to sexual oppression; it is rather because a feminist exploration of the inextricable materiality-semioticity that circulates through all of these bodies pushes at the borders of feminism, and expands it.

By venturing to feminism's ecotones, and leaping in, we can discover that feminism dives far deeper than human sexual difference, and outswims any attempts to limit it thus. Here is gestation, here is proliferation, here is danger, here is risk. Here is an unknowable future, always already folded into our own watery flesh. Here is hydrofeminism. At least this is what becoming a body of water has taught me.

Notes

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11. Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 38.
12. Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 37.
13. "And isn't it by forgetting the first waters that you achieve immersion in your abysses and the giddy flight of one who wings far away" (ibid., p. 38).
14. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 38.
15. Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," *Signs* 1:4 (1976), p. 881.
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18. Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, p. 38.
19. "A woman's ink of blood for a man's ink of semen" (Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, p. 38).
20. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 72.
21. See Irigaray, *Marine Lover*, pp. 12–13, where Irigaray makes allusions to Nietzsche's evolutionary "descent."
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42. Rosi Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible," in *Deleuze and Philosophy*, ed. Constantin V. Boundas (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 139.
43. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," *Signs* 28:2 (2003), pp. 499–535.
44. Spatio-temporal dynamisms "can be experienced only at the borders of the livable" (Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], p. 118). Braidotti expands this notion as an ethics of sustainability (Braidotti, "The Ethics of Becoming-Imperceptible").

THE GODDESS WHO CREATED THIS PASSING WORLD

The Goddess who created this passing world
Said Let there be lightbulbs & liquefaction
Life spilled out onto the street, colors whirled
Cars & the variously shod feet were born
And the past & future & I born too
Light as airmail paper away she flew
To Annapurna or Mt. McKinley
Or both but instantly
Clarified, composed, forever was I
Meant by her to recognize a painting
As beautiful or a movie stunning
And to adore the finitude of words
And understand as surfaces my dreams
Know the eye the organ of affection
And depths to be inflections
Of her voice & wrist & smile

Chapter 1

WATER RIGHTS: THE STATE, THE MARKET THE COMMUNITY

Who does water belong to? Is it private property or a commons? What kind of rights do or should people have? What are the rights of the state? What are the rights of corporations and commercial interests? Throughout history, societies have been plagued with these fundamental questions.

We are currently facing a global water crisis, which promises to get worse over the next few decades. And as the crisis deepens, new efforts to redefine water rights are under way. The globalized economy is shifting the definition of water from common property to private good, to be extracted and traded freely. The global economic order calls for the removal of all limits on and regulation of water use and the establishment of water markets. Proponents of free water trade view private property rights as the only alternative to state ownership and free markets as the only substitute to bureaucratic regulation of water resources.

More than any other resource, water needs to remain a common good and requires community management. In fact, in most societies, private ownership of water has been prohibited. Ancient texts such as the *Institute of Justinian* show that water and other natural sources are public goods: "By the law of nature

these things are common to mankind—the air, running water, the sea, and consequently the shore of the sea."[1] In countries like India, space, air, water, and energy have traditionally been viewed as being outside the realm of property relations. In Islamic traditions, the *Sharia*, which originally connoted the "path to water," provides the ultimate basis for the right to water. Even the United States has had many advocates for water as a common good. "Water is a moving, wandering thing, and must of necessity continue to be common by the law of nature," wrote William Blackstone, "so that I can only have a temporary, transient, usufructuary property therein."[2]

The emergence of modern water extraction technologies has increased the role of the state in water management. As new technologies displace self-management systems, people's democratic management structures deteriorate and their role in conservation shrinks. With globalization and privatization of water resources, new efforts to completely erode people's rights and replace collective ownership with corporate control are under way. That communities of real people with real needs exist beyond the state and the market is often forgotten in the rush for privatization.

Water Rights as Natural Rights

Throughout history and across the world, water rights have been shaped both by the limits of ecosystems and by the needs of people. In fact, the root of the Urdu word *abadi*, or human settlement, is *ab*, or water, reflecting the formation of human settlements and civilization along water sources. The doctrine of riparian right—the natural right of dwellers supported by a water system, especially a river system, to use water—also arose from this concept of *ab*. Water has traditionally been treated as a natural right—a right arising out of human nature, historic conditions, basic needs, or notions of justice. Water rights as natural rights do not originate with the state; they evolve out of a given ecological context of human existence.

As natural rights, water rights are usufructuary rights; water can be used but not owned. People have a right to life and the resources that sustain it, such as water. The necessity of water to life is why, under customary laws, the right to water has been accepted as a natural, social fact:

> The fact that right over water has existed in all ancient laws, including our own *dharmasastras* and the Islamic laws, and also the fact that they still continue to exist as customary laws in the modern period, clearly eliminates water rights as being purely legal rights, that is, rights granted by the state or law.[3]

Riparian Rights

Riparian rights, based on concepts of usufructuary rights, common property, and reasonable use, have guided human settlement all over the world. In India, riparian systems have long existed along the Himalaya. The famous grand *Anicut* (canal) on the Kaveri at the Ullar River dates back a thousand years and is believed to be the oldest hydraulic structure to control the flow of rivers in India. It is still functioning. In the northeast, old riparian systems known as *dongs* guide the use of water. In Maharashtra, conservation structures were known as *bandharas*.

The *ahar* and *pyne* systems of Bihar, where an unlined inundation canal (*pyne*) transfers water from a stream into a catchment basin (*ahar*), also evolved from a riparian doctrine. Unlike modern Sone canals built by the British, which have failed to meet the needs of the people, the *ahars* and *pynes* still provide water to peasants. In the United States, riparian systems were introduced by the Spanish, who had brought them from the Iberian Peninsula.[4] These systems were adopted in Colorado, New Mexico, and Arizona, as well as the eastern settlements.

Early riparian principles were based on the notion of sharing and conserving a common water source. They were not attached to property rights. As historian Donald Worster notes:

> In ancient times, the riparian doctrine was less a method of ascertaining individual property rights and more the expression of an attitude of non-interference with nature. Under the oldest form of the principle a river was to be regarded as no one's private property. Those who lived along its banks were granted rights to use the flow for natural purposes like drinking, washing, or watering their stock, but it was a usufructuary right only—a right to consume so long as the river was not diminished.[5]

Even European colonists who first settled in the eastern United States adhered to these basic tenets. But as the western part of the country began to be inhabited, usufructuary rights were no longer prevalent. The riparian concept was instead believed to have emerged from English common law and consequently centered around individual property ownership. "The men and women who settled the American West did not belong to that older world...[They] rejected the traditional riparianism," writes Worster. "Instead, they chose to set up over most of the region the doctrine of prior appropriation because it offered them a greater freedom to exploit nature."[6] Universal water rights were thus severely curtailed.

Cowboy Economics: The Doctrine of Prior Appropriation and the Advent of Privatization

It was in the mining camps of the American west that the cowboy notion of private property and the rule of appropriation—*Qui prior est in tempore, potior est in jure* (He who is first in time is first in right)—first emerged. The doctrine of prior appropriation established absolute rights to property, including the right to sell and trade water. New water markets blossomed and soon replaced natural water rights and the value of water was determined by the monopolistic first settlers. Prior appropriation "gave no preference to riparian landowners, allowing all users an opportunity to compete for water and to develop far from streams."[7]

The cowboy sentiment "might is right" meant that the economically powerful could invest in capital-intensive means to appropriate water regardless of the needs of others and the limits of water systems. This frontier logic granted the first appropriator an exclusive right to the water. Latecomers could appropriate water on the condition that prior rights were honored first. Cowboy economics permitted the diversion of water from streams to be used on nonriparian lands. If the appropriator did not use the water, he was forced to forfeit his right.

The cowboy logic allowed the transfer and exchange of water rights among individuals, who often disregarded water's ecological functions or its functions beyond mining. Although rights were based on first settlement, the true first settlers—Native Americans—were denied water appropriation rights. Miners and colonizers, assumed to be the first inhabitants, were granted all rights to use the water sources.[8]

Disregard for the limits of nature's hydrological cycle meant that rivers could be drained and polluted by mining waste. Disregard for the natural rights of others meant that people were denied access to water, and regimes of unequal and nonsustainable water use and water-wasteful agriculture began to spread across the American west.

Contemporary Cowboy Economics

The current push to privatize common water sources had its foundation in cowboy economics. Champions of water privatization, such as Terry Anderson and Pamela Snyder of the conservative Cato Institute, not only acknowledge the link between current privatization efforts and cowboy water laws, but also look at the earlier western appropriation philosophy as a model for the future:

> From the western frontier, especially the mining camps, came the doctrine of prior appropriation and the foundation of water marketing. This system provided the essential ingredients

> for an efficient market in water wherein property rights were well-defined, enforced and transferable.[9]

The current push to reintroduce and globalize the lawlessness of the frontier is a recipe for destroying our scarce water resources and for excluding the poor from their water share. Parading as the anonymous market, the rich and powerful use the state to appropriate water from nature and people through the prior-appropriation doctrine. Private interest groups systematically ignore the option of community control over water. Because water falls on earth in a dispersed manner, because every living being needs water, decentralized management and democratic ownership are the only efficient, sustainable, and equitable systems for the sustenance of all. Beyond the state and the market lies the power of community participation. Beyond bureaucracies and corporate power lies the promise of water democracy.

Water as a Commons

Water is a commons because it is the ecological basis of all life and because its sustainability and equitable allocation depend on cooperation among community members. Although water has been managed as a commons throughout human history and across diverse cultures, and although most communities manage water resources as common property or have access to water as a commonly shared public good even today, privatization of water resources is gaining momentum.

Prior to the arrival of the British in south India, communities managed water systems collectively through a system called *kudimaramath* (self-repair). Before the advent of corporate rule by the East India Company in the 18th century, a peasant paid 300 out of 1,000 units of grain he or she earned to a public fund, and 250 of those units stayed in the village for maintenance of commons and public works.[10] By 1830, peasant payments rose to 650 units, out of which 590 units went straight to the East India Company. As a result of increased payments and lost maintenance

revenue, the peasants and commons were destroyed. Some 300,000 water tanks built over centuries in pre-British India were destroyed, affecting agricultural productivity and earnings.

The East India Company was driven out by the first movement for independence in 1857. In 1858, the British passed the Madras Compulsory Labor Act of 1858, popularly known as the Kudimaramath Act, mandating peasants to provide labor for the maintenance of the water and irrigation systems.[11] Because *kudimaramath* was based on self-management and not coercion, the act failed to mobilize community participation and to rebuild the commons.

Self-managed communities have not just been a historical reality; they are a contemporary fact. State interference and privatization have not wiped them out entirely. In a nationwide survey covering districts in dry tropical regions in seven states, N. S. Jodha finds that the most basic fuel and fodder needs of the poor throughout India continue to be satisfied from common property resources.[12] Jodha's studies of commons in the fragile Thar desert also reveal that village community councils still adjudicate grazing rights: institutional rules and regulations determine periods of restricted grazing, the rotational patterns for grazing, the numbers and types of animals to be grazed, the rights to dung and fuel wood collection, and the rules for lopping trees for green fodder. Village councils also appoint their own watchmen to ensure that no community member or outsider breaks the rules. Similar rules exist for maintenance of wells and tanks.

Tragedy of the Commons

John Locke's treatise on property effectively legitimized the theft of the commons in Europe during the enclosure movements of the 17th century. Locke, son of wealthy parents, sought to defend capitalism—and his family's massive wealth—by arguing that property was created only when idle natural resources were transformed from their spiritual form through the applica-

tion of labor: "Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left in it, he hath mixed his labor with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property."[13] Individual freedom was dependent upon the freedom to own, through labor, the land, forests, and rivers. Locke's treatises on property continue to inform theories and practices that erode the commons and destroy the earth.

In contemporary times, water privatization is based on Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons*, first published in 1968. To explain his theory, Hardin calls on us to imagine a scenario:

> Picture a pasture open to all. It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons. Such an arrangement may work reasonably satisfactorily for centuries because tribal wars, poaching, and disease keep the numbers of both man and beast well below the carrying capacity of the land. Finally, however, comes the day of reckoning, that is, the day when the long-desired goal of social stability becomes a reality. At this point, the inherent logic of the commons remorselessly generates tragedy.[14]

Hardin assumes that commons were socially unmanaged, open-access systems with no ownership. And Hardin sees the absence of private property as a recipe for lawlessness.

Although Hardin's theory about the commons has gained tremendous popularity, it is has several holes. His assumption about commons as unmanaged, open-access systems stems from the belief that management takes effect only in the hands of private individuals. But groups do manage themselves, and commons are regulated rather well by communities. Moreover, commons are not open-access resources as Hardin proposes; they in fact apply the concept of ownership, not on an individual basis, but at the level of the group. And groups do set rules and restrictions regarding use. Regulations of utility are what protect pastures from overgrazing, forests from disappearing, and water resources from vanishing.

Hardin's prediction about the doom of commons has at its center the idea that competition is the driving force in human societies. If individuals do not compete to own property, law and order will be lost. This argument has failed to hold ground when tested in large sections of rural societies in the Third World, where the principle of cooperation, rather than competition, among individuals still dominates. In a social organization based on cooperation among members and need-based production, the logic of gain is entirely different from those in competitive societies. Garrett Hardin's *Tragedy of the Commons* misses the critical point that under circumstances in which common lands cannot even support the basic needs of the population, a tragedy is inevitable—with or without competition.

Communities and Commons

In the upper reaches of the Rio Grande Valley in Colorado, water is still managed as a commons. I had the opportunity to visit San Luis, home of traditional *acequia* systems (gravity-driven irrigation ditch) that nurture soils, plants, and animals. I was there to offer solidarity to the local communities engaged in a major struggle to defend the commons and the oldest system of water rights in Colorado. What the irrigation ditches produce is not merely a market commodity but a denseness of life. "The ditches make a lot of plant life possible in what is really a cold, barren desert," says Joseph Gallegos, a fifth-generation farmer working on ancestral lands in San Luis. "More plants means that the wildlife—birds and mammals—have a home. The ecologists call this biodiversity. I call it life, *terra y vida*."[15]

When the water of the Rio Grande is auctioned to the highest bidder, it is taken away from the agri-pastoral community whose rights to the water are tied to the responsibility of maintaining a "watershed commonwealth."[16] Markets fail to capture diverse values, and they fail to reflect the destruction of ecologi-

cal value. Water that replenishes ecosystems is considered water wasted. Joseph Gallegos raises an important point when he asks:

> Whose point of view is this? The cottonwood trees that line the acequia banks don't think the leaking water is wasted. Nor do the birds and other animals that live in the trees. The ditches create habitat niches for wildlife, and that is a good thing for the animals and the farmers. It is not wasteful, unless of course you are an urban developer greedily looking for more water for the cities' maniacal growth needs. The gringo treats water like a commodity. You know the saying, "In Colorado water flows uphill, towards money."[17]

When money determines value and courts get involved, common resources are stripped from farmers and lost to private companies. And, as Devon Pena points out,

> The attack on common property rights involves the legal codification of production that produces violent but legally sanctioned invasions, enclosures, and expropriations of *space*. The law itself violates the integrity of places as habitat for mixed communities of humans and non-humans.[18]

This is exactly what transpired in the Rito Seco Watershed in Colorado, when courts allowed the Battle Mountain Gold Mine to transfer water from agriculture to industrial use.

Community Rights and Water Democracies

Under conditions of scarcity, sustainable systems of water management evolved from the idea of water as commons passed on from generation to generation. Labor in conservation and community building became the primary investment in water resources. In the absence of capital, people working collectively provided the major input or "investment" in water works. As Anupam Mishra of the Gandhi Peace Foundation observes:

> The ways of collecting the drops of *Palar*, i.e., of rainfall, are as unending as the names of clouds and drops. The pot like the

> ocean is filled up drop by drop. These beautiful lessons are not to be found in any textbook but are actually couched in the memory of our society. It is from this memory that the *shrutis* of our oral traditions have come.... The people of Rajasthan did not entrust the organisation of such a boundless work to either the central or federal government, not even to what in modern parlance is termed as the private sphere. It is the people themselves who in each house, in each village, gave fruition to this structure, maintained it, and further developed it.
>
> "Pindwari" is to help others through one's effort, one's labour, one's hard work. The drops of sweat streaming down the brow of the people of Rajasthan continue to flow so as to collect the drops of rain.[19]

Traditional water systems based on local management were insurance against water scarcity in drought-prone regions of Gujarat. These systems were managed mainly by village committees. In the event of floods, famines, and other calamities, the king also helped; the role of a central authority was, therefore, primarily in disaster mitigation. Local institutions in water management included farmers' associations, local irrigation functionaries, local irrigation technicians, the village water associations, and the community labor system, maintained by contributions from each family.

In India, farmers' associations for the construction and maintenance of water systems were once widespread. In Karnataka and Maharashtra the associations were known as *panchayats*. In Tamil Nadu, they were called *nattamai*, *kavai maniyam*, *nir maniyam*, *oppidi sangam*, or *eri variyam* (tank committee). Tanks and ponds often served more than one village, and in such cases representatives from each village or farmers' association ensured democratic control. These committees could also collect tank dues and taxes from users. Lands were also donated, especially for financing capital expenditures on waterworks.

Village water systems required irrigation functionaries who looked after the day-to-day operation of irrigation systems. In the

Himalayas, where *kuhls* served community irrigation needs, irrigation managers were called *kohlis*. In Maharashtra, they were known as *patkaris*, *havaldars*, and *jogalaya*. In Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, they were known as *nirkatti*, *nirganti*, *nirpaychi*, *niranikkans*, or *kamkukatti*.

To ensure neutrality, *nirkattis* were chosen from the landless caste—the Harijans—who were granted autonomy from landowners and caste groups. Only Harijans held the power to close and open the tanks or vents. Once the farmers laid down the rules of distribution, no individual farmer could interfere and those who did could be fined. This protection of the associations from the economically powerful ensured water democracy.

Compensations were based on investments of one's own labor and could not be substituted by capital or by others' labor. In south India, collective labor investment was the primary investment in the construction and maintenance of village water systems known as *kudimaramath*. Each able-bodied person was required to help maintain and clean channels. *Nirkattis* also summoned farmers to clean the supply and field channels. The ancient economic treatise, *Arthasastra*, included certain punishments for defaulters from any kind of cooperative construction. Violators were expected to send their servants and bullocks to carry on their work and to share the costs, without laying any claim to the return.

The self-management systems suffered when the government took control over water resources during British rule. Community ownership was further eroded with the emergence of bore wells and tube wells, which made individual farmers dependent on capital. Collective water rights were undermined by state intervention, and resource control was transferred to external agencies. Revenues were no longer reinvested in local infrastructure but diverted to government departments.

Community rights are necessary for both ecology and democracy. Bureaucratic control by distant and external agencies and market control by commercial interests and corporations

create disincentives for conservation. Local communities do not conserve water or maintain water systems if external agencies—bureaucratic or commercial—are the only beneficiaries of their efforts and resources.

Higher prices under free-market conditions will not lead to conservation. Given the tremendous economic inequalities, there is a great possibility that the economically powerful will waste water while the poor will pay the price. Community rights are a democratic imperative—they hold states and commercial interests accountable and defend people's water rights in the form of decentralized democracy.

The Right to Clean Water Versus the Right to Pollute

Prior to passage of the Water Act of India in 1974, almost all judicial decisions were in favor of polluters. In addition to being protected by law, polluters also had more economic and political power than ordinary citizens. They were even more successful in using the legal processes in their favor. When the impact of industrial pollution was not severe or when industrialization was seen as a symbol of progress, courts tended to uphold the rights of the industrialists to pollute water as exemplified in a number of cases: *Deshi Sugar Mills v. Tups Kahar*; *Empress v. Holodhan Poorroo; Emperor v. Nana Ram*; *Imperatix v. Neelappa*; *Darvappa Queen v. Vittichakkon*; *Reg v. Partha;* and *Imperatix v. Hari Baput.* As water pollution intensified with the spread of industrialization, it could be handled only through criminal or penal sanctions. However, the courts alone could not protect people's right to clean water.

By the 1980s, as the threat from pollution increased, the right to clean water had to be defended as a fundamental right. The Supreme Court of India introduced a new principle of environmental rights in the famous case *Ratlam Municipality v. Vardhichand.* The municipality had to remove public nuisances, whether it had the financial capability to do so or not. *Ratlam* established a new type of natural right and recognized customary rights as a consti-

tutional guarantee. But even after *Ratlam* and the Water Act, the big polluters were not brought under the law. In most cases, the Central Water Pollution Board was against small factories.[20]

In the industrial world, antipollution regulations were introduced primarily to clean up rivers. In 1969, the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, Ohio, which served as a dump site for industries, was so contaminated by chemicals that it caught fire. In 1972, the United States passed the Clean Water Act, which established that no one had a right to pollute water and that everyone had a right to clean water. Before the passage of the law, water pollution was handled as a matter of common law involving trespassing and nuisance. The act set the goal of rendering the waters fishable and swimmable by 1983, and eliminating discharges of water pollutants by 1985. Since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, US pollution from point sources has been dramatically reduced, showing the power of regulation in pollution control.

In 1977, as a result of pressure from industry, the focus in the United States shifted from control-point discharge regulation to water quality standards. Tacitly, this shift marked a move away from pollution as a violation to pollution as permissible. Companies attempted to reintroduce the right to pollute through back-door efforts such as tradable pollution rights or tradable discharge permits (TDPs). Although TDPs have faced resistance from environmentalists, they still remain a popular market myth for solving pollution problems.

Supporters of the free market promote TDPs as an alternative to the "command-and-control" of environmental regulation. However, trade in pollution is also government sanctioned. As free-market advocates Snyder and Anderson admit, "Tradable pollution rights are essentially an assignment by a governmental agency of a right to discharge a specified level of pollution into a water body or water course."[21] The government also sets pollution standards, albeit on the basis of a fictitious "bubble," an imagined boundary covering a designated area.

It is not surprising that pollution permits are ecologically blind. They merely consider "incentives for gains from trade." If pollution control costs are low, an industry will sell discharge rights, and if costs are high, an industry will buy discharge rights. While such cost-benefit analysis might appear to create trade advantages, this market of pollution is ecologically dangerous.

Trade in pollution permits violates ecological democracy and people's right to clean water on several counts. It changes the role of governments from protector of people's water rights to advocate of polluters' rights. Governments assume regulatory roles that are anti-environment, anti-people and pro-polluter industry. TDPs exclude nonpolluters and ordinary citizens from an active democratic role in pollution control, since the trade in pollution is restricted to polluter industries.

Big Polluters: Old and New

The struggle between the right to clean water and the right to pollute is the struggle between the human and environmental rights of ordinary citizens and the financial interests of businesses. Pollution is a by-product of industrial technologies and global trade. Handmade paper and vegetable dyes cause no pollution; indigenous leather treatment is also very prudent and water conserving; fresh vegetables and fruits do not require water, except for cultivation.

By contrast, modern industrial papermaking and leather processing create massive pollution. Pulp uses 60,000 to 190,000 gallons of water per ton of paper or rayon. Bleaching uses 48,000 to 72,000 gallons of water per ton of cotton. Packaging green beans and peaches for long-distance trade can use up to 17,000 and 4,800 gallons per ton, respectively.[22]

The overuse and pollution of scarce water resources is not restricted to old industrial technologies; it is a hidden component of the new computer technologies. A study by South West Network for Environmental and Economic Justice and the Cam-

paign for Responsible Technology reveals that the process of chip manufacturing requires excessive amounts of water.

On average, processing a single six-inch silicon wafer uses 2,275 gallons of deionized water, 3,200 cubic feet of bulk gases, 22 cubic feet of hazardous gases, 20 pounds of chemicals, and 285 kilowatts hours of electrical power.[23] In other words,

> if an average plant processes 2,000 wafers per week (the new state-of-the-art Intel facility in Rio Rancho, New Mexico, for example, can produce 5,000 wafers per week) it would need 4,550,000 gallons of water per week and 236,600,000 gallons per year for wafer production alone.[24]

The study finds that out of the 29 Superfund sites in Santa Clara County, California, 20 were created by the computer industry.

The Principles of Water Democracy

At the core of the market solution to pollution is the assumption that water exists in unlimited supply. The idea that markets can mitigate pollution by facilitating increased allocation fails to recognize that water diversion to one area comes at the cost of water scarcity elsewhere.

In contrast to the corporate theorists who promote market solutions to pollution, grassroots organizations call for political and ecological solutions. Communities fighting high-tech industrial pollution have proposed the Community Environmental Bill of Rights, which includes rights to clean industry; to safety from harmful exposure; to prevention; to knowledge; to participation; to protection and enforcement; to compensation; and to cleanup.[25] All of these rights are basic elements of a water democracy in which the right to clean water is protected for all citizens. Markets can guarantee none of these rights.

There are nine principles underpinning water democracy:

1. Water is nature's gift

We receive water freely from nature. We owe it to nature to use this gift in accordance with our sustenance needs, to keep it clean and in adequate quantity. Diversions that create arid or waterlogged regions violate the principles of ecological democracy.

2. Water is essential to life

Water is the source of life for all species. All species and ecosystems have a right to their share of water on the planet.

3. Life is interconnected through water

Water connects all beings and all parts of the planet through the water cycle. We all have a duty to ensure that our actions do not cause harm to other species and other people.

4. Water must be free for sustenance needs

Since nature gives water to us free of cost, buying and selling it for profit violates our inherent right to nature's gift and denies the poor of their human rights.

5. Water is limited and can be exhausted

Water is limited and exhaustible if used nonsustainably. Nonsustainable use includes extracting more water from ecosystems than nature can recharge (ecological nonsustainability) and consuming more than one's legitimate share, given the rights of others to a fair share (social nonsustainability).

6. Water must be conserved

Everyone has a duty to conserve water and use water sustainably, within ecological and just limits.

7. Water is a commons

Water is not a human invention. It cannot be bound and has no boundaries. It is by nature a commons. It cannot be owned as private property and sold as a commodity.

8. No one holds a right to destroy

No one has a right to overuse, abuse, waste, or pollute water systems. Tradable-pollution permits violate the principle of sustainable and just use.

9. Water cannot be substituted

Water is intrinsically different from other resources and products. It cannot be treated as a commodity.

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2 William Blackstone, quoted in Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains* (New York: Grosset and Dunlop, 1931).
3 Chattarpati Singh, "Water and Law" (n.d.)
4 Devon Pena, ed., *Chicano Culture, Ecology and Politics* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998), p. 235.
5 Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), p. 88.
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7 Ibid., p. 104.
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9 Terry Anderson and Pamela Snyder, *Water Markets: Priming the Invisible Pump* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 1997), p. 75.
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14 Garrett Hardin, "Tragedy of the Commons," *Science* 162 (1968): pp. 1243-1248.
15 Devon Pena, ed., *Chicano Culture, Ecology and Politics* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998), p. 235.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., p. 242.
18 Devon Pena, "A Gold Mine, An Orchard, and an Eleventh Commandment," in Pena ed., *Chicano Culture, Ecology and Politics* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 1998), pp. 250-251.
19 Anupam Mishra, "The Radiant Raindrops of Rajasthan," translated by Maya Jani (New Delhi: Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, 2001).
20 Chattarpati Singh, "Water and Law."
21 Terry Anderson and Pamela Snyder, *Water Markets*, p. 149.
22 Peter Rogers, *America's Water: Federal Roles and Responsibilities* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993).
23 South West Network for Environmental and Economic Justice and Campaign for Responsible Technology, *Sacred Waters* (1997), pp. 19-20.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid., pp. 133-134.

Spirit lifts the digits,
Lifts the limb
With which it puts its seed
Inside of you to swim.

Spirit lifts the fingers,
Tilts the skull
Around to look straight at you
While it chooses what to cull.

Spirit spills the dye,
Colours it red,
The cloth is drenched now,
Every opponent is forever-always dead.

Spirit pulls the strings,
Pulled tight or loose,
It does not matter,
Around your neck there is a noose.

Spirit cleans the hole,
It keeps it empty
So that space always remains
To consume infinite plenty.

Spirit digs the trench,
It bends the brass
And sees all that you do
Right through a magic looking glass.

Spirit lifts the digits,
Lifts the limb
With which it puts its seed
Inside of you to swim.

Brilant Pireva

TRINH T. MINH-HA

WIND, WATER, WALL-WOMAN

(Excerpts from *I-Blue*, a book in progress)[1]

The Wind

Once in a while, surreptitiously the Cry irrupts, bursting into light, giving life to what has gone dead and killing what is thought to be living. Whether it be scream, squeal or wail, the cut breeds form, which silence absorbs.

All sea outside inside. Immense, the ebb and flow; that interface between air, earth, water; or, spirit, breath and body. Immeasurable, boundlessly boundful, nonhuman within a human frame.

Froth, wind, the incessant rise and fall. How far can one dive, knowing not how to tread deep waters? Shore dwellers and swimmers putting their lives to the test in seawater have learnt to see an individual wave, isolating its pattern and components, whose complexities writing has eloquently preserved. To read and write a wave, it's difficult, it's feasible. But to listen to one, and one only? In so intense a din, nothing comes through without resonance. Only with ears shut wide does the sound of the single wave separated from the ones immediately preceding and following it manifest itself soundlessly. Majestically and spectrally, the vision of the singular fold and flow unwinds in slow motion as in a silent film. Yet, a wave is in itself a multiplicity. Tiny bits of water circling onto themselves, sweeping and swelling to indefinite sizes magically choreographed by the hand of the wind. All-activity, each waving appears as unique individual and disappears as no-individual in the silence of the communal ocean. One after the other they are seen dying, whitening to the cadence of winds and tides. Again and again the foam spreads while the lone break, the individuated shatter, goes unheard.

The rise is in the dying. When language recedes, words return looking strangely at writing and at she who writes.

Wind writing on sea skin. Sea tongues and unsolicited voices drift in and are driven out. When everything seems to decay and the remains are swept away, the wind rises again. Only it knows the waves, whence they come, where they are heading. One either follows, swims against their flow at one's own risk, or else floats empty. Undulating adrift. Tossed about in nothingness. Writ in the language of flotsam. The wind disturbs, sickens, harms, but also enlivens and endows writing circumstantially with an end and a purpose. A predominance of water and wind is known to produce a bitter medicinal taste. For divers who have taken the sea as their abode, the kiss of the waves tastes—not sweet nor even salty, but—fresh and bitter. At least, it is so remarked by those who happily offer their flesh to the erotic flogging of the sea on windy days. Wind, in the science of healing, solicits deep listening, as it is one of the essential constituents of the body and one of the basic causes of the entire spectrum of diseases. Not quite visible, perhaps, but wind movements and effects can be acutely seen, heard and smelled. Illnesses of the body, so the science warns, are no other than imbalances of the wind. Physicians diagnose them by reading or listening to the pulse, which seems to beat normally, but when pressure is applied to it, it symptomatically becomes empty like a balloon on the surface of water. The patient suffering from such a disease is said to suffer from delirium and unlocalised pain, marked by restlessness, insomnia, screaming, laughing, and senseless talk.

Overuse of body, speech and mind on an empty stomach, overexposure to breezes and draughts invites leakage and uncontrolled flows there where everything looks sane and rational. Delirium pervades the social field and is always at work in Day reality. The Tibetan medical system treats disordered wind by suggesting a diet that has soft and warm powers, therapy in which hot and oily fomentation is applied on "wind" points, and repose in a warm and dark place with a desired friend. Healing requires warmth-inducing

behavior as well as maintenance of the stomach's heat, if this bodily field is to be kept fertile. Warm and dark go together in creativity—the act of love (or lovemaking for those whose dying to the self leads to no hoarding of power). There are many ways to go warm, and hot refers here neither to the temperature nor to the spicy taste of the food, although these may be linked. Wise eating, wise food speaks to the qualities of digestion and the powers arising from it. Perhaps the mouth is the organ of thinking. The mouth at the intersection of eye and ear, or else the nose at the intersection of tongue and hand. All depends on the *di*-gestive and *trans*-forming process. There where it is located—at the hips and waist—physicians characterize the wind in its development as "lightness and mobility manifested by the mind when, out of ignorance, it desires and becomes attached to attractive objects."[2] A careful assemblage of apparent contradictions—*lightness, desire, mobility and attachment*—may lead to a halt or to the threshold of the word. Eros and logos, the malady grows with dispersion in acquisition (whether mental or material), and the inability to unmoor oneself or to free-flow bears many names, for these physicians of ancient ways have identified no less than sixty-three types of cold or wind diseases.

The Wave

The world is all sound, which makes the ground of silence dangerously suicidal. No doubt, the wind says it best when it comes to nothingness. The sight of a wave, a solitary wave leaping high in a white meadow with no ocean in view, is nothing strange. Senseless talk? In the realm of fore sound, hearing needs absorption. Isolation often means release from hierarchical and customary subordination. It is either equated with dissociation in destruction or exalted as the quintessence of the creative source. But the pearls here are all fakes, for defiance is still dependence and genuine silence does not

2 Dr. Pema Dorjee, with Elizabeth Richards, "Cures and Concepts of Tibetan Medicine," *Tibetan Medicine* (A publication by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives), Series No. 2, 1981, 44.

necessarily come from elimination, exclusion or isolation. Tamed and dispossessed of its nightmarish power is the image of a tsunami—caught in its gigantic size on rice paper, on celluloid, or on colorful postcards—in the act of swallowing a miniscule boat, of soaring up above humble rooftops, of chasing mortals in their flight, and of blasting away whole villages. *One* of a kind against the commoners, or else, *One* on its own, unattached to the leveling waters of the world. The extra-ordinary in the *singular*, or simply, man at the mercy of nature's forces. What claims exceptionalness paradoxically turns out to be exceptionable. What becomes eagerly popularized would have to depend on the whims of the wind. Is the display of individual threat nothing but a need for a feeling of power? Or is it a wish to discharge what is assumed to be power? Perhaps, rather than waiting for the image to regain its real effect in dreams, one should simply accept the reality of encounters with wonder and let one's eyes meet, with neither fear nor rejection, the sight of a wave taking a stroll by itself, detached from its peers and consorts.

Alone is just as general as *Bread,* so a writer (Maurice Blanchot) notes, who finds rather comical the dilemma of a distress that writes well and moans: "I am alone." It is in a solitary condition, in deliriums and convulsions that new ideas and great men have, for some time now, conventionally thought to be born. Aloneness under the guise of solitude is easily tossed around in the narrow world of exceptions, and a grain of madness is commonly joined to originality when it comes to establishing innovators' credentials. Mystification chooses when to soak its geniuses *almost* wet in the shadows of insanity and when to flood them with the dry beam of super-clarity. He who writes (masterly) on madness, raves and stutters (admirably) *like* a madman, is often also he who confides, not quite to himself, but to the much-needed reader, that he is alone. The *lie*, whether partial or whole, depends on whether this not-quite solitude writes "well" across I, or whether it writes "in mediocrity" within an I, in which case it does not even *ring true*, unable as it is, to bear witness to its artifices.

Truth longs for the lie to disappear; it is, *in appearance*, the most enduring lie.

There's no one "mad" without others "sane." Nor is there a victim of loneliness without a lucid witness. Laughable and miserable, this delusion called desolation needs the Other's presence in order to take on meaning. No wonder, then, that one of the methods used in Japan to work with psychotic and neurotic subjects is to allow the person to be left alone and to live in isolation for three to six weeks, with all needs provided for, but with no doctors of any kind around. Half-mad; nearly; almost, but not quite. Alone, never alone, itself a multiplicity in language. Reading the "best" writings on madness and solitude often means engaging in a multiply haunted activity of *re-lire* (*re-lier*) and *dé-lire (dé-lier)*—of delirious re-reading and un-reading, or of indeterminate re-attaching and detaching. The more exact the words resorted to in order to cry out the loneliness, the greater the contradiction. The moment one puts it in writing one is already outside it, caught in the sanity of word arrangement and the collective babble of language.

No-mad solitude leaves the mind musing. What is it that makes the pain lie to itself? Often a reaction against normalcy with its rational institutions and mind-doctors, a work that capitalizes on madness tends also to capitalize on the anomaly of everyday reality. Banality and anonymity are no longer the order, but the disorder of the day. In a reverse economy of madness, one stops being insane when the world fully regains its sanity. Writing finds a way out (with poignancy and grace), by shifting the focus to *the madness of the day:* that queer, accurate encounter between the *every* day and the *other* night, in which the clarity of normal light exudes intractable insaneness. The darkest place is always right underneath the lamp, says a Chinese proverb. Blinded, one is driven to a revelation, not of the hidden, but of the obvious, the all-too-visible. Once the light is turned around and established dualities lose their pertinence, the need for solitude and madness can *detach* itself from its reactive anti-socialness (those who *dare* to be mad). The singular insanity being made manifest inside, the unseen madness of the world becomes disturbingly visible.

Silence is many-voiced.

Full lips in the morning mist. To such a single-to-myriad movement born in stillness, those hearing the traces of sea foam on warm sand with no thought clinging to their heart would go mad with joy. But in a room full of bawling winds and waters where landscape imitates mindscape, self-made knots can be so tortuous as to make it impossible to give ear to such a silent multiplicity. Listening to voices in the whirlwind, one sometimes only hears the barking of a not-so-solitary voice spewing forth venom, trying overtly to chastise those with whom it comes into contact, while covertly demanding from them unconditional love. Building its own decor in the unfolding drama of life, the voice also devises for itself the sole protagonist's role, being actor and reactor, observer observed, and victim of the times in which it lives. A time, it is thought, of *windsurfing,* when reacting to, riding with and adapting the motion of that gigantic wave are more appropriate than creating one—even a small one among others—to alter the course of events.

Catch the third wave, let the fourth go, for a new wave, and another again, has already begun to wash away all traces on the shore. Nobody listens today because nobody cares or knows how to, so goes the lament. The anguish and the craving to make a mark on one's contemporaries bleed out in the tone of the work, which blindly registers the individual's states of bitterness. A voice in the dark? No, a voice among voices in the whirlwind. A singular mark in the heart of globalization. Internal or external, the struggle is carried on in writing between T-terms: Time (The Times) or Tone? Neither or both, perhaps, for despite its familiar music across histories and cultures, every story of the wound is told as a unique story from one victim to another. In the archives of thoughts, deeds, and art, numerous were the individualities that tried to make a dent in the structure of the day, but were drowned out. It would be doing them injustice to think they failed because they weren't loud enough, when truly they were so enamored with their own thinking as to shut themselves up in their own noises.

When love goes dying and fascism finds its way back up…

Fall and rise. Rise toward the fall. There where L disappears, F is said to reappear in full glory. The amorous movement draws in and out in solitude. Traces left by the one are properly wiped out by the other, for the sake of sanity and sanitation. A line detached from a previous context of insanity continues here and now to speak out of the blue. Fissured and already non-original, it is meant to return and travel. No doubt a false move, a mad fever of emotional heights and subjectification has been driving love to its entombment. And since loners pining away for attachment to their own images are born as much from misery as from mastery, the forces of repression and of oppression continue to thrive under the cover of passion and separatism. The flame passes on, leaving behind graphics of the firewood consumed. Ever present is the threat of being muffled from the outset as a voice emerges and events are set into words. The sounds fervently emitted can be skillfully dulled or deadened through a comprehensive system, not necessarily of censorship, but of anticreative appropriation, expropriation, and mutilation in simulation. For some then, the time when love dies and fascism rises is dreadfully specific. . . The blame needs a traceable face within a named ethnicity. In the land of the free, suddenly, thousands disappear overnight, deported or detained without charge, for reasons of homeland security.

Again, the way of the wind emerges as pivotal to all relations of movement and repose. Its sounding power can make wonders happen, but only when the time and context are ripe: at dawn or sunset, when thresholds of colors imperceptibly slide into one another; or else, on a moonlit night when the mind clears and the body walks noiselessly. At the twilight of language, immediate change through cleansing and purifying is an illusion; only the intense affirmation of repetition in difference exposes death's and the World Order's conceit.

Wind Power

As an answer to Huang-di's question, "Why is it that the same illness having the same origin and manifesting itself at the same time can present itself in different clinical forms? Has the sky created wind to punish man?" Shaoyu remarked: "the wind does not take anyone as its target, but man, by his carelessness, let himself be caught by the wind."

The Wall

Endless attempts are made to drive Home away and to ban the Return. Yet everyone is said to carry a roof on the back and a room inside oneself. It is by one's ear that one is asked to prove this fact for, if one listens intensely—as did Kafka—when someone walks fast, say during nighttime, what one hears is "the rattling of a mirror not quite firmly fastened to the wall."[3] With the fragility of the reflective device comes the threat of alterity and multiplicity that lurks during quiet times behind the agony of clattering sounds caused by external movements. Bodies in collision, bodies shuffled away in haste, footsteps resounding in the empty night. Who are you, appearing in front of me? Seeking, shouting to the dark; then, walking behind, sitting by my side, lying across my path, breaking or laughing when I am mending and crying. What? …You mean that sound? So loud, I can't hear. No one can. And yet there it is, soundlessly present as stories and emotions rise from nowhere's depths to the surface. It's the silence of the voiceless thousands crowded within the building's walls, waiting in pitch dark to be lifted up to the sky, far from home. No, no light allowed in the ink of the night, for fear that bullets may have eyes, leaving their writing on the wall. What? …It says they dare step out of their shores and while fleeing, forget to weep, even soundlessly. Lips. Voices of exiles, refugees and emigrants recede in the distance and return loudly in waves nearby. Secrets buried deep in the opacity of matter may suddenly and uncontrollably speak, rising uninvited to the impassive surface of the wall.

[3] Franz Kafka, *The Blue Octavo Notebooks* (Cambridge, Mass.: Exact Change, 1991), 1.

Shhhhhhhh! Stop talking, or else.

Mouth lies. What terrifies is not always the act per se so much as its overblown projection: the numerous thoughts that wildly arise from one's own fears and insecurities—the evident, rather than the unknown. What one finds oneself so afraid of is the very stench of truth emanating from oneself: one's own elusive enemy. When terror awakens, the wall out of bounds loses its opacity. It lets one see what is not meant to be seen. From the outside in, the brick wall. From the inside out, the skin wall. (Or is it the other way around?) Both have innumerable ears and eyes, wide open or wide shut as circumstance requires. The ultra-thin film separating the two sides of one's intimate wall—the communal inner-outer sounding board—constantly threatens to disappear, leaving one *raw*. Sometimes, walls can become turning points. They stand out at once as screens and as doorways—the *impasse* (what materially prevents visibility) and the *passage* to an elsewhere (what lies on the other side of its material visibility).

A boundary event, the wall-no-wall draws into focus one's relationship to visibility and invisibility. It is a (non)corporeal reality whose opacity and bi-dimensionality are paradoxically indicative of an infinite non-place. The Great Wall of immortality; the wall of life built on innumerable deaths. Both door and doorway are nowhere to be seen. One goes on knocking in the dark but no One is there to answer. How utterly vain it is to try to break in there where one is already inside. How many have flung themselves into the abyss of the wall hoping for a breakthrough? The mystery is that of no secret. All is there, and one is said to be a sorry traveler in this noisy world if one knows not how to return to the stillness of the sea within oneself.

Once the flow is let out, it falls silent.…

When one enters the world of words with more in sight than the skill of joining sentences, the art of making verses, the ability to shape meanings, the goal to impart a message, or the quest for new concepts and ideas, one is bound to founder from shore to

shore, to experience instances of all white in the midst of radiant life, and to take a dive into the infinite realms of twilight gray….

Imperfectly hemmed with white, words swell and recede at their own pace. Some cling and stick to one's skin, others float in the room between floor and ceiling. Liquid as they all are, they evaporate and dry up. But sometimes, just as they seem to fade into white, they return wet again in a solitary sneeze. Something not being said is speaking silently, which demands and endures waiting. At the call of dusk, anger goes dying with the return of nightlight. Facing the wall in emptiness then has little to do with being walled in by emptiness. The gap between the two grows wider as *one* instant of true love, no matter how brief and fragile, is enough to inaugurate a taste for the infinite. Each syllable used to translate It, each sound breaking into light carries its wonders into the smallest details of daily life. There, amidst the sea, a woman stands. A single "w" holding up the sky while diving into the wreck of the infamous Wall. That non-place against which images, sounds and thoughts arise and vanish. A living surface-membrane; a target for the eye and a visual rupture; an earthwork, blind and blinding in its immovable and impenetrable (im)material appearance; a song of texture in its own right.

The Silence of the Sea

A drop yearns to find its way to the Ocean. Freed, water returns to water, again and again breaking through the individual container. Love urges her to enter the cold sea and fill herself to the brim with the chill of Freshness. Her body quivers with every wave movement. Who writes all that strange poetry of the senses? Woman and water give and receive in mutual resistance and surrender. There, soaking wet, she gulps down liquid and moon, drinking in the fresh, the salty, the bitter. In the ripple of the light, a sign, then a question now and then surfaces on the night page. Can a drop stay still in the Ocean? Yet despite the forceful beating and tossing of the waves, she stands still. Struggle and fall, she does, as she weeps and laughs her way up again, dripping in the iciness and standing

still. The Great woman Barrier. Her boundaries are her very access. Carrying the sea inside, she moves with the receding and the returning, letting the time of coming and going find its own rhythm. Letting the sea be deceptively defined by the horizon's flat line; letting the wind sweep wild through her liquid field; letting this body open a path that is no path in the briny water and walk its way back to the shore.

Now facing seaward, silent at the edge of land and water, she and the sea. The selfsame sea that calls everything unto Her is now gazing back at her gaze. Mystery arises as living starts asking questions about itself. The ever-changing surface of the sea inquires about its own unfathomable depths. And the answer? *Silence*: solid, empty, watchful and awake. The Answer closes in around the Question so as to preserve the latter, keeping it open, bottomless. In the encounter of woman and sea—so small and so vast, the infinite multiplicity of the singular—three worlds mingle on the page: the *ones* of desire, form and non-form.

Mute thunder. The sand delights to feel her bare feet. Time stands still. From the quietness, attention effortlessly arises. She is all ear, listening wide with no memory. Not a single sound in the night. There, unseen, silence appears. Unmistakable, unavoidable, saying nothing, wanting nothing, judging no one, bearing no grudge, it awaits, lurking, spreading, filling in every form, and catching one unawares—in the lips, in a stranger's eyes, in the heart of a gesture, in the very word used to name it. Unblinking, the world stares back at the empty surface of the mirror wall. The larger has suddenly entered the small; the ocean has slipped into the drop. Inside meets outside in the familiar everyday. The body, losing its boundary, slowly looks round and around, the way the earth turns on itself.

With the unexpected irruption of vastness, the feeling of having gone over the edge expands ever wider and yet, everything in the surrounding is in the same place. Words, rocks, stones, sand, shellfishes, seaweed, froth and foam: more vibrant than ever, each form fully alive and constantly in movement—in their places. Something big and

uncontainable has gotten into the room without warning. But the moon is still the same moon. Quietly, in small single steps, she reverts to her daily activities and pretends nothing has happened. Time returns to its usual pulsation…

Uncannily non-scalar, from end to end, …I start walking.

WHEN THE CLIMATE CHANGED

Samuel R. Delany

THE NEWS ON THE COMPUTER was full of the damage from the six tornadoes to the south, and the forest fires were less than two hundred miles away. He wanted to have sex, mad, passionate sex of the sort he had had last week through his Tinder app, and he knew with whom and where to find them.

But it was just too hot.

6

Mappings of the Liminal

I think about being in the bush with Doug—how I was often in my head, not paying attention to my surroundings and the bits of knowledge the land was sharing with me. But each March, as we collected sap from the maple trees, Doug would describe the melting of the snow, the warmth of the sun at midday and the crispness of the nighttime. He would turn my attention to the waking of the trees, the making of sap within their trunks, their regrowth and their breath. He talked about Ziigwan as a season that would hand things over to Minookmi, the second part of spring when the broad leaves are born and the tree frogs begin to sing—spirits bringing with them a miraculous transformation that he found wonderful every year.

A miraculous transformation that happens every year.

Now, hearing Doug's voice in this time of world endings and world beginnings grounds my thinking in a different register. Over the past twenty years the acceleration of the global climate crisis has not brought about any transformation where global systems have aligned with the existing planetary cycles that create and maintain life on earth. Rather, there has been an intensification of racial capitalism and its hierarchies, violences that see Black, Brown and Indigenous peoples as sacrificial in order to maintain the wealth of a few elite, wealthy white men. Over the course of my own life, this has become much worse—and the speed at which things are becoming worse is also accelerating.

I am reminded that my ancestors are here with me, supporting and sharing and caring for me from another realm. They are present in Gzhwe Manidoo, and they allow me to be present within an unconditional love for the living beings that make up our planetary homespace. The energy of Gzhwe Manidoo lands in my heart, singing to me that the violence of colonialism requires an arsenal of coping mechanisms, and the full range of emotions—including anger, resentment, sadness, despair and hopelessness—are necessary responses and motivators alongside a foundational habit of care and kindness and unconditional love. These ethics are foundational in that they create worlds that view private property, prisons, punishment and greed as terrible mistakes. Gzhwe Manidoo grounds me in my body as a cycle of energies through space and time, and in the notion that the individual exists only fleetingly and insignificantly.

I know, too, that the experiences of Gzhwe Manidoo and Gizhiigokwe eliminate the possibility that this work will be easy and spontaneous. Their stories tell us that there was no map. There was no research plan. There was no set of strategies. There was no land. There was no leader—or there were many leaders.

There was, however, a practice of love and hope. There was a fostering of emergence. There was a collaborative practice of kindness. There was persistence, and perhaps the belief that eventually, working together, these beings would generate what they collectively needed to get to the next day. They understood that in remaking the world, they weren't building an entire planetary system but merely figuring out how to live within, and contribute to, the cycles that already existed and had given them life.

There are many origin stories that tell of this kind of knowledge.

Joshua Myers begins his book *Cedric Robinson: The Time of the Black Radical Tradition* with a description of the philosophies and ethical practices for world making of the Bakongo peoples of West-Central Africa. Using the work of Congolese intellectual Tata Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau, Myers grounds the evolving world view and theory of a particular communal existence that is both cyclical and deeply relational.[31] He describes a world that is at once concerned with the intimate and the

planetary, and an existence where to be alive is "to seek to understand, grow, and mature in rhythm with ancestors and the natural world, and to align them with a vision of and for community" within the tuzingu—the records of their ancestors and the bodies of knowledge they housed and embedded into the intellectual practices of the Bakongo. Myers then uses these understandings as a conceptual foundation for one definition of the Black Radical tradition found in the work of Cedric Robinson.

Robinson himself, as Myers notes, described the Black Radical tradition in Black Marxism as "an accretion (process of growth), over generations, of collective intelligence gathered from struggle," and as "enslavement providing the occasion for struggle" wherein connection, record-keeping and creating a collective body of intelligence—all with the purpose of bringing forth more life—were consistent with the theories of the Bakongo peoples.

I'm drawn to this section of Myers's book, and I read and reread it. First, because the theories of the Bakongo peoples are so like the theories of my own people, the Nishnaabeg. And second, because of the continuation of this orientation and accretion within the political movements of radical and liberatory Black organizing. The second point is most striking to me. If I were to sit down and try to excavate an Indigenous liberatory or radical politics, I would most certainly find evidence of it at every point in history since the beginning of colonialism, and I would have to increasingly disentangle this from the recognition politics of the state. And yet, as Tata Kimbwandende Kia Bunseki Fu-Kiau points out, coding and decoding, tying and untying, are critical parts of world-making practices.[32]

Lakota philosopher Vine Deloria Jr., in *God Is Red*, writes that one of the most significant differences between Indigenous and Western metaphysics is that land is central to Indigenous modes of thinking and being and to our ethical formulations. He writes that places or place making are sites of meaning making, "the highest possible meaning," and that most Western societies, by contrast, derive meaning from time in relation to place, with the narrative of development and history being of central importance. Deloria concludes that this fundamental difference, with

Indigenous peoples philosophically concerned with space and Western peoples philosophically concerned with time, makes understanding and meaning between the two thought systems difficult.

I remember when I first bought *God Is Red*. I was visiting Boulder, Colorado, in the late 1990s and I found the book in a local bookstore. I was a hungry PhD student at the University of Manitoba, and this was a time when if one found a book by a Native writer, one bought it. Revisiting the book decades later, after spending years immersed in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabewin, shifts my understanding.

Following Deloria, I don't think I understand a clear division between time and space; rather, I understand time as a function of the networks created by space. The passage of time within Nishnaabeg thought is not linear, and it comes from the cycles of living and non-living systems that make up the land. Time is inferred from place.

A day is one rotation of the earth on its axis, or two passages of the sun across the meridian. Using stars, a day is the period of two passages of a star across the earth's meridian. A month is the time needed to complete the cycle phases of the moon, or the moon's passage around the earth. A year is the period taken by the earth to complete an orbit around the sun. Time is movement. Time places the earth and all the patterns and systems that make up the earth in liminal space.

I'm thinking about this in Denendeh in June, where the sun is seemingly always out, high in the sky. Darkness comes for a few hours after midnight, more muted daylight than actual darkness. This contrasts with the dark of December and January, when the sun only appears for a few hours each day. These seasonal contrasts in daylight are an organizing feature of life in the north, and the farther one goes, the more dramatic the contrast is, until you reach Inuit homelands where there are long periods of dark in the winter and long periods of midnight sun in the summer. In this period of expanded daylight, event after event can occur as life continues long into what was previously understood as night. Plants grow at phenomenal rates. Animals adjust their circadian rhythms to the ever-changing levels of light, with birds seemingly singing at all hours. While this measurement is non-spatial,

it is informed by place, space or land. It is informed by days, months and seasons. And these, in turn, are informed by the movement of the sun, the rotation of the earth, one's location on the planet. Cyclical time comes from land. Linear time is a European construct that overlays cyclical time—a mechanism to organize the world in a homogeneous way to facilitate, of course, capitalism.

When my kids were little, I tried each December to recover some of the celebrations and traditions of my Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg ancestors, so as to bring authentic meaning to the month. The winter solstice seemed to make sense. For a few years we gathered around an outside fire and told stories to mark the day. This wasn't how my ancestors would have marked the occasion. Doug had shared with me that they would send a child out with a device that measured the movements of the sun at noon. The device was sinew or string and a stick, now commonly known as a shadow stick. Or often the stick was a tree. Children would draw a circle on the ground and place the stick in the circle. A week or two before the solstice, they would mark the length of the shadow at noon, relative to the circle. They would repeat this process each day. At some point the shadow would stop lengthening and begin to shorten—and that was the winter solstice.

Doug told me that our name for winter solstice is *Shkwaamaagee Giizis* —meaning "no more movement" or "the end of movement" or "the sun is now standing still," where *giizis* meant moon or month. After it stops for about three weeks—Nike zhaw miinawaa—it comes back. We would mark this time of year, Gchi Gisinaa Giizis, by feasting, having ceremony and celebrating on the first full moon after December 21.[33]

Time is a mapping of cycles. A mapping of liminal space.

I think of a child in the time before colonization, in the darkness of December, measuring light on the snow with a stick and sinew, connecting themselves and their family to planetary movements and cycles as a practice. I think of other ways this happens for Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, which of course includes sunrise, noon, sunset, midnight, which are sometimes thought of as the four sacred times of day. Sunrise and our sunrise ceremonies are the first daily reminder that we are attached to

something communal and global that is far bigger than any one of us. The light before dawn helps us visualize that the presence is a collapse, an enfolding, of the past and the future. Naawakwe, or noon, is another stopping time, with the sun high in the sky during the summer. Sunset is yet another transformation—a handing over from Giizis to Dibi-Giizis. And midnight is the fourth stopping point. The thirteen moons that make up the year are signals telling us that the impossible blue of the planet is liminal space. Everything is always in transition.

From within this frame, spatial orientation is relational rather than a fixed territory. From inside this orientation, linear time is a ruse. With this orientation, a division between time and space is an artifact of a way of thinking that is a fantasy.

All the water that surrounded that child in the time before colonization, in the darkness of December, every single drop, is all the water that has ever been on the planet—and is all the water that now surrounds me.

Water is the network that facilitates communication and relationship between all forms of life.

Water is a liminal space, always shifting between states.

This network, Water, Nibi, is the container of life on our planet, and as a container it is constantly moving and changing form, taking up different amounts of space. It is an anti-container container.

Three percent of it, fresh water, moves inside and outside all forms of life. It exists in soil and air.

Without cycling, process and a complicated positive feedback loop, without Gizhiigokwe's invention and monitoring of the cycles, there is no container. Gizhiigokwe, Sky Woman, created liminal space and transformation.

Fresh water accounts for less than 3 percent of water on the planet.

Of that less than 3 percent, two-thirds is frozen in glaciers and ice caps. The other 30 percent is groundwater. Only 0.3 percent of fresh water is found in lakes, rivers and swamps.[34]

The earth is 70 percent water.

The human body is 60 percent water. Animals are 60 to 80 percent water. Plants are 90 percent water.

The liminal space of water is a complex cycle spanning different scales of time—spending just days in the atmosphere and decades in snow and glaciers, and thousands of years in the ocean, and tens of thousands of years underground, and hundreds of thousands of years in the Antarctic ice shelf.[35]

A drop of water inside me appears on my skin as sweat in the summer. This evaporates into the air, travelling as water vapour. Its travels expose it to conditions that cause it to undergo condensation, and it falls to the earth as some kind of precipitation. It can fall and be collected in the ocean. It can fall into the collection of groundwater, intercepted by soil, infiltration and percolation, learning to move sideways. It can run off into a lake or a river that moves it to the ocean. It can be transpired, perspired, expired by plants and animals.

And still, it is in motion. And still, it is all the water in the world today. Every drop is all the water that has ever been on the planet.

And all life shares this water.

10

Agaming: On the Shore

A little less alone.

Doug died in the summer of 2022, and part of my grieving has been to make an accounting of the importance of this attachment—and an accounting of regret, for all the things we didn't get to do together. The violence of dispossession has made access to Elders and land and Nishnaabe knowledge scarce, and that is why the death of such Elders is not merely a loss of parental or grandparental relationships; it is also the loss of bodies of knowledge that are difficult to recover. These are losses compounded by colonialism. When an Elder dies, there are things they saved in their body that you can't get back because they don't exist anywhere else in the world.

In the months leading up to his death, Doug and I talked a lot about Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg beliefs and practices around the transition from physical and spiritual being to a solely spiritual one. Doug was spending more time in the spiritual world as his body retreated. And as he spent more time in this interstitial space, the space in between life and death, I was dragged there with him, reluctantly. It was difficult for me to stay present where the physical and spiritual worlds overlapped because I didn't want to feel the feelings invoked there. Yet this in-between space demanded my presence. It demanded I face my emotions. It demanded that I let go of the relationship Doug and I had for years, that of student and teacher, and be

open to a sort of companionship at the end during a radical transformation: death.

During this time, Doug liked to recount what he thought would happen as he made his way to the spiritual world. He talked about the visiting he would do in the first four days; and the visiting he would do over that first year of fragility. He described the canoe, like the ones we'd seen etched into the rock at Kinomagewapkong, that would take him north, not west as most Nishnaabeg believe, across the water and into the skyworld.

Over the years we had both spent a lot of time in canoes because, of course, our people are lake people, and travelling by canoe, floating and being held by water, was the primary way our people moved through our territory. In the fall, Doug would sit in the front of his green canoe with a shotgun, hunting geese, and I would sit in the stern, trying to steer and paddle and follow all his instructions. Canoes require you to be in alignment with the water that is holding you. They require an awareness of currents and flow, and they provide a different orientation to the world than that of land. Canoes require intimacy with the shore. Travelling by water, whether it was by canoe in the spring, summer and fall or over the ice in the winter, was the primary way my ancestors moved around. This vantage point, floating on top of water, seeing the edges of water meeting land and land meeting sky, was an organizing force. Shorelines where land and water meet, where birds, fish and mammals meet, are zones of overlapping worlds, often teeming with diversity and mino-bimaadiziwin.

I'm wondering now what I would have learned if I'd built a birchbark canoe and used that to travel to Pinery Road and Concession 11 from my home in Nogojiwanong. What if I had been able to travel to this spot without using the *concession* roads that bisect and enclose the land?

The preparations and planning would likely have had to begin a year in advance, because I don't know how to build a canoe. I would have had to call Chuck Commanda from Kitigaan Ziibi and engage in some international diplomacy to ask for help.

Then I would have harvested birchbark in minookima, the second part of spring, when the broad leaves are born. And I would have needed to harvest

the materials of four other trees: zesegaandagwadab (spruce roots), giizhikatig (cedar), mananoons (ironwood) and baapaagigun (ash). I would have obtained consent from each of these beings to help, and to do so I'd have needed the semaa I made from four different plants and dried last summer. Some of these materials are no longer easy to find in my territory, so I would have had to think about why that is so, name this and understand it, and then engage in more international diplomacy with the Dene to ask them for spruce gum. Maybe I'd have traded them some maple syrup or minomiin.

I would then have needed ten days to build the canoe, which would mean borrowing an Elder's front yard on the reserve and bringing in like-minded Nishnaabeg to help me.

At this point, I would have discovered I needed paddles. So I'd have found someone with knowledge, harvested the materials and built the paddles.

I would then have needed goodness knows how long to learn how to drive that thing.

Next, I would have asked the Elder whose lawn I was borrowing to build the canoe how to get to where I wanted to go. He would tell me:

Jackson Creek
Chemong
Buckhorn
Pigeon Lake
Sturgeon Lake
Cameron Lake
Burnt River

He would tell me where I needed to put offerings. Sure, as an act of reciprocity and acknowledgement of those living things that I was encountering, but also as a way of feeding into the network a burst of energy and goodwill.

This is a journey I would have liked to take with that Elder, but I should have thought of it decades ago. His body can no longer make the trip in a

canoe; maybe a motorboat or a Ski-Doo if the lakes froze enough that year. And even then, I don't know.

I would have had to think carefully about water, because it's not safe to drink the water out of these lakes. I would have thought carefully about food as well. There would be layers of safety concerns: boat traffic, Jet Skis, racism, mosquitoes, sunburns, heat exhaustion, and resting points that aren't on private property—or maybe are on private property.

I think of Nanabush, who made a similar journey in a canoe at the beginning of time. I would merely have been re-enacting something they did; something that generations of my ancestors did before me, and that, through this re-enactment, I'd have been gifting those yet to be born. Nanabush's journey was a struggle, an ordeal even, and they relied upon countless beings for help. They almost didn't make it, but this was also their method for learning about the world in which Gzhwe Manidoo had placed them.

Reattachment, I think now, is not glamorous or romantic. I would have learned some beautiful things from my re-enactment, but I also understand that some things are lost that I can't get back. The densely populated route I would have travelled would be a constant struggle. I would not feel safe, not for one second, on this journey. And there is a good chance my work of reattachment would have led to feelings of alienation. I feel sick thinking about it.

In the summer of 2018, two Nishnaabekwewag, Tia Cavanagh and Maddy Whetung, organized a birchbark canoe–building session on Doug's front lawn in Curve Lake. It was specifically curated to be welcoming and meaningful to Indigenous femmes and queers, and it was a space to embody and practise consent. Every relationship is founded upon a shared consent in Nishnaabeg thought. Working with trees, water and fire to weave together strength and gentleness means that when you are working with these beings, you cannot force them. Force results in snapped ribs, cracking birchbark, spliced spruce roots. In canoe building, consent and accountability are practices embodied moment to moment, and they serve to allow us to build deeper relationships with one another. This is preventive.[62]

About a month after Doug died, Maddy and I took our kids to harvest cattails in a marsh inside the nature areas of Trent University beside the Otonabee. The day was hot. We were sad. I was joking that we were orphans, and since Doug had passed, we only had Google and YouTube to figure out how to weave the long leaves into mats. My kid knew exactly where to take us because she had spent the most time of any of us in the Trent nature areas while at forest school. We put our offerings down. Then we picked the long leaves and hauled them back to Maddy's car.

Maddy used the cattails to teach us about shorelines as connectors as we wove warming mats and built the walls of shelters from what we had harvested. She told us that the roots and pollen of the cattails are food, and the fluff is used as insulation and to stuff pillows, while the gel found within the layers can be used to soothe skin irritations. The place where we harvested the cattails was a marsh, and I wouldn't have described it as a shore until I had this experience. Now I know that marshes are tiny shores, where the division between land and water breaks down. Cattails brought us to the shore that day. They connected us to water, land, bugs and each other. They also connected us to Doug.

Some medicine people describe cattails as the "defenders of the shoreline" because they prevent erosion, and Maddy told us that this description comes from our language.[63] In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kim-merer retells a story of taking her biology students to harvest cattails as part of a university class she was teaching. Kim-merer writes about the biology of the plant and how it is adapted specifically for the winds and waves of shorelines, with an extensive network of rhizomes below the surface and no distinct stem. Instead, the stalk consists of a rolled bundle of leaves, sheathed around each other in concentric layers because no one leaf alone could withstand the wind and waves of the shore.[64]

Once again, this time through an understanding of the cattail, we see that a shoreline is a relational space mediating between worlds and beings.

And now I think that what I would have learned on my canoe trip to Pinery Road and Concession 11 is about shorelines, which are hard to map

or comprehend on paper because they are made up of fractal geometry formed by other natural forces.

A fractal is a pattern that repeats forever, and every part of the fractal at every scale looks similar to the structure of the whole. Fractals, which can be found everywhere in nature, from snowflakes to mountains to networks of rivers to blood vessels, are also found in shorelines.[65] And in this way, the shoreline orients us: what we do on a small scale is how we exist at the large scale.

The shore is a space of overlapping or interconnected worlds, of edges and zones and areas of intensive transition. In the lakes and rivers of Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg ogamig, shores are places of diversity and abundance, places in which my ancestors would have spent a lot of their time—building homes, harvesting cattails, rice, berries, and aquatic plants and medicines, hunting and fishing. They were places of meeting, decision-making, ceremony and diplomacy. They were places of beginnings of life and of journeys and of deaths and of homecomings.

They continue to be places where we learn to be careful—the last places to freeze up in the fall and the first places to thaw in the spring. And they continue to be sites of constant transformation. As cottagers and homeowners build sandy beaches, decks, docks, lawns and retaining walls, the shoreline resists taking back any tiny space to begin to regrow. As cottagers and homeowners use herbicide, Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, ducks, geese and fish replant. As landowners rope off, curate and alter, birds, fish, insects and Nishnaabeg violate.

For life forms that spend their time on the land, the shoreline is a passage to the water world; and for life whose entire world is water, the shoreline is world-ending, a foreign place that cannot provide the necessities to thrive. But for those species that live on the shoreline, the littoral zone is their world. Land, air and water mix in an overlapping beginning and ending.

Whenever I'm in a canoe, I'm struck by the shift in orientation that takes place. Travel by road and trail becomes travel by floating on the surface of rivers and lakes, arriving and departing from the shore. I notice space and

light that doesn't exist in the same way in the bush. There is wind, and the consequences of wind. My canoe is on the surface or the edge of the water, and also on the surface and the edge of the skyworld, of air. My visual field shifts from the browns and greens of various textures in the forest to large swaths of blues, first in the sky and then reflected in the water. There is no escaping or finding shelter from the sun or the wind or the rain. There is no escape from the mosquitoes and blackflies. It is only at the shore that I can find shelter from the elements. It is only at the shore, the meeting of forest and lake, that I can rest.

We often put an offering in the water before we push off from the shore in our canoes. The shore is a place to set up camp, to gather water and harvest food. It is a place where families come together in the summer to celebrate and honour with ceremonies and feasting. It is where we come to cool ourselves down, escape the bugs, clean ourselves, just as the moose do. In the winter, frozen shorelines lead us by foot, dog team or Ski-Doo into territory where we cannot travel in the summer. The ice holds our fish camps and our nets. In the spring, shorelines lead us to muskrat push-ups and the first ducks and geese migrating home.

Shorelines are continually changing, mapping a coming together of land and water, and then unmapping the departures. They are gathering sites for living beings from the lake, the air and the land. They are sites of dense relationality, renewing relationships, reaffirming connections and generating ecosystems.

In 2019, Candice Hopkins and Tairone Bastien curated the first Toronto Biennial of Art, which brought together artists from all over the world and asked them to consider "The Shoreline Dilemma." This, they write, occurs when scientific conventions break down in the face of the complexity of nature.[66] Indigenous peoples have long revered the complexity of the earth and the ecosystems we live in, and the Shoreline Dilemma reminds me that my ancestors, too, understood the limits of human understanding and therefore the ongoing implications of colonial systems we currently struggle against.

Colonial interference places shorelines under tremendous pressure. Colonial societies exploit the gifts of shorelines by building cities, ports, harbours, causeways and roads along them, using rivers and lakes as political borders and places to expel waste water and effluent from the land. At the same time, the shore is coveted by campers and cottagers, which leads to waterfronts stacked with private property in the form of cottages, homes, condominiums, industrial development and even parkland.

The forces of this dispossession are intense and arresting.

Hopkins and Bastien write that shorelines are also, inherently, about resistance. The shore isn't bound by the same conventions as land or water or the skyworld. Shorelines resist conventional mapping—they are ever-shifting, fractal, they have no well-defined perimeter and evade attempts at quantification. Shorelines embrace the unknown, the unquantifiable and the fugitive. They resist systems that seek discipline and control.

In the fall of 2022, as part of my work at the Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning, I coordinated a land-based course on sovereign creative Indigenous artistic practice, focusing on the idea of shorelines. The class spent a week with Dene Elders and land-based practitioners, making things and living on Mackenzie Island in Tındeè, or the big lake, living at the shore and surrounded by shoreline. Dene have built camps on the island for many generations because it provides a safe place to shelter.

I'm thinking of that time now, remembering how the shore during the course was bursting with life. We were gathered in canvas tents and lived and worked together. In the mornings, students would leave the shore in motorboats to hunt ducks and fish the net with Elders, returning to camp with a blue plastic bin full of whitefish, jackfish or pike—and, if they were lucky, trout. Another Elder would teach them to fillet the fish to feed the camp or to make dry fish for later. One of our staff would take the extra fish and distribute them to the community while putting the guts and bones on another, nearby island for birds to eat. Students picked cranberries and Labrador tea, while Inuk instructor Krista Ulujuk Zawadski taught them how to make sewing needles out of duck bones. Secwépemc artist Tania Willard helped them use the materials around them to deepen their creative

practices and relationship to the shore. Students canoed around the circumference of the island to learn a different perspective. I asked students to spend quiet time sitting on the shore, just listening. I noticed only a few minutes would go by before we would hear the laughter of children or Elders from camp. One evening an eagle fished outside our tents for nearly an hour.

I realize now that what I'm still learning from Doug, and also from Maddy's work on shorelines, from Olivia's work with the Trent-Severn Waterway, and from the land, is that these zones of overlap that bring together the water world and the land world, the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence Lowlands and the boreal forest, are rich sites of mino-bimaadiz-iwin. They are rich sites of regeneration. They are rich sites of synergistic knowledge. At the shoreline and in this eco-tone, this brings forth more life —in contrast to the colonial way, which always ends and diminishes life.

I add this knowledge to what I continue to learn from snow: that when you arrive, you make bonds.

18

Recapturing

Over our twenty-year friendship, I often asked Doug about water. But he mostly refused to talk to me about it because in our culture, water is the responsibility of women. When we were teaching together, he would often invite Shirley Williams to speak to the class about water, and he was careful not to interfere with what she told us. Shirley is an Odawa Elder and a gifted language expert. She would often tell the story of travelling on the lake as a child with her dad, who warned her that the water was becoming polluted. He cautioned her that eventually she might have to buy water.[127] I will always remember the look on her face when she got to this part of the story: a mixture of shock and horror that something her dad told her nearly eighty years ago, and that had sounded unbelievable at the time, had come true.

Today, what I'm learning from water is that when Nibi is captured, Nibi adapts and stays the course.

Twenty years of the Slant Lake blockade demonstrates to me that Indigenous Knowledge systems hold the potential to not only critique capitalism but reveal multiple potentials to live otherwise.[128] These systems provided my ancestors with the moral and ethical imperatives to critique, analyze and revolt. I'm here today, in no small part, because of how my ancestors acted and lived within those moral imperatives. This teaches me that we don't need to rely solely on anti-imperialist and anti-colonial traditions to critique our present moment; we also can draw upon our own

intimate anti-colonial tradition, one that is at once theory and communal embodied practice. Our contribution internationally to anti-colonialism comes from these bodies of knowledge. I feel the need to articulate these knowledge systems because I think they can help build worlds that are otherwise, and because I believe in the value of sintering: sharing our knowledge with, and as, anti-colonial peoples helps us and helps our collective movements.

I believe there must be a shift away from making Indigenous Knowledge knowable, legible and shareable by the state and its actors; instead, we must refocus this knowledge towards liberation. Just because Nishnaabeg worlds are deeply relational does not mean we should be in relationship with everyone, and it especially doesn't mean we should be in relationship with all the forces that attack mino-bimaadiziwin. Quite the opposite. The deeply relational nature of our worlds means that we must fight against systems that attack and undermine the planetary network of life.

Indigenous Knowledge is regularly captured by elites—some working in the academy, some working for state bureaucracies—who separate our knowledge from our bodies, from our peoples and from political projects and, too often now, deploy it in the service of neoliberalism. Looking back at all my writing, I can see that this is something I've been writing about all along, since I began my PhD research years ago, using different framings to respond to different colonial interventions over the last few decades.

Institutions such as universities and the agencies that fund research were for decades, and still are, only just beginning to acknowledge Indigenous Knowledge, and only ever on their terms. The recognition of Indigenous Knowledge was and is being driven by the state, non-Indigenous researchers and even environmental activists who see our bodies of knowledge as enhancements to Western science and Western natural resource management strategies. Our knowledge is seen, on the one hand, as a potential source of solutions for pending environmental issues such as climate change, and on the other hand as a way of placating Indigenous peoples' resistance and objections to industrial development by making us feel included, consulted, part of environmental impact assessments, and

stakeholders in decision-making. This is, at best, a partial recognition, a partial seeing: the state and the academy are interested in information in English, and in documented data rather than ethics and philosophies. Knowledge Holders are often interviewed, and then these interviews are transcribed into English, extracting the knowledge from the Oral Tradition and Indigenous languages. Knowledge about colonialism, dispossession and world endings are left to the side, while knowledge about animal movements and populations are highlighted. Indigenous understandings of the world are processed, depoliticized, sanitized and colonized into a form that is nearly unrecognizable to the Knowledge Holders who shared it in the first place. The state, and its educational institutions and research funding agencies, is interested in extracting, translating, decoding, integrating, separating, dispossessing, textualizing, documenting and sorting the knowledge of Indigenous peoples into a format that can be used to bolster the state's agenda, give the impression of collaboration and disrupt Indigenous resistance, and ultimately open up our bodies of collective understanding to Freedom of Information requests.

In short, sharing Indigenous Knowledge with the state primarily serves the state, and invests in sustaining the present colonial system of knowledge.[129] These days, I am most acutely aware of this when I talk about capitalism. My seemingly cute and quaint intimate knowledge of my territory is tolerated by agents of the state when it is used to assist scientists and civil servants to do their jobs better—when, for example, I use our oral histories as baseline data where no science exists. This tolerance might even be couched in sympathy for the world my ancestors built prior to the "arrival of the Europeans," along with some words to the effect of "wouldn't it be great if we could all live in that dream castle." But this knowledge quickly becomes recursive because these same people understand "our presently ecocidal and genocidal world as normal and unalterable."[130] They tell me that their inclusion of me and my knowledge —on their terms—makes their work more ethical and robust. What it really does is elide and remove the liberatory potential of Indigenous Knowledge

systems, recasting our knowledge in service of our current "ecocidal and genocidal" world.

Indigenous Knowledge should be about our liberation—by which I mean not just the liberation of Indigenous peoples but the liberation of the planet and all the living systems that make up the earth.

It concerns me that I have come to this precise understanding; it should be inherent in all we do. It was inherent for Gizhiigokwe. She helped to build a network for Nishnaabeg enmeshed in the existing network of life "emerging from interspecies and intercolonial schema," as Sylvia Wynter says. If, when they were focused on making our Nishnaabeg world, I had asked Gizhiigokwe what freedom means in our language, she would have responded, "Freedom from what?" If I were to ask them the same question now, I think they would have an answer, not a clarification.[131] This idea comes from Madeline Whetung. We were out walking at Jackson Creek one day and she recounted a discussion with Doug Williams in which she'd asked him for a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg understanding of the word *freedom*. Doug's response was, "Freedom from what?" Maddy and I laughed, and we talked about how his response made complete sense within the world that our ancestors shared. In the absence of colonialism, and in a radically egalitarian society, freedom from what, exactly?

Even in the smallest cells in my body, I always knew that I would quit the academy. Those cells knew that if I stayed within its walls, the process of writing, teaching, thinking and being within its structure would rewire my brain and harden my heart. The disciplinary nature, the institutional politics, the endless committees, the structuring of my time, my thinking and my relationships would change me and my ability to do the work I do. Had I stayed in the academy, I would not have the body of work that I do. I would not live in the world in the same way as I do. I would not think in the same way I do.

In my natural state, I live, think, analyze, read, play and sing, make and write. I never have a plan, a prospectus or a proposal. I rarely have a curriculum, and if I do, I rarely follow it. When I'm forced to write a proposal for making music, as soon as the forms are filled out, I know for

certain that iteration of the album has already been ruined and died. I like the sort of teaching, or learning alongside, that occurs when the right people are in the right place at the right time.

My body of work, my life, exists in the way it does because I removed myself from the academy and the institution. I allowed my people, the land, water, anti-colonial struggle, theory and critique to structure my days in a repeated way over decades, chipping away at the "regime of truth created by capitalism" within the educational institutions that reproduce it. This has oriented my thinking and writing away from non-Indigenous allies and towards organizers, writers, scholars and thinkers engaged in struggle and working towards liberation so that we can make interconnected worlds. Worlds where we all ask, as Doug did, and as Nibi does still: Freedom from what?

Affirmation

I believe in living.
I believe in the spectrum
of Beta days and Gamma people.
I believe in sunshine.
In windmills and waterfalls,
tricycles and rocking chairs.
And i believe that seeds grow into sprouts.
And sprouts grow into trees.
I believe in the magic of the hands.
And in the wisdom of the eyes.
I believe in rain and tears.
And in the blood of infinity.

I believe in life.
And i have seen the death parade
march through the torso of the earth,
sculpting mud bodies in its path.
I have seen the destruction of the daylight,
and seen bloodthirsty maggots
prayed to and saluted.

I have seen the kind become the blind
and the blind become the bind
in one easy lesson.
I have walked on cut glass.
I have eaten crow and blunder bread
and breathed the stench of indifference.

I have been locked by the lawless.
Handcuffed by the haters.
Gagged by the greedy.
And, if i know any thing at all,
it's that a wall is just a wall
and nothing more at all.
It can be broken down.

I believe in living.
I believe in birth.
I believe in the sweat of love
and in the fire of truth.

And i believe that a lost ship,
steered by tired, seasick sailors,
can still be guided home
to port.

The Malaise of a Civilization

Suzanne Césaire

If in our legends and tales we see the appearance of a suffering, sensitive, sometimes mocking being that is our collective ego, we look in vain for an expression of that ego in Martinique's ordinary literary products.

Why is it that in the past we have been so unconcerned about telling our ancestral worries directly?

The urgency of this cultural problem escapes only those who have decided to put on blinders so as not to be disturbed from an artificial tranquillity—at any price, be it that of stupidity or death.

As for us, we feel that our troubling times will bud here a ripened fruit, irresistibly called by the ardor of the sun to disperse its creative forces to the wind; we feel in this tranquil, sun-drenched land the fearsome, inexorable pressure of destiny that will dip the whole world in blood in order, tomorrow, to give it its new face.

Let us inquire into the life of this island that is ours.

What do we see?

First the geographical position of this parcel of land: tropical. In this case here, the Tropics.

Whence the adaptation here of an African settlement. The Negroes imported here had to struggle against the intense mortality of slavery in its beginnings, against the harshest work conditions ever, against chronic malnutrition—a reality that is still alive. And nevertheless, it cannot be denied that on Martinican soil the colored race produces strong, tough, supple men and women of a natural elegance and great beauty.

But, then, is it not surprising that this people, who over the centuries has adapted to this soil, this people of authentic Martinicans is just now

producing authentic works of art? How is it that over the centuries no viable survivors of the original styles have been revealed—for example, those styles that have flowered so magnificently on African soil? Sculptures, ornate fabrics, paintings, poetry? Let the imbeciles reproach the race and its so-called instinct for laziness, theft, wickedness.

Let's talk seriously:

If this lack of Negroes is not explained by the hardships of the tropical climate to which we have adapted, and still less by I know not what inferiority, it is explained, I believe, as follows, by:

(1) the horrific conditions of being brutally transplanted onto a foreign soil; we have too quickly forgotten the slave ships and the sufferings of our slave fathers. Here, forgetting equals cowardice.

(2) an obligatory submission, under pain of flogging and death, to a system of "civilization," a "style" even more foreign to the new arrivals than the tropical land.

(3) finally, after the liberation of people of color, through a collective error about our true nature, an error born of the following idea, anchored in the deepest recesses of popular consciousness by centuries of suffering: "Since the superiority of the colonizers arises from a certain style of life, we can access power only by mastering the techniques of this 'style' in our turn."

Let's stop and measure the importance of this gigantic mistake.

What is the Martinican fundamentally, intimately, and inalterably? And how does he live?

In answering these questions, we will see a surprising contradiction appear between his deep being, with his desires, his impulses, his unconscious forces—and how life is lived with its necessities, its urgencies, its weight. A phenomenon of decisive importance for the future of the country.

What is the Martinican?

—A human plant.

Like a plant, abandoned to the rhythm of universal life. No effort expended to dominate nature. Mediocre at farming. Perhaps. I'm not saying he makes the plant grow; I'm saying he grows, that he lives plantlike. His indolence? That of the vegetable kingdom. Don't say: "he's lazy," say: "he vegetates," and you will be doubly right. His favorite phrase:

"let it flow." Meaning that he lets himself flow with, be carried by life, docile, light, not insistent, not a rebel—amicably, amorously. Obstinate besides, as only a plant knows how to be. Independent (the independence and autonomy of a plant). Surrender to self, to the seasons, to the moon, to the day whether shorter or longer. The picking season. And always and everywhere, in the least of his representations, primacy of the plant, the plant that is trod upon but alive, dead but reborn, the free, silent, and proud plant.

Open your eyes—a child is born. To which god should he be confided? To the Tree god. Coconut or Banana, in whose roots they bury the placenta.

Open your ears. One of the popular tales of Martinican folklore: the grass that grows on the tomb is the living hair of the dead person, in protest to death. Always the same symbol: the plant. The lively feeling of a life-death community. In short, *the Ethiopian feeling for life.*[1]

So, the Martinican is typically Ethiopian. In the depths of his consciousness, he is the human plant, and by identifying with the plant, his desire is to surrender to life's rhythm.

Does this attitude suffice to explain his failure in the world?

No—the Martinican has failed because, misrecognizing his true nature, he tries to live a life that is not suited to him. A gigantic phenomenon of collective lying, of "pseudomorphosis." And the current state of civilization in the Caribbean reveals to us the consequences of this error.

Repression, suffering, sterility.

How, why this fatal mistake among this people enslaved until yesterday? By the most natural of processes, by the play of the survival instinct.

Remember that what the regime of slavery above all forbade was the *assimilation of the Negro to the white.* Some choice ordinances: that of April 30, 1764, which forbids blacks and coloreds from practicing medicine; that of May 9, 1765, which forbids them from working as notary publics; and the famous ordinance of February 9, 1779, which formally forbids blacks from wearing the same clothes as whites, demands respect for and submission to "all whites in general," etc., etc.

Let's cite too the ordinance of January 3, 1788, which obliged free men of color "to request a permit if they wished to work *anywhere but in cultivation.*" It is understood henceforth that the essential goal for the colored man has become that of *assimilation.* And with a fear-

some force, the disastrous conclusion forms in his head: *liberation equals assimilation.*

In the beginning, the movement was off to a good start: 1848; the masses of freed blacks, in a sudden explosion of primitive ego, incorrectly renounced all regular work, despite the danger of famine. But the Negroes, subdued by economics, no longer slaves but wage earners, submitted once more to the discipline of the hoe and the cutlass.

And this is the era that definitively establishes the repression of the ancestral desire for letting go.

That desire is replaced, especially in the colored bourgeoisie, by the foreign desire of struggle.

Whence the drama, evident to those who analyze in depth the collective ego of the Martinican people: their unconscious continues to be inhabited by the Ethiopian desire for letting go. But their consciousness, or rather their preconsciousness, accepts the Hamitic desire for struggle. The race to riches. To diplomas. Ambition. Struggle reduced to the level of the bourgeoisie. The race to monkey-like imitations. Vanity fair.

The most serious consequence is that the desire to imitate, which had formally been vaguely conscious—since it was a defense reaction against an oppressive society—now passed into the ranks of the fearsome, secret forces of the unconscious.

No "evolved" Martinican would accept that he is only imitating, so much does his current situation appear natural, spontaneous, born of his most legitimate aspirations. And, in so doing, he would be sincere. He truly does not KNOW that he is imitating. He is *unaware* of his true nature, which does not cease to exist for that matter.

Just as the *hysteric* is unaware that he is merely *imitating* an illness, but the doctor, who cares for him and delivers him from his morbid symptoms, knows it.

Likewise, analysis shows us that the effort to adapt to a foreign style that is demanded of the Martinican does not take place without creating a state of pseudocivilization that can be qualified as *abnormal, teratoid.*

The problem today is to determine if the Ethiopian attitude we discovered as the very essence of the Martinican's feeling for life can be the point of departure for a viable, hence imposing, cultural style.

It is exalting to imagine in these tropical lands, finally rendered to

their internal truth, the long-lasting and fruitful accord between man and soil. Under the sign of the plant.

Here we are called upon finally to know ourselves, and here before us stand splendor and hope. Surrealism gave us back some of our possibilities. It is up to us to find the rest. By its guiding light.

Understand me well:

It is not a question of a return to the past, of resurrecting an African past that we have learned to appreciate and respect. On the contrary, it is a question of mobilizing every living force mingled together on this land where race is the result of the most continuous brazing; it is a question of becoming conscious of the tremendous heap of various energies we have until now locked up within ourselves. We must now put them to use in their fullness, without deviation and without falsification. Too bad for those who thought we were idle dreamers.

The most troubling reality is our own.

We shall act.

This land, our land, can only be what we want it to be.

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The Great Camouflage

Suzanne Césaire

There are, layered up against the islands, the beautiful green waves of water and silence. There is the purity of salt in and about the Antilles. There is before my eyes the pretty Place de Pétionville, planted with pines and hibiscus. There is my island, Martinique, and its fresh necklace of clouds puffed up by Mount Pelée. There are the highest plateaus of Haiti, where a horse dies, lightning-struck by the secularly murderous storm at Hinche. Nearby, his master contemplates the country he thought to be solid and expansive. He doesn't yet know that he is participating in the islands' lack of equilibrium. But this stroke of terrestrial insanity enlightens his heart: he begins to think about the other Antilles, about their volcanoes, their earthquakes, their hurricanes.

At this moment off the coast of Puerto Rico a great cyclone begins to turn amid seas of clouds, with its beautiful tail that rhythmically sweeps the half circle of the Caribbean isles. The Atlantic flees toward Europe in great oceanic waves. Our little tropical observatories begin to crackle with the news. The wireless goes haywire. Boats flee, flee where? The sea swells, here and there an exertion, a delectable surge, the water slackens its limbs to get a wider consciousness of its watery power, sailors with clenched teeth and a streaming face, and we learn that the southeast coast of Haiti is under the cyclone that passes at twenty-five miles per hour, heading toward Florida. Consternation takes hold of the objects and beings spared from the wind by being at its fringe. Don't move. Let it pass. . . .

In the heart of the cyclone, everything crackles, everything crumbles with the ripping sound of great displays. Then the radios fall silent. The great tail of palms of cool wind is unfurled somewhere in the

stratosphere, there where no one will follow the crazy iridescences and violet lightwaves.

After the rain, then sun.

Haitian cicadas think about grinding love. When there is not a single drop of water left in the burnt grass, they sing furiously that life is beautiful, they burst out in a cry that is too vibrant for an insect body. Their thin pellicle of dried silk stretched to the extreme, they die suffusing the least moist cry of pleasure in the world.

Haiti remains, wrapped in the embers of the sun that are sweet to the eyes of the cicadas, to the scales of the *mabouyas,* to the metal face of the sea which is no longer made of water but of mercury.[1]

Now is the time to lean out the window of the aluminum clipper with its great turns.

The airplanes of the Pan American Airways System pass through once again the no-longer-virgin sea of clouds. If there is a harvest ripening, that is the time to try to get a glimpse of it [Haiti], but in the closed-off military zones, the windows are closed.

They bring out disinfectants, or ozone, it doesn't matter, you will see nothing. Nothing but the sea and the dim form of lands. We can only guess about the easy love of fish. They make the water move, which amicably winks at the clipper's porthole. Viewed from very high up, our islands take on their true dimension as shells. And as for the hummingbird-women, the tropical flower–women, the women of four races and dozens of bloodlines, they are no longer there. Neither the canna, nor the plumeria and the flame trees, neither the palms by moonlight, nor the sunsets unlike any other in the world . . .

Nevertheless, they are there.

Nevertheless, fifteen years ago, the Antilles were revealed to me from the flank of Mount Pelée. From here I discovered, though still very young, that Martinique was sensual, coiled up, extended, distended into the Caribbean Sea, and I thought about the other islands that are so beautiful.

Once again in Haiti, during the summer mornings of 1944, I experienced the presence of the Antilles, more perceptible in places from which, like at Kenscoff, the mountain views are of an unbearable beauty.

And now, total lucidity. Beyond these perfect colors and forms, my gaze detects the innermost torments in the Antilles' most beautiful face.

For the plot of unsatisfied desires has ensnared the Antilles and

America. Since the arrival of the conquistadors and the maturation of their technology (beginning with that of firearms), the ultra-Atlantic lands have not only changed face, but also fear. Fear of being outpaced by those who remained in Europe, already armed and appointed, the fear of being in competition with peoples of color that were hurriedly pronounced inferior so as the better to torment them. It was necessary at first and at all costs, be it the cost of the slave trade's infamy, to create an American society richer, more powerful, and better organized than the European society left behind—and desired. It was necessary to take this revenge upon the nostalgic hell that belched forth its adventurous demons, its convicts, its penitents, and its utopians upon the New World and its islands. After three centuries, the colonial adventure continues—the wars of independence are but an episode—the peoples of the Americas, whose behavior toward the peoples of Europe remains often infantile and romantic, are still not free of the old continent's ascendancy. Naturally, the blacks in America are those who suffer the most, in a day-by-day humiliation, from the degeneracies, injustices, and pettiness of colonial society.

If we are proud to note our extraordinary vitality everywhere in the Americas, if that vitality seems definitively to promise our salvation, nonetheless it must dare be said that refined forms of slavery continue to be rife. Here, in the French islands, they debase thousands of blacks for whom the great Schoelcher sought, a century ago, along with freedom and dignity, the title of citizen. It must dare be shown, on the face of France, lit by the implacable light of events, the Antillean stain, since there are also indeed many among the French who seem determined to tolerate no shadow upon that face.

The degrading forms of modern wage labor still find among us a ground upon which to flourish without constraint.

Who will throw out, along with the antiquated material of their factories, these few thousand submanufacturers and shopkeepers, that caste of false colonizers responsible for the human deprivation of the Antilles?

When they are left off on the streets of their capitals, an insurmountable timidity fills them with fear among their European brethren. Ashamed of their drawling accent, of their unsure French, they sigh after the tranquil warmth of Antillean dwellings and the patois of the black "nanny" of their childhood.

Ready to betray any and all in order to defend themselves against the

rising tide of blacks, they would sell themselves to America were it not that the Americans claim that the purity of their blood is highly suspect,[2] just as in the 1940s they devoted themselves to the Admiral of Vichy: Pétain being for them the altar of France, Robert necessarily became "the tabernacle of the Antilles."

In the meantime, the Antillean serf lives with misery and abjection on the grounds of the "factory," and the mediocre state of our cities-towns is a nauseating spectacle. In the meantime, the Antilles continue to be like paradise and that sweet sound of palms. . . .

That day the irony was that, a shiny garment full of sparkles, each of our muscles expressed in a personal manner one parcel of the desire scattered among the blossoming mango trees.

I listened very attentively without being able to hear your voices lost in the Caribbean symphony that would hurl waterspouts against the islands. We were just like thoroughbreds, held back, impatiently pawing the ground, at the edge of that salt savanna.

On the beach, there were several "metropolitan officials." They were installed there, without conviction, and ready to take off at the first signal. The newcomers can scarcely adapt to our "old French lands." When they look into the maleficent mirror of the Caribbean, they see a delirious image of themselves. They dare not recognize themselves in that ambiguous being: the Antillean. They know that the métis share some of their blood, that they are also, like them, part of Western civilization. It is well understood that the "metropolitans" don't know racial prejudice. But their colored descendants fill them with dread, despite the exchange of smiles. They did not expect that strange burgeoning of their blood. Perhaps they didn't want to answer the Antillean heir who does and does not cry out "my father." However, these unexpected sons, these charming daughters must be reckoned with. These turbulent folks must be governed.

Here is an Antillean, the great-grandson of a colonist and a black slave woman. Here he is on his island, seeing to its "running" in deploying all the energies once necessary for the greedy colonists, for whom other people's blood was the natural price of gold, and all the courage necessary for African warriors who forever gained their life through death.

Here he is with his double force and double ferociousness, in a dangerous equilibrium: he cannot accept his Negritude, yet he cannot make

himself become white. Listlessness overtakes this heart divided in two, and with it comes the habit of rusing, the taste for "schemes." So blossoms in the Antilles that flower of human baseness, the colored bourgeoisie.

Along the roads bordered with glyciridia, pretty little Negro children ecstatically digesting their roots cooked either with or without salt smile at the luxury automobile passing by. They suddenly feel, planted in their navel, the need to be, one day, masters of an equally supple, shiny, and powerful beast. Years later you see them, sullied with the fat of happiness, miraculously give the tremor of life to junkyard carcasses, sold for a low price. Instinctively, the hands of thousands of young Antilleans have felt the weight of steel, have located joints, unscrewed bolts. Thousands of images of brightly lit factories, virgin steel, of liberating machines, have swollen the hearts of our young laborers. In hundreds of sordid sheds where scrap metal rusts away, there is an invisible vegetation of desire. The impatient fruits of the Revolution will inevitably spring forth from this.

Here among the bluffs polished by the wind, the free-person's estate. A peasant who himself has not been swept up by the uproar of mechanical adventure leans up against the big *mapou* that gives shade to an entire flank of the bluff, and he feels grow in him, through his naked toes sunken in the mud, a slow vegetal growth.[3] He has turned toward the sunset to know what the weather will be like tomorrow—the orange reds show him that planting time is near—not only is his gaze the peaceful reflection of the light, but he grows heavy with impatience, the very impatience that uplifts the land of Martinique—his land that does not belong to him and *is* nonetheless his land. He knows that it is the workers with whom he has common cause, and not with the *béké* or the métis. And when, suddenly, in the middle of the Caribbean night all decked out with love and silence, a drum call bursts out, the blacks get ready to answer the desire of the earth and of the dance, but the owners lock themselves up in their beautiful houses, and behind their wire gauze, beneath the electrical light, they are just like pale butterflies caught in a snare.

All around them, the tropical night swells with rhythms, the hips of Bergilde have taken their cataclysmic allure from the swells pushed up from the depths to the sides of volcanoes. And it is Africa itself which, across the Atlantic and across the centuries before slave ships, dedicates to its Antillean children the lustfully solar glances exchanged between

dancers. With a raw and wide voice, their cry exclaims that Africa is there, present, that she waits, immensely virginal despite the colonization, turbulent, devourer of whites. And upon these faces constantly bathed by the marine exhalations close to the islands, upon these limited and tiny lands surrounded by water like so many great, impassable moats, there passes an enormous wind come from Africa. Antilles-Africa, thanks to the drums, the nostalgia for terrestrial spaces, lives in these hearts of the insular. Who will fulfill that nostalgia?

Meanwhile, the cannas of Absalom bleed over chasms, and the beauty of the tropical landscape goes to the head of the poets who pass by. Across the shifting networks of palms they see the Antillean conflagration roll onto the Caribbean, which is a peaceful sea of lava. Here, life is lit by a vegetal fire. Here, on these hot lands that keep geological species alive, is found the fixed plant, passion and blood, in its primitive architecture, the anxious ringing emerging from the chaotic backs of the dancers. Here, the creepers swinging vertiginously take on airy allures to charm the precipices; with their trembling hands they hook on to the ungraspable cosmic tremor that rises all through the nights inhabited by drums. Here, the poets feel their heads overturn, and inhaling the fresh scents of the ravines, they take hold of the islands in their spread, they listen to the noise of the water around the islands, they see the tropical flames flare up no longer on account of cannas, gerberas, hibiscuses, bougainvilleas, or flame trees, but on account of the hungers, fears, hatreds, and ferocity that burn in the hollows of hills.

So it is that the conflagration of the Caribbean puffs out its silent vapors, blinding for the only eyes able to see, and suddenly the blues of the Haitian bluffs grow dim, suddenly the most dazzling reds grow pale, and the sun is no longer a crystal that plays, and if the public places have chosen Jerusalem thorns as their deluxe fans against the heat of the sky, if the flowers have found the right colors to make one thunderstruck, if the tree ferns have secreted a golden sap from their crook, all coiled up like a sex organ, if my Antilles are so beautiful, then it's because the great game of hide-and-seek has succeeded, and certainly that day would be too enchanting for us to see.

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1943
Surrealism and Us

the river of grass snakes that I call my veins
the river of battlements that I call my blood
the river of bantu spears that I call my face
the river trekking on foot around the world
will strike the Artesian rock with one hundred monsoon stars

Liberty my only pirate water of the new year my only thirst
love my only sampan boat
we shall slip our fingers of laughter and calabash
between the icy teeth of the Sleeping Beauty in the woods

Many have believed that surrealism was dead. Many wrote so. Childish nonsense: its activity extends today to the entire world and surrealism remains livelier, more audacious than ever. André Breton can look with pride upon the period between the wars and affirm that the mode of expression he created more than twenty years ago is opening upon an increasingly vast and immense "beyond."

If the whole world is struck by the influence of French poetry at a time when the most horrible disaster in its history swoops down upon France, it is, in part, because the great voice of André Breton was not stilled, and that is because everywhere, in New York, in Brazil, in Mexico, in Argentina, in Cuba, in Canada, in Algiers, voices echo that would not be what they are (in timber and resonance) without surrealism. Actually, today as twenty years ago, surrealism can claim the glory of being at the extreme point of the bow of life drawn to the breaking point.

The presence therefore of surrealism. Young, ardent, and revolutionary. Most certainly, in 1943, surrealism remains what it has always been, an activity which assigns itself the goal of exploring and expressing systematically the forbidden zones of the human

mind, in order to neutralize them: an activity which desperately seeks to give humankind the means of reducing the ancient antinomies that are "the true alembics of suffering"; a power, the only one, that allows us to reconnect with "this original, unique faculty, that the primitive and the child still retain traces of, that lifts the spell of the impassable barrier between the inner world and the outer world." But as the surrealist cause in art, as in life, is the cause itself of freedom, the sign itself of vitality, surrealism has itself evolved. Evolution, better yet, a blossoming outward in all directions. When Breton created surrealism, the most urgent task was to free the mind from the shackles of absurd logic and so-called Western reason.

But when freedom found itself threatened throughout the world in 1943, surrealism, which never for a single instant ceased to stand in service to the greatest emancipation of humankind, wanted to sum up the entirety of all its efforts in one magical word: freedom.

> In art as in life, the surrealist cause is the cause itself of freedom. Today more than ever, to draw one's inspiration abstractly from freedom, or to celebrate it in conventional terms, is to do it a disservice. In order to enlighten the world, freedom must make itself flesh and blood and, toward that end, must be reflected and recreated in language, in the word.

Thus speaks Breton. The demand for freedom. The necessity of absolute purity—it's the Saint-Just side of Breton, hence his "Thank you, but no" to concessions, harshly denounced by his friends more given to compromise.

> To those who ask periodically why certain schisms have occurred at the center of the surrealist movement, why such abrupt exclusions have been pronounced, I believe I can reply in all clear conscience that those who eliminated themselves in the process had, in some more or less obvious way, broken a solemn pact with freedom, freedom being revered in its pure state by sur-

realists—that is to say, advocated in all its forms—there are, of course, many ways to have broken this pact. In my opinion, it was, for example, to have returned, as did some former surrealists, to fixed forms in poetry, when it has been demonstrated, particularly in the French language—the exceptional influence of French poetry since Romanticism allows me to generalize in this way—that the quality of lyric expression has benefitted from nothing so much as the will to be emancipated from obsolete rules: Rimbaud, Lautréamont mute things, the Mallarmé of "A Throw of the Dice," the most important symbolists (Maeterlinck, Saint-Pol-Roux), Apollinaire's "conversation-poems." And this would be just as true for painting during the same period. In place of the preceding names, it would suffice to cite those of Van Gogh, Seurat, Rousseau, Matisse, Picasso, Duchamp. It was also a betrayal, once and for all, of the freedom to renounce personal expression" and in that way even dangerously always outside the strict frameworks to which a "party" wants to restrain you, even were it in your eyes the party of freedom (loss of the feeling of uniqueness). Freedom is at once madly desirable and quite fragile, which gives it the right to be jealous.

The intransigence consequently of freedom, which is, moreover, itself the condition of its fruitfulness. And we see that Breton, at the end of his most moving examinations, does not hesitate to venture into the most wide-ranging virginal spaces that surrealism has yielded to human daring. What does Breton ask of the most insightful minds of the period? Nothing less than the courage to embark upon an adventure which may prove deadly, from all one can tell, but which one may hope—and that is the essence—will lead to the total conquest of the mind. "A period, like the one we live in, can manage, if it has as a goal the arousal of mistrust for all the conventional ways of thinking the insufficiency of which is only too obvious, for travels à la Bergerac and Gulliver. And, not excluded from the voyage on which I invite you today, is every possibility of arriv-

ing somewhere, even after certain detours, to lands more reasonable than the one we leave behind." Surrealism is living, intensely, magnificently, having found and perfected a method of inquiry of immeasurable efficacy. The dynamism of surrealism. And it is this sense of movement that has kept it always in the avant-garde, infinitely sensitive to the disruptions of the period, the "scourge of balance."

Such is surrealist activity, a total activity, the only one that can liberate humankind by revealing to it the unconscious, one of the activities that will aid in liberating people by illuminating the blind myths that have led them to this point.

■

And now, a return to ourselves.

We know where we stand in Martinique. The arrow of history dizzyingly indicated for us our human task: a society, corrupt from its origins through crime, reliant for the present on injustice and hypocrisy, fearful of its future because of its guilty conscience, must morally, historically, and inevitably disappear.

From among the powerful war weaponry the modern world now places at our disposal, our audacity has chosen surrealism, which offers the greatest chances for success.

Already one result is established. At no moment during these difficult years of Vichy domination was the image of freedom ever totally extinguished here, and we owe this to surrealism. We are happy to have sustained this image in the eyes even of those who thought they had destroyed it forever. Blind because they were ignorant, they failed to see it laughing insolently, aggressively, in our pages. Cowards later, when they did understand, fearful and ashamed.

So, far from contradicting, diminishing, or diverting our revolutionary feeling for life, surrealism shored it up. It nourished in us an impatient strength, endlessly sustaining this massive army of negations.

And then I think also to tomorrow.

Millions of Black hands, across the raging clouds of world war, will spread terror everywhere. Roused from a long benumbing torpor, this most deprived of all people will rise up, upon plains of ashes.

Our surrealism will then supply them the leaven from their very depths. It will be time finally to transcend the sordid contemporary antinomies: Whites–Blacks, Europeans–Africans, civilized–savage: the powerful magic of the mahoulis will be recovered, drawn from the very wellsprings of life. Colonial idiocies will be purified by the welding arc's blue flame. The mettle of our metal, our cutting edge of steel, our unique communions—all will be recovered.

■

Surrealism, tightrope of our hope.

SUZANNE CÉSAIRE
Tropiques, nos. 8–9, October 1943

Clepsydra

I embroidered on my head long ago
the signs of abandonment and failure
no one had the fortune of knowing
to which galaxies I allude
with my smile.
I opted for wild trails,
the object of poetry
was always to create
spiritual and collective rings
where conjecture,
Juno, and Aristotle
dance among new shrubs.
From the beginning
I relied on my stupidity
and general lack of talent.
Always I shipwrecked among
nouns and verbs.
I continue to feel I am
a shitty preacher:
I enlighten no one
more than me.

Translated by Rosa Alcalá

The Great Caliban

The Struggle Against the Rebel Body

> Life is but a motion of limbs.... For what is the heart, but a spring; and the nerves, but so many strings; and the joints but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body.
>
> (Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 1650)

> Yet I will be a more noble creature, and at the very time when my natural necessities debase me into the condition of the Beast, my Spirit shall rise and soar and fly up towards the employment of the angels.
>
> (Cotton Mather, *Diary, 1680–1708*)

> ...take some Pity on me... for my Friends is very Poor, and my Mother is very sick, and I am to die next Wednesday Morning, so I hope you will be so good as to give my Friends a small Trifill of Money to pay for a Coffin and a Sroud, for to take my body a way from the Tree in that I am to die on... and dont be faint Hearted... so I hope you will take it into Consideration of my poor Body, consedar if it was your own Cace, you would be willing to have your Body saved from the Surgeons.
>
> (Letter of Richard Tobin, condemned to death in London in 1739)

One of the preconditions for capitalist development was the process that Michel Foucault defined as the "disciplining of the body," which in my view consisted of an attempt by state and church to transform the individual's powers into labor-power. This chapter examines how this process was conceived and mediated in the philosophical debates of the time, and the strategic interventions which it generated.

It was in the 16th century, in the areas of Western Europe most affected by the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the mercantile bourgeoisie, that we see emerging in every field — the stage, the pulpit, the political and philosophical imagination — a new concept of the person. Its most ideal embodiment is the Shakespearean Prospero

15th centur woodcut. "The devil's assault on the dying man is a theme that pervades all the [medieval] popular tradition." (From Alfonso M. di Nola, 1987.)

of the *The Tempest* (1612), who combines the celestial spirituality of Ariel and the brutish materiality of Caliban. Yet he betrays an anxiety over the equilibrium achieved that rules out any pride for "Man's" unique position in the Great Chain of Being.[1] In defeating Caliban, Prospero must admit that "this thing of darkeness is mine," thus reminding his audience that our human partaking of the angel and the beast is problematic indeed.

In the 17th century, what in Prospero remains a subliminal foreboding is formalized as the conflict between Reason and the Passions of the Body, which reconceptualizes classic Judeo-Christian themes to produce a new anthropological paradigm. The outcome is reminiscent of the medieval skirmishes between angels and devils for the possession of the departing soul. But the conflict is now staged within the person who is reconstructed as a battlefield, where opposite elements clash for domination. On the one side, there are the "forces of Reason": parsimony, prudence, sense of responsibility, self-control. On the other, the "low instincts of the Body": lewdness, idleness, systematic dissipation of one's vital energies. The battle is fought on many fronts because Reason must be vigilant against the attacks of the carnal self, and prevent "the wisdom of the flesh" (in Luther's words) from corrupting the powers of the mind. In the extreme case, the person becomes a terrain for a war of all against all:

> Let me be nothing, if within the compass of my self I do not find the battail of Lepanto: Passions against Reason, Reason against Faith, Faith against the Devil, and my Conscience against all.
>
> (Thomas Browne 1928: 76)

In the course of this process a change occurs in the metaphorical field, as the philosophical representation of individual psychology borrows images from the body-politics of the state, disclosing a landscape inhabited by "rulers" and "rebellious subjects," "multitudes" and "seditions," "chains" and "imperious commands" and (with Thomas Browne) even the executioner (*ibid.*: 72).[2] As we shall see, this conflict between Reason and the Body, described by the philosophers as a riotous confrontation between the "better" and the "lower sorts," cannot be ascribed only to the baroque taste for the figurative, later to be purged in favor of a "more masculine" language.[3] The battle which the 17th-century discourse on the person imagines unfolding in the microcosm of the individual has arguably a foundation in the reality of the time. It is an aspect of that broader process of social reformation, whereby, in the "Age of Reason," the rising bourgeoisie attempted to remold the subordinate classes in conformity with the needs of the developing capitalist economy.

It was in the attempt to form a new type of individual that the bourgeoisie engaged in that battle against the body that has become its historic mark. According to Max Weber, the reform of the body is at the core of the bourgeois ethic because capitalism makes acquisition "the ultimate purpose of life," instead of treating it as a means for the satisfaction of our needs; thus, it requires that we forfeit all spontaneous enjoyment of life (Weber 1958: 53). Capitalism also attempts to overcome our "natural state," by breaking the barriers of nature and by lengthening the working day beyond the limits set by the sun, the seasonal cycles, and the body itself, as constituted in pre-industrial society.

Marx, too, sees the alienation from the body as a distinguishing trait of the capitalist work-relation. By transforming labor into a commodity, capitalism causes workers to submit their activity to an external order over which they have no control and with which they cannot identify. Thus, the labor process becomes a ground of self-estrangement: the worker "only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working and when he is working is not at home" (Marx 1961: 72). Furthermore, with the development of a capitalist economy, the worker becomes (though only formally) the "free owner" of "his" labor-power, which (unlike the slave) he can place at the disposal of the buyer for a limited period of time. This implies that "[h]e must constantly look upon his labour-power" (his energies, his faculties) "as his own property, his own commodity" (Marx 1906, Vol. I: 186).[4] This too leads to a sense of dissociation from the body, which becomes reified, reduced to an object with which the person ceases to be immediately identified.

The image of a worker freely alienating his labor, or confronting his body as capital to be delivered to the highest bidder, refers to a working class already molded by the capitalist work-discipline. But only in the second half of the 19th century can we glimpse that type of worker — temperate, prudent, responsible, proud to possess a watch (Thompson 1964), and capable of looking upon the imposed conditions of the capitalist mode of production as "self-evident laws of nature" (Marx 1909, Vol. I: 809) — that personifies the capitalist utopia and is the point of reference for Marx.

The situation was radically different in the period of primitive accumulation when the emerging bourgeoisie discovered that the "liberation of labor-power" — that is, the expropriation of the peasantry from the common lands — was not sufficient to force the dispossessed proletarians to accept wage-labor. Unlike Milton's Adam, who, upon

Woman selling rags and vagabond. The expropriated peasants and artisans did not peacefully agree to work for a wage. More often they became beggars, vagabonds or criminals. Design by Louis-Léopold Boilly (1761–1845).

being expelled from the Garden of Eden, set forth cheerfully for a life dedicated to work,[5] the expropriated peasants and artisans did not peacefully agree to work for a wage. More often they became beggars, vagabonds or criminals. A long process would be required to produce a disciplined work-force. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the hatred for wage-labor was so intense that many proletarians preferred to risk the gallows, rather than submit to the new conditions of work (Hill 1975: 219–39).[6]

This was the first capitalist crisis, one far more serious than all the commercial crises that threatened the foundations of the capitalist system in the first phase of its development.[7] As is well-known, the response of the bourgeoisie was the institution of a true regime of terror, implemented through the intensification of penalties (particularly those punishing the crimes against property), the introduction of "bloody laws" against vagabonds, intended to bind workers to the jobs imposed on them, as once the serfs had been bound to the land, and the multiplication of executions. In England alone, 72,000 people were hung by Henry the VIII during the thirty-eight years of his reign; and the massacre continued into the late 16th century. In the 1570s, 300 to 400 "rogues" were "devoured by the gallows in one place or another every year" (Hoskins 1977: 9). In Devon alone, seventy-four people were hanged just in 1598 (*ibid.*).

But the violence of the ruling class was not confined to the repression of transgressors. It also aimed at a radical transformation of the person, intended to eradicate in the proletariat any form of behavior not conducive to the imposition of a stricter work-discipline. The dimensions of this attack are apparent in the social legislation that, by the middle of the 16th century, was introduced in England and France. Games were forbidden, particularly games of chance that, besides being useless, undermined the individual's sense of responsibility and "work ethic." Taverns were closed, along with public

baths. Nakedness was penalized, as were many other "unproductive" forms of sexuality and sociality. It was forbidden to drink, swear, curse.[8]

It was in the course of this vast process of social engineering that a new concept of the body and a new policy toward it began to be shaped. The novelty was that the body was attacked as the source of all evils, and yet it was studied with the same passion that, in the same years, animated the investigation of celestial motion.

Why was the body so central to state politics and intellectual discourse? One is tempted to answer that this obsession with the body reflects the fear that the proletariat inspired in the ruling class.[9] It was the fear felt by the bourgeois or the nobleman alike who, wherever they went, in the streets or on their travels, were besieged by a threatening crowd, begging them or preparing to rob them. It was also the fear felt by those who presided over the administration of the state, whose consolidation was continuously undermined — but also determined — by the threat of riots and social disorders.

Yet, there was more. We must not forget that the beggarly and riotous proletariat — who forced the rich to travel by carriage to escape its assaults, or to go to bed with two pistols under the pillow — was the same social subject who increasingly appeared as the source of all wealth. It was the same of whom the mercantilists, the first economists of capitalist society, never tired of repeating (though not without second thoughts) that "the more the better," often deploring that so many bodies were wasted on the gallows.[10]

Many decades were to pass before the concept of the value of labor entered the pantheon of economic thought. But that work ("industry"), more than land or any other "natural wealth," is the primary source of accumulation was a truth well understood at a time when the low level of technological development made human beings the most important productive resource. As Thomas Mun (the son of a London merchant and spokesman for the mercantilist position) put it:

> ...we know that our own natural wares do not yield us so much profit as our industry.... For Iron in the Mines is of no great worth, when it is compared with the employment and advantage it yields being digged, tried, transported, bought, sold, cast into Ordnance, Muskets...wrought into Anchors, bolts, spikes, nails and the like, for the use of Ships, Houses, Carts, Coaches, Ploughs, and other instruments for Tillage. (Abbott 1946: 2)

Even Shakespeare's Prospero insists on this crucial economic fact in a little speech on the value of labor, which he delivers to Miranda after she manifests her utter disgust with Caliban:

> But, as 'tis
> We cannot miss him. He does make our fire
> Fetch in our wood, and serves in office
> That profit us. (*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene 2)

The body, then, came to the foreground of social policies because it appeared not only as a beast inert to the stimuli of work, but also as the container of labor-power, a

means of production, the primary work-machine. This is why, in the strategies adopted by the state towards it, we find much violence, but also much interest; and the study of bodily motions and properties becomes the starting point for most of the theoretical speculation of the age — whether aiming, with Descartes, to assert the immortality of the soul, or to investigate, with Hobbes, the premises of social governability.

Indeed, one of the central concerns of the new Mechanical Philosophy was *the mechanics of the body*, whose constitutive elements — from the circulation of the blood to the dynamics of speech, from the effects of sensations to voluntary and involuntary motions — were taken apart and classified in all their components and possibilities. Descartes' *Treatise of Man* (published in 1664)[11] is a true anatomical handbook, though the anatomy it performs is as much psychological as physical. A basic task of Descartes' enterprise is to institute an ontological divide between a purely mental and a purely physical domain. Every manner, attitude, and sensation is thus defined; their limits are marked, their possibilities weighed with such a thoroughness that one has the impression that the "book of human nature" has been opened for the first time or, more likely, that a new land has been discovered and the conquistadors are setting out to chart its paths, compile the list of its natural resources, assess its advantages and disadvantages.

In this, Hobbes and Descartes were representatives of their time. The care they display in exploring the details of corporeal and psychological reality reappears in the Puritan analysis of *inclinations* and individual *talents*,[12] which was the beginning of a bourgeois psychology, explicitly studying, in this case, all human faculties from the viewpoint of their potential for work and contribution to discipline. A further sign of a new curiosity about the body and "of a change in manners and customs from former times whereby

The anatomy lesson at the University of Padova. The anatomy theatre disclosed to the public eye a disenchanted, desecrated body. In DE FASCICULO DE MEDICINA. *Venezia (1494).*

the body can be opened" (in the words of a 17th-century physician) was also the development of *anatomy* as a scientific discipline, following its long relegation to the intellectual underground in the Middle Ages (Wightman 1972: 90–92; Galzigna 1978).

But while the body emerged as the main protagonist in the philosophical and medical scenes, a striking feature of these investigations is the degraded conception they formed of it. The anatomy "theatre"[13] discloses to the public eye a disenchanted, desecrated body, which only in principle can be conceived as the site of the soul, but actually is treated as a separate reality (Galzigna 1978: 163–64).[14] To the eye of the anatomist the body is a factory, as shown by the title that Andreas Vesalius gave to his epochal work on the "dissecting industry": *De humani corporis fabrica* (1543). In Mechanical Philosophy, the body is described by analogy with the *machine*, often with emphasis on its *inertia*. The body is conceived as brute matter, wholly divorced from any rational qualities: it does not know, does not want, does not feel. The body is a pure "collection of members" Descartes claims in his 1634 *Discourse on Method* (1973, Vol. I, 152). He is echoed by Nicholas Malebranche who, in the *Dialogues on Metaphysics and on Religion* (1688), raises the crucial question "Can a body think?" to promptly answer, "No, beyond a doubt, for all the modifications of such an extension consist only in certain relations of distance; and it is obvious that such relations are not perceptions, reasonings, pleasures, desires, feelings, in a word, thoughts" (Popkin 1966: 280). For Hobbes, as well, the body is a conglomerate of mechanical motions that, lacking autonomous power, operates on the basis of an external causation, in a play of attractions and aversions where everything is regulated as in an automaton (*Leviathan* Part I, Chapter VI).

It is true, however, of Mechanical Philosophy what Michel Foucault maintains with regard to the 17th and 18th-century social disciplines (Foucault 1977: 137). Here, too, we find a different perspective from that of medieval asceticism, where the degradation of the body had a purely negative function, seeking to establish the temporal and illusory nature of earthly pleasures and consequently the need to renounce the body itself.

In Mechanical Philosophy we perceive a new bourgeois spirit that calculates, classifies, makes distinctions, and degrades the body only in order to rationalize its faculties, aiming not just at intensifying its subjection but at maximizing its social utility (*Ibid.*: 137–38). Far from renouncing the body, mechanical theorists seek to conceptualize it in ways that make its operations intelligible and controllable. Thus the sense of pride (rather than commiseration) with which Descartes insists that "this machine" (as he persistently calls the body in the *Treatise of Man*) is just an automaton, and its death is no more to be mourned than the breaking of a tool.[15]

Certainly, neither Hobbes nor Descartes spent many words on economic matters, and it would be absurd to read into their philosophies the everyday concerns of the English or Dutch merchants. Yet, we cannot fail to see the important contribution which their speculations on human nature gave to the emerging capitalist science of work. To pose the body as mechanical matter, void of any intrinsic teleology — the "occult virtues" attributed to it by both Natural Magic and the popular superstitions of the time — was to make intelligible the possibility of subordinating it to a work process that increasingly relied on uniform and predictable forms of behavior.

Once its devices were deconstructed and it was itself reduced to a tool, the body could be opened to an infinite manipulation of its powers and possibilities. One could

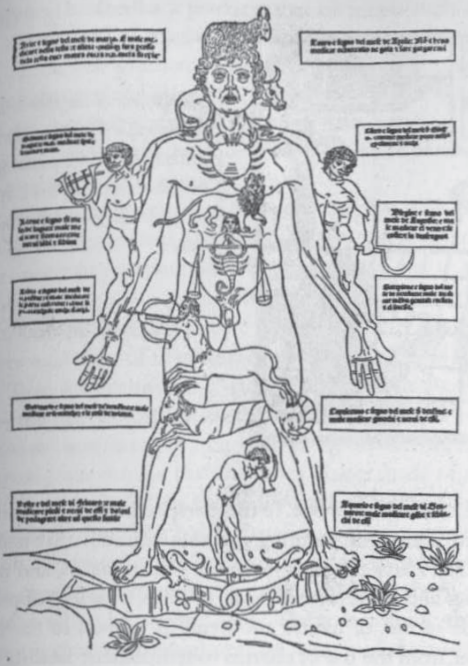
investigate the vices and limits of imagination, the virtues of habit, the uses of fear, how certain passions can be avoided or neutralized, and how they can be more rationally utilized. In this sense, Mechanical Philosophy contributed to increasing the ruling-class control over the natural world, control over human nature being the first, most indispensable step. Just as *nature*, reduced to a "Great Machine," could be conquered and (in Bacon's words) "penetrated in all her secrets," likewise the *body*, emptied of its occult forces, could be "caught in a system of subjection," whereby its behavior could be calculated, organized, technically thought and invested of power relations" (Foucault 1977: 26).

In Descartes, body and nature are identified, for both are made of the same particles and act in obedience to uniform physical laws set in motion by God's will. Thus, not only is the Cartesian body pauperized and expropriated from any magical virtue; in the great ontological divide which Descartes institutes between the essence of humanity and its accidental conditions, the body is divorced from the person, it is literally dehumanized. "I am not this body," Descartes insists throughout his *Meditations* (1641). And, indeed, in his philosophy the body joins a continuum of clock-like matter that the unfettered will can now contemplate as the object of its domination.

As we will see, Descartes and Hobbes express two different projects with respect to corporeal reality. In Descartes, the reduction of the body to mechanical matter allows for the development of mechanisms of self-management that make the body the subject of the will. In Hobbes, by contrast, the mechanization of the body justifies the total submission of the individual to the power of the state. In both, however, the outcome is a redefinition of bodily attributes that makes the body, ideally, at least, suited for the regularity and automatism demanded by the capitalist work-discipline.[16] I emphasize "ideally" because, in the years in which Descartes and Hobbes were writing their treatises, the ruling class had to confront a corporeality that was far different from that appearing in their prefigurations.

It is difficult, in fact, to reconcile the insubordinate bodies that haunt the social literature of the "Iron Century" with the clock-like images by which the body is represented in Descartes' and Hobbes' works. Yet, though seemingly removed from the daily affairs of the class struggle, it is in the speculations of the two philosophers that we find first conceptualized the development of the body into a work-machine, one of the main tasks of primitive accumulation. When, for example, Hobbes declares that "the heart (is) but a spring... and the joints so many wheels," we perceive in his words a bourgeois spirit, whereby not only is work the *condition and motive of existence of the body*, but the need is felt to transform all bodily powers into work powers.

This project is a clue to understanding why so much of the philosophical and religious speculation of the 16th and 17th centuries consists of a true *vivisection of the human body*, whereby it was decided which of its properties could live and which, instead, had to die. It was a *social alchemy* that did not turn base metals into gold, but bodily powers into work-powers. For the same relation that capitalism introduced between land and work was also beginning to command the relation between the body and labor. While labor was beginning to appear as a dynamic force infinitely capable of development, the body was seen as inert, sterile matter that only the will could move, in a condition similar to that which Newton's physics established between mass and motion, where the mass tends to inertia unless a force is applied to it. Like the land, the body had to be cul-



The conception of the body as a receptacle of magical powers largely derived from the belief in a correspondence between the microcosm of the individual and the macrocosm of the celestial world, as illustrated in this 16th-century image of the "zodiacal man."

tivated and first of all broken up, so that it could relinquish its hidden treasures. For while the body is the *condition of the existence of labor-power,* it is also its limit, as the main element of resistance to its expenditure. It was not sufficient, then, to decide that *in itself* the body had no value. The body had to die so that labor-power could live.

What died was the concept of the body as a receptacle of magical powers that had prevailed in the medieval world. In reality, it was destroyed. For in the background of the new philosophy we find a vast initiative by the state, whereby what the philosophers classified as "irrational" was branded as crime. This state intervention was the necessary "subtext" of Mechanical Philosophy. "Knowledge" can only become "power" if it can enforce its prescriptions. This means that the mechanical body, the body-machine, could not have become a model of social behavior without the destruction by the state of a vast range of pre-capitalist beliefs, practices, and social subjects whose existence contradicted the regularization of corporeal behavior promised by Mechanical Philosophy. This is why, at the peak of the "Age of Reason" — the age of scepticism and methodical doubt — we have a ferocious attack on the body, well-supported by many who subscribed to the new doctrine.

This is how we must read the attack against witchcraft and against that magical view of the world which, despite the efforts of the Church, had continued to prevail on a popular level through the Middle Ages. At the basis of magic was an animistic conception of nature that did not admit to any separation between matter and spirit, and thus imagined the cosmos as a *living organism,* populated by occult forces, where every

Frontispiece to the first edition of Christopher Marlowe's DOCTOR FAUSTUS *(1604), picturing the magician conjuring the Devil from the protected space of his magical circle.*

element was in "sympathetic" relation with the rest. In this perspective, where nature was viewed as a universe of signs and signatures, marking invisible affinities that had to be deciphered (Foucault 1970: 26–27), every element — herbs, plants, metals, and most of all the human body — hid virtues and powers peculiar to it. Thus, a variety of practices were designed to appropriate the secrets of nature and bend its powers to the human will. From palmistry to divination, from the use of charms to sympathetic healing, magic opened a vast number of possibilities. There was magic designed to win card games, to play unknown instruments, to become invisible, to win somebody's love, to gain immunity in war, to make children sleep (Thomas 1971; Wilson 2000).

Eradicating these practices was a necessary condition for the capitalist rationalization of work, since magic appeared as an illicit form of power and an instrument *to obtain what one wanted without work,* that is, a refusal of work in action. "Magic kills industry," lamented Francis Bacon, admitting that nothing repelled him so much as the assumption that one could obtain results with a few idle expedients, rather than with the sweat of one's brow (Bacon 1870: 381).

Magic, moreover, rested upon a qualitative conception of space and time that precluded a regularization of the labor process. How could the new entrepreneurs impose regular work patterns on a proletariat anchored in the belief that there are lucky and unlucky days, that is, days on which one can travel and others on which one should not move from home, days on which to marry and others on which every enterprise should be cautiously avoided? Equally incompatible with the capitalist work-discipline was a conception of the cosmos that attributed special powers to the individual: the magnetic look, the power to make oneself invisible, to leave one's body, to chain the will of others by magical incantations.

It would not be fruitful to investigate whether these powers were real or imaginary. It can be said that all precapitalist societies have believed in them and, in recent times, we have witnessed a revaluation of practices that, at the time we refer to, would have been condemned as witchcraft. Let us mention the growing interest in parapsy-

chology and biofeedback practices that are increasingly applied even by mainstream medicine. The revival of magical beliefs is possible today because it no longer represents a social threat. The mechanization of the body is so constitutive of the individual that, at least in industrialized countries, giving space to the belief in occult forces does not jeopardize the regularity of social behavior. Astrology too can be allowed to return, with the certainty that even the most devoted consumer of astral charts will automatically consult the watch before going to work.

However, this was not an option for the 17th-century ruling class which, in this initial and experimental phase of capitalist development, had not yet achieved the social control necessary to neutralize the practice of magic, nor could they functionally integrate magic into the organization of social life. From their viewpoint it hardly mattered whether the powers that people claimed to have, or aspired to have, were real or not, for the very existence of magical beliefs was a source of social insubordination.

Take, for example, the widespread belief in the possibility of finding hidden treasures by the help of magical charms (Thomas 1971: 234–37). This was certainly an impediment to the institution of a rigorous and spontaneously accepted work-discipline. Equally threatening was the use that the lower classes made of *prophecies,* which, particularly during the English Civil War (as already in the Middle Ages), served to formulate a program of struggle (Elton 1972: 142ff). Prophecies are not simply the expression of a fatalistic resignation. Historically they have been a means by which the "poor" have externalized their desires, given legitimacy to their plans, and have been spurred to action. Hobbes recognized this when he warned that "There is nothing that... so well directs men in their deliberations, as the foresight of the sequels of their actions; prophecy being many times the principal cause of the events foretold" (Hobbes, "Behemot," *Works VI*: 399).

But regardless of the dangers which magic posed, the bourgeoisie had to combat its power because it undermined the principle of individual responsibility, as magic placed the determinants of social action in the realm of the stars, out of their reach and control. Thus, in the rationalization of space and time that characterized the philosophical speculation of the 16th and 17th centuries, prophecy was replaced with the *calculation of probabilities* whose advantage, from a capitalist viewpoint, is that here the future can be anticipated only insofar as the regularity and immutability of the system is assumed; that is, only insofar as it is assumed that the future will be like the past, and no major change, no revolution, will upset the coordinates of individual decision-making. Similarly, the bourgeoisie had to combat the assumption that it is possible to be in two places at the same time, for the *fixation of the body in space and time*, that is, the *individual's spatio-temporal identification,* is an essential condition for the regularity of the work-process.[17]

The incompatibility of magic with the capitalist work-discipline and the requirement of social control is one of the reasons why a campaign of terror was launched against it by the state — a terror applauded without reservations by many who are presently considered among the founders of scientific rationalism: Jean Bodin, Mersenne, the mechanical philosopher and member of the Royal Society Richard Boyle, and Newton's teacher, Isaac Barrow.[18] Even the materialist Hobbes, while keeping his distance, gave his approval. "As for witches," he wrote, "I think not that their witchcraft is any real power; but yet that they are justly punished, for the false belief they have that they can do such mischief, joined with their purpose to do it if they can" (*Leviathan* 1963: 67).

The torture chamber. 1809 engraving by Manet in Joseph Lavallee, HISTOIRES DES INQUISITIONS RELIGIEUSES D'ITALIE, D'ESPAGNE ET DE PORTUGAL.

He added that if these superstitions were eliminated, "men would be much more fitted than they are for civil obedience" (*ibid.*). Hobbes was well advised. The stakes on which witches and other practitioners of magic died, and the chambers in which their tortures were executed, were a laboratory in which much social discipline was sedimented, and much knowledge about the body was gained. Here those irrationalities were eliminated that stood in the way of the transformation of the individual and social body into a set of predictable and controllable mechanisms. And it was here again that the scientific use of torture was born, for blood and torture were necessary to "breed an animal" capable of regular, homogeneous, and uniform behavior, indelibly marked with the memory of the new rules (Nietzsche 1965: 189–90).

A significant element in this context was the condemnation as *maleficium* of abortion and contraception, which consigned the female body — the *uterus* reduced to a machine for the reproduction of labor — into the hands of the state and the medical profession. I will return later to this point, in the chapter on the witch-hunt, where I argue that the persecution of the witches was the climax of the state intervention against the proletarian body in the modern era.

Here let us stress that despite the violence deployed by the state, the disciplining of the proletariat proceeded slowly throughout the 17th century and into the 18th century in the face of a strong resistance that not even the fear of execution could overcome. An emblematic example of this resistance is analyzed by Peter Linebaugh in "The Tyburn Riots Against the Surgeons." Linebaugh reports that in early 18th-century

London, at the time of an execution, a battle was fought by the friends and relatives of the condemned to prevent the assistants of the surgeons from seizing the corpse for use in anatomical studies (Linebaugh 1975). This battle was fierce, because the fear of being dissected was no less than the fear of death. Dissection eliminated the possibility that the condemned might revive after a poorly executed hanging, as often occurred in 18th-century England (*ibid.*: 102-04). A magical conception of the body was spread among the people according to which the body continued to live after death, and by death was enriched with new powers. It was believed that the dead possessed the power to "come back again" and exact their last revenge upon the living. It was also believed that a corpse had healing virtues, so that crowds of sick people gathered around the gallows, expecting from the limbs of the dead effects as miraculous as those attributed to the touch of the king (*ibid.*: 109–10).

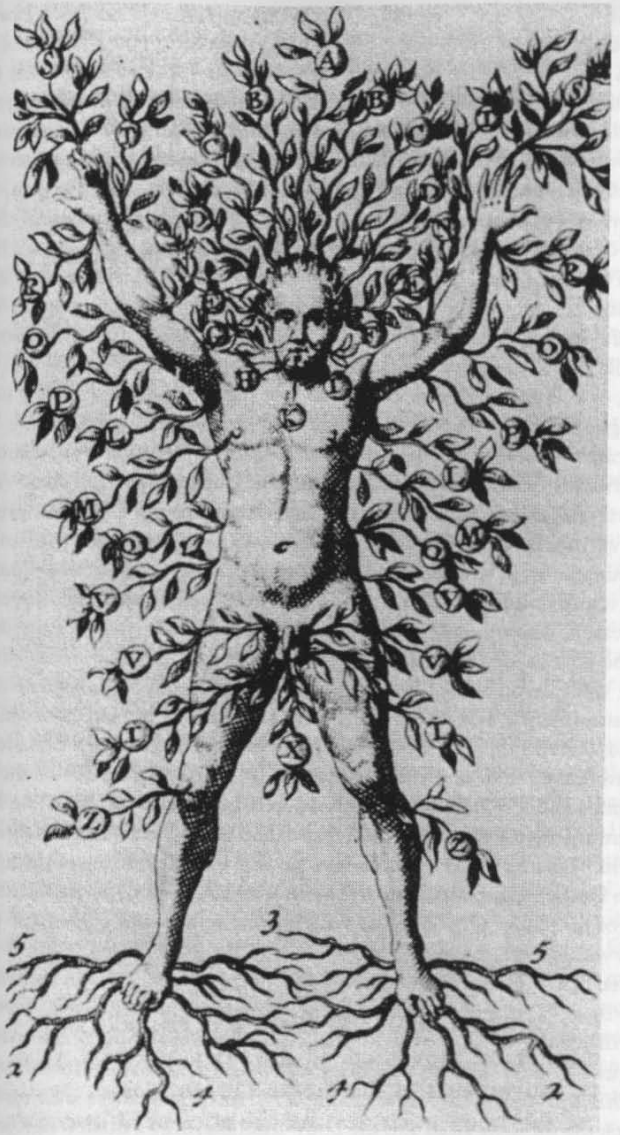
Dissection thus appeared as a further infamy, a second and greater death, and the condemned spent their last days making sure that their body should not be abandoned into the hands of surgeons. This battle, significantly occurring at the foot of the gallows, demonstrates both the violence that presided over the scientific rationalization of the world, and the clash of two opposite concepts of the body, two opposite investments in it. On one side, we have a concept of the body that sees it endowed with powers even after death; the corpse does not inspire repulsion, and is not treated as something rotten or irreducibly alien. On the other, the body is seen as dead even when still alive, insofar as it is conceived as a mechanical device, to be taken apart just like any machine. "At the gallows, standing at the conjunction of the Tyburn and Edgware roads," Peter Linebaugh writes, "we find that the history of the London poor and the history of English science intersect." This was not a coincidence; nor was it a coincidence that the progress of anatomy depended on the ability of the surgeons to snatch the bodies of the hanged at Tyburn.[19] The course of scientific rationalization was intimately connected to the attempt by the state to impose its control over an unwilling workforce.

This attempt was even more important, as a determinant of new attitudes towards the body, than the development of technology. As David Dickson argues, connecting the new scientific worldview to the increasing mechanization of production can only hold as a metaphor (Dickson 1979: 24). Certainly, the clock and the automated devices that so much intrigued Descartes and his contemporaries (e.g. hydraulically moved statues), provided models for the new science, and for the speculations of Mechanical Philosophy on the movements of the body. It is also true that starting from the 17th century, anatomical analogies were drawn from the workshops of the manufacturers: the arms were viewed as levers, the heart as a pump, the lungs as bellows, the eyes as lenses, the fist as a hammer (Mumford 1962: 32). But these mechanical metaphors reflect not the influence of technology *per se*, but the fact that the *machine was becoming the model of social behavior.*

The inspirational force of the need for social control is evident even in the field of astronomy. A classic example is that of Edmond Halley (the secretary of the Royal Society), who, in concomitance with the appearance in 1695 of the comet later named after him, organized clubs all over England in order to demonstrate the predictability of natural phenomena, and to dispel the popular belief that comets announced social disorders. That the path of scientific rationalization intersected with the disciplining of the social body is even more evident in the social sciences. We can see, in fact, that their

A telling example of the new mechanical conception of the body is this 16th-century German engraving where the peasant is represented as nothing more than a means of production, with his body composed entirely of agricultural implements.

development was premised on the homogenization of social behavior, and the construction of a prototypical individual to whom all would be expected to conform. In Marx's terms, this is an "abstract individual," constructed in a uniform way, as a social average, and subject to a radical decharacterization, so that all of its faculties can be grasped only in their most standardized aspects. The construction of this new individual was the basis for the development of what William Petty would later call (using Hobbes' terminology) *Political Arithmetics* — a new science that was to study every form of social behavior in terms of *Numbers, Weights,* and *Measures.* Petty's project was realized with the development of *statistics* and *demography* (Wilson 1966; Cullen 1975) which perform on the social body the same operations that anatomy performs on the individual body, as they dissect the population and study its movements — from natality to mortality rates, from generational to occupational structures — in their most massified and regular aspects. Also from the point of view of the abstraction process that the individual underwent in the transition to capitalism, we can see that the development of the "human machine" was the main technological leap, the main step in the development of the productive forces that took place in the period of primitive accumulation. *We can see, in other words, that the human body and not the steam engine, and not even the clock, was the first machine developed by capitalism.*



J. Case, COMPENDIUM ANATOMICUM (1696).
In contrast to the "mechanical man" is this image of the "vegetable man," in which the blood vessels are seen as twigs growing out of the human body.

But if the body is a machine, one problem immediately emerges: how to make it work? Two different models of body-government derive from the theories of Mechanical Philosophy. On one side, we have the Cartesian model that, starting from the assumption of a purely mechanical body, postulates the possibility of developing in the individual mechanisms of self-discipline, self-management, and self-regulation allowing for voluntary work-relations and government based on consent. On the other side, there is the Hobbesian model that, denying the possibility of a body-free Reason, externalizes the functions of command, consigning them to the absolute authority of the state.

The development of a self-management theory, starting from the mechanization of the body, is the focus of the philosophy of Descartes, who (let us remember it) completed his intellectual formation not in the France of monarchical absolutism but in the bourgeois Holland so congenial to his spirit that he elected it as his abode. Descartes' doctrines have a double aim: to deny that human behavior can be influenced by external factors (such as the stars, or celestial intelligences), and to free the soul from any bodily conditioning, thus making it capable of exercising an unlimited sovereignty over the body.

Descartes believed that he could accomplish both tasks by demonstrating the mechanical nature of animal behavior. Nothing, he claimed in his *Le Monde* (1633), causes so many errors as the belief that animals have a soul like ours. Thus, in preparation for his *Treatise of Man,* he devoted many months to studying the anatomy of animal organs; every morning he went to the butcher to observe the quartering of the beasts.[20] He even performed many vivisections, likely comforted by his belief that, being mere brutes "destitute of Reason," the animals he dissected could not feel any pain (Rosenfield 1968: 8).[21]

To be able to demonstrate the brutality of animals was essential for Descartes, because he was convinced that here he could find the answer to his questions concerning the location, nature, and extent of the power controlling human conduct. He believed that in the dissected animal he would find proof that the body is only capable of mechanical, and involuntary actions; that, consequently, it is not constitutive of the person; and that the human essence, therefore, resides in purely immaterial faculties. The human body, too, is an automaton for Descartes, but what differentiates "man" from the beast and confers upon "him" mastery over the surrounding world is the presence of thought. Thus, the soul, which Descartes displaces from the cosmos and the sphere of corporeality, returns at the center of his philosophy endowed with infinite power under the guise of individual reason and will.

Placed in a soulless world and in a body-machine, the Cartesian man, like Prospero, could then break his magic wand, becoming not only responsible for his own actions, but seemingly the center of all powers. In being divorced from its body, the rational self certainly lost its solidarity with its corporeal reality and with nature. Its solitude, however, was to be that of a king: in the Cartesian model of the person, there is no egalitarian dualism between the thinking head and the body-machine, only a master/slave relation, since the primary task of the will is to dominate the body and the natural world. In the Cartesian model of the person, then, we see the same centralization of the functions of command that in the same period was occurring at the level of the state: as the task of the state was to govern the social body, so the mind became sovereign in the new personality.

Descartes concedes that the supremacy of the mind over the body is not easily achieved, as Reason must confront its inner contradictions. Thus, in *The Passions of the*

Soul (1650), he introduces us to the prospect of a constant battle between the lower and higher faculties of the soul which he describes in almost military terms, appealing to our need to be brave, and to gain the proper arms to resist the attacks of our passions. We must be prepared to suffer temporary defeats, for our will might not always be capable of changing or arresting its passions. It can, however, neutralize them by diverting its attention to some other thing, or it can restrain the movements to which they dispose the body. It can, in other words, prevent the *passions* from becoming *actions* (Descartes 1973, I: 354–55).

With the institution of a hierarchical relation between mind and body, Descartes developed the theoretical premises for the work-discipline required by the developing capitalist economy. For the mind's supremacy over the body implies that the will can (in principle) control the needs, reactions, reflexes of the body; it can impose a regular order on its vital functions, and force the body to work according to external specifications, independently of its desires.

Most importantly, the supremacy of the will allows for the interiorization of the mechanisms of power. Thus, the counterpart of the mechanization of the body is the development of Reason in its role as judge, inquisitor, manager, administrator. We find here the origins of bourgeois subjectivity as self-management, self-ownership, law, responsibility, with its corollaries of memory and identity. Here we also find the origin of that proliferation of "micro-powers" that Michel Foucault has described in his critique of the juridico-discursive model of Power (Foucault 1977). The Cartesian model shows, however, that Power can be decentered and diffused through the social body only to the extent that it is recentered in the person, which is thus reconstituted as a micro-state. In other words, in being diffused, Power does not lose its vector — that is, its content and its aims — but simply acquires the collaboration of the Self in their promotion.

Consider, in this context, the thesis proposed by Brian Easlea, according to which the main benefit that Cartesian dualism offered to the capitalist class was the Christian defense of the immortality of the soul, and the possibility of defeating the atheism implicit in Natural Magic, which was loaded with subversive implications (Easlea 1980: 132ff). Easlea argues, in support of this view, that the defense of religion was a central theme in Cartesianism, which, particularly in its English version, never forgot that "No Spirit, No God; No Bishop, No King" (*ibid.*: 202). Easlea's argument is attractive; yet its insistence on the "reactionary" elements in Descartes's thought makes it impossible for Easlea to answer a question that he himself raises. Why was the hold of Cartesianism in Europe so strong that, even after Newtonian physics dispelled the belief in a natural world void of occult powers, and even after the advent of religious tolerance, Cartesianism continued to shape the dominant worldview? I suggest that the popularity of Cartesianism among the middle and upper class was directly related to the program of *self-mastery* that Descartes' philosophy promoted. In its social implications, this program was as important to Descartes's elite contemporaries as the hegemonic relation between humans and nature that is legitimized by Cartesian dualism.

The development of self-management (i.e., self-government, self-development) becomes an essential requirement in a capitalist socio-economic system in which self-ownership is assumed to be the fundamental social relation, and discipline no longer relies purely on external coercion. The social significance of Cartesian philosophy lies in part

in the fact that it provides an intellectual justification for it. In this way, Descartes' theory of self-management *defeats but also recuperates* the active side of Natural Magic. For it replaces the unpredictable power of the magician (built on the subtle manipulation of astral influences and correspondences) with a power far more profitable — a power for which no soul has to be forfeited — generated only through the administration and domination of one's body and, by extension, the administration and domination of the bodies of other fellow beings. We cannot say, then, as Easlea does (repeating a criticism raised by Leibniz), that Cartesianism failed to translate its tenets into a set of practical regulations, that is, that it failed to demonstrate to the philosophers — and above all to the merchants and manufacturers — how they would benefit from it in their attempt to control the matter of the world (*ibid.*: 151).

If Cartesianism failed to give a technological translation of its precepts, it nonetheless provided precious information with regard to the development of "human technology." Its insights into the dynamics of self-control would lead to the construction of a new model of the person, wherein the individual would function at once as both master and slave. It is because it interpreted so well the requirements of the capitalist work-discipline that Descartes' doctrine, by the end of the 17th century, had spread throughout Europe and survived even the advent of vitalistic biology as well as the increasing obsolescence of the mechanistic paradigm.

The reasons for Descartes' triumph are clearest when we compare his account of the person with that of his English rival, Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes' biological monism rejects the postulate of an immaterial mind or soul that is the basis of Descartes' concept of the person, and with it the Cartesian assumption that the human will can free itself from corporeal and instinctual determinism.[22] For Hobbes, human behavior is a conglomerate of reflex actions that follow precise natural laws, and compel the individual to incessantly strive for power and domination over others (*Leviathan*: 141ff). Thus the war of all against all (in a hypothetical state of nature), and the necessity for an absolute power guaranteeing, through fear and punishment, the survival of the individual in society.

> For the laws of nature, as justice, equity, modesty, mercy, and, in sum, doing to others as we would be done to, of themselves, without the terror of some power to cause them to be observed, are contrary to our natural passions, that carry us to partiality, pride, revenge and the like (*ibid.*: 173).

As is well known, Hobbes' political doctrine caused a scandal among his contemporaries, who considered it dangerous and subversive, so much so that, although he strongly desired it, Hobbes was never admitted to the Royal Society (Bowle 1952: 163).

Against Hobbes, it was the Cartesian model that prevailed, for it expressed the already active tendency to democratize the mechanisms of social discipline by attributing to the individual will that function of command which, in the Hobbesian model, is left solely in the hands of the state. As many critics of Hobbes maintained, the foundations of public discipline must be rooted in the hearts of men, for in the absence of an interior legislation men are inevitably led to revolution (quoted in Bowle 1951: 97–98). "In Hobbes," complained Henry Moore, "there is no freedom of will and consequently no

remorse of conscience or reason, but only what pleases the one with the longest sword" (quoted in Easlea 1980: 159). More explicit was Alexander Ross, who observed that "it is the curb of conscience that restrains men from rebellion, there is no outward law or force more powerful... there is no judge so severe, no torturer so cruel as an accusing conscience" (quoted in Bowle 1952: 167).

The contemporaneous critique of Hobbes' atheism and materialism was clearly not motivated purely by religious concerns. His view of the individual as a machine moved only by its appetites and aversions was rejected not because it eliminated the concept of the human creature made in the image of God, but because it eliminated the possibility of a form of social control not depending wholly on the iron rule of the state. Here, I argue, is the main difference between Hobbes' philosophy and Cartesianism. This, however, cannot be seen if we insist on stressing the feudal elements in Descartes' philosophy, and in particular its defense of the existence of God with all that this entailed, as a defense of the power of the state. If we do privilege the feudal Descartes we miss the fact that the elimination of the religious element in Hobbes (i.e., the belief in the existence of incorporeal substances) was actually a response to *the democratization implicit in the Cartesian model of self-mastery* which Hobbes undoubtedly distrusted. As the activism of the Puritan sects during the English Civil War had demonstrated, self-mastery could easily turn into a subversive proposition. For the Puritans' appeal to return the management of one's behavior to the individual conscience, and to make of one's conscience the ultimate judge of truth, had become radicalized in the hands of the sectaries into an anarchic refusal of established authority.[23] The example of the Diggers and Ranters, and of the scores of mechanic preachers who, in the name of the "light of conscience," had opposed state legislation as well as private property, must have convinced Hobbes that the appeal to "Reason" was a dangerously double-edged weapon.[24]

The conflict between Cartesian "theism" and Hobbesian "materialism" was to be resolved in time in their reciprocal assimilation, in the sense that (as always in the history of capitalism) the decentralization of the mechanisms of command, through their location in the individual, was finally obtained only to the extent that a centralization occurred in the power of the state. To put this resolution in the terms in which the debate was posed in the course of the English Civil War: "neither the Diggers nor Absolutism," but a well-calculated mixture of both, whereby the democratization of command would rest on the shoulders of a state always ready, like the Newtonian God, to reimpose order on the souls who proceeded too far in the ways of self-determination. The crux of the matter was lucidly expressed by Joseph Glanvil, a Cartesian member of the Royal Society who, in a polemic against Hobbes, argued that the crucial issue was the control of the mind over the body. This, however, did not simply imply the control of the ruling class (the mind *par excellence*) over the body-proletariat, but, equally important, the development of the capacity for self-control within the person.

As Foucault has demonstrated, the mechanization of the body did not only involve the repression of desires, emotions, or forms of behavior that were to be eradicated. It also involved the developent of new faculties in the individual that would appear as *other* with respect to the body itself, and become the agents of its transformation. The product of this alienation from the body, in other words, was the development of individual *identity*, conceived precisely as "otherness" from the body, and in perennial antagonism with it.

The emergence of this *alter ego,* and the determination of a historic conflict between mind and body, represent the birth of the individual in capitalist society. It would become a typical characteristic of the individual molded by the capitalist work-discipline to confront one's body as an alien reality to be assessed, developed and kept at bay, in order to obtain from it the desired results.

As we pointed out, among the "lower classes" the development of self-management as self-discipline remained, for a long time, an object of speculation. How little self-discipline was expected from the "common people" can be judged from the fact that, right into the 18th century, 160 crimes in England were punishable by death (Linebaugh 1992), and every year thousands of "common people" were transported to the colonies or condemned to the galleys. Moreover, when the populace appealed to reason, it was to voice anti-authoritarian demands, since self-mastery at the popular level meant the rejection of the established authority, rather than the interiorization of social rule.

Indeed, through the 17th century, self-management remained a bourgeois prerogative. As Easlea points out, when the philosophers spoke of "man" as a rational being they made exclusive reference to a small elite made of white, upper-class, adult males. "The great multitude of men," wrote Henry Power, an English follower of Descartes, "resembles rather Descartes' automata, as they lack any reasoning power, and only as a metaphor can be called men" (Easlea 1980: 140).[25] The "better sorts" agreed that the proletariat was of a different race. In their eyes, made suspicious by fear, the proletariat appeared as a "great beast," a "many-headed monster," wild, vociferous, given to any excess (Hill 1975: 181ff; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000). On an individual level as well, a ritual vocabulary identified the masses as purely instinctual beings. Thus, in the Elizabethan literature, the beggar is always "lusty," and "sturdy," "rude," "hot-headed," "disorderly" are the ever-recurrent terms in any discussion of the lower class.

In this process, not only did the body lose all naturalistic connotations, but a *body-function* began to emerge, in the sense that the body became a purely relational term, no longer signifying any specific reality, but identifying instead any impediment to the domination of Reason. This means that while the proletariat became a "body," the body became "the proletariat," and in particular the weak, irrational female (the "woman in us," as Hamlet was to say) or the "wild" African, being purely defined through its limiting function, that is through its "otherness" from Reason, and treated as an agent of internal subversion.

Yet, the struggle against this "great beast" was not solely directed against the "lower sort of people." It was also interiorized by the dominant classes in the battle they waged against their own "natural state." As we have seen, no less than Prospero, the bourgeoisie too had to recognize that "[t]his thing of darkness is mine," that is, that Caliban was part of itself (Brown 1988; Tyllard 1961:34–35). This awareness pervades the literary production of the 16th and 17th centuries. The terminology is revealing. Even those who did not follow Descartes saw the body as a beast that had to be kept incessantly under control. Its instincts were compared to "subjects" to be "governed," the senses were seen as a prison for the reasoning soul.

> O who shall, from this Dungeon, raise
> A Soul inslav'd so many wayes?

asked Andrew Marvell, in his "Dialogue Between the Soul and the Body."

> With bolts of Bones, that fetter'd stands
> In Feet; and manacled in Hands.
> Here blinded with an Eye; and there
> Deaf with the drumming of an Ear.
> A Soul hung up, as t'were, in Chain
> Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins
> (quoted by Hill 1964b: 345).

The conflict between appetites and reason was a key theme in Elizabethan literature (Tillyard 1961: 75), while among the Puritans the idea began to take hold that the "Antichrist" is in every man. Meanwhile, debates on education and on the "nature of man" current among the "middle sort" centered around the body/mind conflict, posing the crucial question of whether human beings are voluntary or involuntary agents.

But the definition of a new relation with the body did not remain at a purely ideological level. Many practices began to appear in daily life to signal the deep transformations occurring in this domain: the use of cutlery, the development of shame with respect to nakedness, the advent of "manners" that attempted to regulate how one laughed, walked, sneezed, how one should behave at the table, and to what extent one could sing, joke, play (Elias 1978: 129ff). While the individual was increasingly dissociated from the body, the latter became an object of constant observation, as if it were an enemy. The body began to inspire fear and repugnance. "The body of man is full of filth," declared Jonathan Edwards, whose attitude is typical of the Puritan experience, where the subjugation of the body was a daily practice (Greven 1977: 67). Particularly repugnant were those bodily functions that directly confronted "men" with their "animality." Witness the case of Cotton Mather who, in his *Diary*, confessed how humiliated he felt one day when, urinating against a wall, he saw a dog doing the same:

> Thought I 'what vile and mean Things are the Children of Men in this mortal State. How much do our natural Necessities abase us, and place us in some regard on the same level with the very Dogs'... Accordingly I resolved that it should be my ordinary Practice, whenever I step to answer the one or the other Necessity of Nature, to make it an Opportunity of shaping in my Mind some holy, noble, divine Thought (*ibid.*).

The great medical passion of the time, the *analysis of excrements* — from which manifold deductions were drawn on the psychological tendencies of the individual (vices, virtues) (Hunt 1970: 143–46) — is also to be traced back to this conception of the body as a receptacle of filth and hidden dangers. Clearly, this obsession with human excrements reflected in part the disgust that the middle class was beginning to feel for the non-productive aspects of the body — a disgust inevitably accentuated in an urban environment where excrements posed a logistic problem, in addition to appearing as pure waste. But in this obsession we can also read the bourgeois need to regulate and

cleanse the body-machine from any element that could interrupt its activity, and create "dead time" in the expenditure of labor. Excrements were so much analyzed and debased because they were the symbol of the "ill humors" that were believed to dwell in the body, to which every perverse tendency in human beings was attributed. For the Puritans they became the visible sign of the corruption of human nature, a sort of original sin that had to be combatted, subjugated, exorcised. Hence the use of purges, emetics, and enemas that were administered to children or the "possessed" to make them expel their devilries (Thorndike 1958: 553ff).

In this obsessive attempt to conquer the body in its most intimate recesses, we see reflected the same passion with which, in these same years, the bourgeoisie tried to conquer — we could say "colonize" — that alien, dangerous, unproductive being that in its eyes was the proletariat. For the proletarian was the great Caliban of the time. The proletarian was that "material being by itself raw and undigested" that Petty recommended be consigned to the hands of the state, which, in its prudence, "must better it, manage it, and shape it to its advantage" (Furniss 1957: 17ff).

Like Caliban, the proletariat personified the "ill humors" that hid in the social body, beginning with the disgusting monsters of idleness and drunkenness. In the eyes of his masters, its life was pure inertia, but at the same time was uncontrolled passion and unbridled fantasy, ever ready to explode in riotous commotions. Above all, it was indiscipline, lack of productivity, incontinence, lust for immediate physical satisfaction; its utopia being not a life of labor, but the land of Cockaigne (Burke 1978; Graus 1987),[26] where houses were made of sugar, rivers of milk, and where not only could one obtain what one wished without effort, but one was paid to eat and drink:

> To sleep one hour
> of deep sleep
> without waking
> one earns six francs;
> and to drink well
> one earns a pistol;
> this country is jolly,
> one earns ten francs a day
> to make love (Burke: 190).

The idea of transforming this lazy being, who dreamt of life as a long Carnival, into an indefatigable worker, must have seemed a desperate enterprise. It meant literally to "turn the world upside down," but in a totally capitalist fashion, where inertia to command would be transformed into lack of desire and autonomous will, where *vis erotica would become vis lavorativa*, and where need would be experienced only as lack, abstinence, and eternal indigence.

Hence this battle against the body, which characterized the early phase of capitalist development, and which has continued, in different ways, to our day. Hence that mechanization of the body, which was the project of the new Natural Philosophy, and the focal point for the first experiments in the organization of the state. If we move from the witch-hunt to the speculations of Mechanical Philosophy, and the Puritans' metic-

ulous investigations of individual talents, we see that a single thread ties the seemingly divergent paths of social legislation, religious reform, and the scientific rationalization of the universe. This was the attempt to rationalize human nature, whose powers had to be rechannelled and subordinated to the development and formation of labor-power.

As we have seen, the body was increasingly politicized in this process; it was denaturalized and redefined as the "other," the outer limit of social discipline. Thus, the birth of the body in the 17th century also marked its end, as the concept of the body would cease to define a specific organic reality, and become instead a political signifier of class relations, and of the shifting, continuously redrawn boundaries which these relations produce in the map of human exploitation.

Endnotes

1. Prospero is a "new man." Didactically, his misfortunes are attributed by Shakespeare to his excessive interest in magic books, which in the end he renounces for a more active life in his native kingdom, where he will draw his power not from magic, but from the government of his subjects. But already in the island of his exile, his activities prefigure a new world order, where power is not gained through a magic wand but through the enslavement of many Calibans in far distant colonies. Prospero's exploitative management of Caliban prefigures the role of the future plantation master, who will spare no torture nor torment to force his subjects to work.
2. "[E]very man is his own greatest enemy, and as it were, his own executioner," Thomas Browne writes. Pascal, too, in the *Pensée,* declares that: "There is internal war in man between reason and the passions. If he had only reasons without passions.... If he had only passions without reason.... But having both, he cannot be without strife.... Thus he is always divided against, and opposed to himself (*Pensee*, 412: 130). On the Passions/Reason conflict, and the "correspondences" between the human "microcosm" and the "body politic," in Elizabethan literature see Tillyard (1961: 75–79; 94–99).
3. The reformation of language — a key theme in 16th and 17th-century philosophy, from Bacon to Locke — was a major concern of Joseph Glanvil, who in his *Vanity of Dogmatizing* (1665), after proclaiming his adherence to the Cartesian world view, advocates a language fit to describe clear and distinct entities (Glanvil 1970: xxvi–xxx). As S. Medcalf sums it up in his introduction to Glanvil's work, a language fit to describe such a world will bear broad similarities to mathematics, will have words of great generality and clarity; will present a picture of the universe according to its logical structure; will distinguish sharply between mind and matter, and between subjective and objective, and "will avoid metaphor as a way of knowing and describing, for metaphor depends on the assumption that the universe does not consist of wholly distinct entities and cannot therefore be fully described in positive distinct terms..." (*ibid.*: xxx).
4. Marx does not distinguish between male and female workers in his discussion of the "liberation of labor-power." There is, however, a reason for maintaining the masculine in the description of this process. While "freed" from the commons, women

were not channeled onto the path of the wage-labor market.

5. "With labour I must earn / My bread; what harm? Idleness had been worse; / My labour will sustain me" is Adam's answer to Eve's fears at the prospect of leaving the blessed garden (*Paradise Lost*, verses 1054–56, p. 579).
6. As Christopher Hill points out, until the 15th century, wage-labor could have appeared as a conquered freedom, because people still had access to the commons and had land of their own, thus they were not solely dependent on a wage. But by the 16th century, those who worked for a wage had been expropriated; moreover, the employers claimed that wages were only complementary, and kept them at their lowest level. Thus, working for a wage meant to fall to the bottom of the social ladder, and people struggled desperately to avoid this lot (Hill, 1975: 220–22). By the 17th century wage-labor was still considered a form of slavery, so much so that the Levelers excluded wage workers from the franchise, as they did not consider them independent enough to be able to freely choose their representatives (Macpherson 1962: 107–59).
7. When in 1622 Thomas Mun was asked by James I to investigate the causes of the economic crisis that had struck the country, he concluded his report by blaming the problems of the nation on the idleness of the English workers. He referred in particular to "the general leprosy of our piping, potting, feasting, factions and misspending of our time in idleness and pleasure" which, in his view, placed England at a disadvantage in its commercial competition with the industrious Dutch (Hill, 1975: 125).
8. (Wright 1960: 80–83; Thomas 1971; Van Ussel 1971: 25–92; Riley 1973: 19ff; Underdown 1985: 7–72).
9. The fear the lower classes (the "base," "meaner sorts," in the jargon of the time) inspired in the ruling class can be measured by this tale narrated in *Social England Illustrated* (1903). In 1580, Francis Hitchcock, in a pamphlet titled "New Year's Gift to England," forwarded the proposal to draft the poor of the country into the Navy, arguing: "the poorer sort of people are... apt to assist rebellion or to join with whomsoever dare to invade this noble island... then they are meet guides to bring soldiers or men of war to the rich men's wealth. For they can point with their finger 'there it is', 'yonder it is' and 'He hath it', and so procure martyrdom with murder to many wealthy persons for their wealth...." Hitchcock's proposal, however, was defeated; it was objected that if the poor of England were drafted into the navy they would steal the ships or become pirates (*Social England Illustrated* 1903: 85–86).
10. Eli F. Heckscher writes that "In his most important theoretical work *A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions* (1662) [Sir William Petty] suggested the substitution of compulsory labour for all penalties, 'which will increase labour and public wealth'. "'Why [he inquired] should not insolvent Thieves be rather punished with slavery than death? So as being slaves they may be forced to as much labour, and as cheap fare, as nature will endure, and thereby become as two men added to the Commonwealth, and not as one taken away from it" (Heckscher 1962, II: 297). In France, Colbert exhorted the Court of Justice to condemn as many convicts as possible to the galleys in order to "maintain this corps which is necessary to the state" (*ibid.*: 298–99).
11. The *Treatise on Man* (*Traité de l'Homme*), which was published twelve years after Descartes' death as *L'Homme de René Descartes* (1664), opens Descartes' "mature

period." Here, applying Galileo's physics to an investigation of the attributes of the body, Descartes attempted to explain all physiological functions as matter in motion. "I desire you to consider" (Descartes wrote at the end of the *Treatise*) "...that all the functions that I have attributed to this machine... follow naturally... from the disposition of the organs — no more no less than do the movements of a clock or other automaton, from the arrangement of its counterweights and wheels" (*Treatise*: 113).

12. It was a Puritan tenet that God has given "man" special gifts fitting him for a particular Calling; hence the need for a meticulous self-examination to resolve the Calling for which we have been designed (Morgan1966:72–73; Weber1958: 47ff).

13. As Giovanna Ferrari has shown, one of the main innovations introduced by the study of anatomy in 16th-century Europe was the "anatomy theater," where dissection was organized as a public ceremony, subject to regulations similar to those that governed theatrical performances:

> Both in Italy and abroad, public anatomy lessons had developed in modern times into ritualized ceremonies that were held in places specially set aside for them. Their similarity to theatrical performances is immediately apparent if one bears in mind certain of their features: the division of the lessons into different phases...the institution of a paid entrance ticket and the performance of music to entertain the audience, the rules introduced to regulate the behaviour of those attending and the care taken over the "production." W.S. Heckscher even argues that many general theater techniques were originally designed with the performance of public anatomy lessons in mind (Ferrari 1987: 82–83).

14. According to Mario Galzigna, the epistemological revolution operated by anatomy in the 16th century is the birthplace of the mechanistic paradigm. It is the anatomical *coupure* that breaks the bond between microcosm and macrocosm, and posits the body both as a separate reality and as a place of production, in Vesalius' words: a factory (*fabrica*).

15. Also in *The Passions of the Soul* (Article VI), Descartes minimizes "the difference that exists between a living body and a dead body":

> ...we may judge that the body of a living man differs from that of a dead man just as does a watch or other automaton (i.e. a machine that moves of itself), when it is wound up and contains in itself the corporeal principle of those movements...from the same watch or other machine when it is broken and when the principle of its movement ceases to act (Descartes 1973, Vol. I, *ibid.*).

16. Particularly important in this context was the attack on the "imagination" (*"vis imaginativa"*) which in 16th and 17th-century Natural Magic was considered a powerful force by which the magician could affect the surrounding world and bring about "health or sickness, not only in its proper body, but also in other bodies" (Easlea 1980: 94ff). Hobbes devoted a chapter of the *Leviathan* to demonstrating that the imagination is only a "decaying sense," no different from memory, only gradually weakened by the removal of the objects of our perception (Part I, Chapter 2); a critique of imagination is also found in Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642).

17. Writes Hobbes: "No man therefore can conceive any thing, but he must conceive it in some place... not that anything is all in this place and all in another place at the same time; nor that two or more things can be in one and the same place at once" (*Leviathan*: 72).
18. Among the supporters of the witch-hunt was Sir Thomas Browne, a doctor and reputedly an early defender of "scientific freedom," whose work in the eyes of his contemporaries "possessed a dangerous savour of skepticism" (Gosse 1905: 25). Thomas Browne contributed personally to the death of two women accused of being "witches" who, but for his intervention, would have been saved from the gallows, so absurd were the charges against them (Gosse 1905: 147–49). For a detailed analysis of this trial see Gilbert Geis and Ivan Bunn (1997).
19. In every country where anatomy flourished, in 16th-century Europe, statutes were passed by the authorities allowing the bodies of those executed to be used for anatomical studies. In England "the College of Physicians entered the anatomical field in 1565 when Elizabeth I granted them the right of claiming the bodies of dissected felons" (O'Malley 1964). On the collaboration between the authorities and anatomists in 16th and 17th-century Bologna, see Giovanna Ferrari (pp. 59, 60, 64, 87–8), who points out that not only those executed but also the "meanest" of those who died at the hospital were set aside for the anatomists. In one case, a sentence to life was commuted into a death sentence to satisfy the demand of the scholars.
20. According to Descartes' first biographer, Monsieur Adrien Baillet, in preparation for his *Treatise of Man*, in 1629, Descartes, while in Amsterdam, daily visited the slaughterhouses of the town, and performed dissections on various parts of animals:

> ...he set about the execution of his design by studying anatomy, to which he devoted the whole of the winter that he spent in Amsterdam. To Father Mersenne he testified that his eagerness for knowledge of this subject had made him visit, almost daily, a butcher's, to witness the slaughter; and that he had caused to be brought thence to his dwelling whichever of the animals' organs he desired to dissect at greater leisure. He often did the same thing in other places where he stayed after that, finding nothing personally shameful, or unworthy his position, in a practice that was innocent in itself and that could produce quite useful results. Thus, he made fun of certain maleficent and envious person who... had tried to make him out a criminal and had accused him of "going through the villages to see the pigs killed".... [H]e did not neglect to look at what Vesalius and the most experienced of other authors had written about anatomy. But he taught himself in a much surer way by personally dissecting animals of different species (Descartes 1972: xiii–xiv).

In a letter to Mersenne of 1633, he writes: "J'anatomize maintenant les têtes de divers animaux pour expliquer en quoi consistent l'imagination, la memoire..." (Cousin Vol.IV: 255). Also in a letter of January 20 he refers in detail to experiments of vivisection: "Apres avoir ouverte la poitrine d'un lapin vivant... en sorte que le tron et le coeur de l'aorte se voyent facilement.... Poursuivant la dissection de cet animal vivant je lui coupe cette partie du coeur qu'on nomme sa pointe" (*ibid*. Vol VII: 350).

Finally, in June 1640, in response to Mersenne, who had asked him why animals feel pain if they have no soul, Descartes reassured him that they do not; for pain exists only with understanding, which is absent in brutes (Rosenfield 1968: 8).

This argument effectively desensitized many of Descartes' scientifically minded contemporaries to the pain inflicted on animals by vivisection. This is how Nicholas Fontaine described the atmosphere created at Port Royal by the belief in animal automatism: "There was hardly a *solitaire*, who didn't talk of automata.... They administered beatings to dogs with perfect indifference and made fun of those who pitied the creatures as if they had felt pain. They said that animals were clocks; that the cries they emitted when struck were only the noise of a little spring which had been touched, but that the whole body was without feeling. They nailed poor animals on boards by their four paws to vivisect them and see the circulation of the blood which was a great subject of conversation" (Rosenfield 1968: 54).

21. Descartes' doctrine concerning the mechanical nature of animals represented a total inversion with respect to the conception of animals that had prevailed in the Middle Ages and until the 16th century, which viewed them as intelligent, responsible beings, with a particularly developed imagination and even the ability to speak. As Edward Westermarck, and more recently Esther Cohen, have shown, in several countries of Europe, animals were tried and at times publicly executed for crimes they had committed. They were assigned a lawyer and the entire procedure — trial, sentence, execution — was conducted with all formal legalities. In 1565, the citizens of Arles, for example, asked for the expulsion of the grasshoppers from their town, and in a different case the worms that infested the parish were excommunicated. The last trial of an animal was held in France in 1845. Animals were also accepted in court as witnesses for the *compurgatio*. A man who had been condemned for murder appeared in court with his cat and his cock and in their presence swore that he was innocent and was released. (Westermarck 1924: 254ff.; Cohen 1986).

22. It has been argued that Hobbes arch-mechanistic perspective actually conceded more powers and dynamism to the body than the Cartesian account. Hobbes rejects Descartes dualistic ontology, and in particular the notion of the mind as an immaterial, incorporeal substance. Viewing body and mind as a monistic continuum, he accounts for mental operations on the basis of physical and physiological principles. However, no less than Descartes, he disempowers the human organism, as he denies self-motion to it, and reduces bodily changes to action-reaction mechanisms. Sense perception, for instance, is for Hobbes the product of an action-reaction, due to the resistance opposed by the sense organ to the atomic impulses coming from the external object; imagination is a decaying sense. Reason too is but a computing machine. No less than in Descartes, in Hobbes the operations of the body are understood in terms of a mechanical causality, and are subjected to the same universal legislation that regulates the world of inanimate matter.

23. As Hobbes lamented in *Behemoth*:

> [A]fter the Bible was translated into English, every man, nay, every boy and wench, that could read English, thought they spoke with God Almighty and understood what he said when by a certain number of chapters a day they had read the Scriptures once or twice. The rever-

ence and obedience due to the Reformed Church here, and to the bishops and pastors therein was cast off, and every man became a judge of religion and an interpreter of the Scriptures to himself." (p. 190).

He added that "numbers of men used to go forth of their own parishes and towns on working-days, leaving their calling" in order to hear mechanical preachers (p. 194).

24. Exemplary is Gerrard Winstanley's "New Law of Righteousness" (1649), in which the most notorious Digger asks:

> Did the light of Reason make the earth for some men to ingrosse up into bags and barns, that others might be opprest with poverty? Did the light of Reason make this law, that if one man did not have such an abundance of the earth as to give to others he borrowed of; that he that did lend should imprison the other, and starve his body in a close room? Did the light of Reason make this law, that some part of mankinde should kill and hang another part of mankinde, that would not walk in their steps? (Winstanley 1941: 197).

25. It is tempting to suggest that this suspicion concerning the humanity of the "lower classes" maybe the reason why, among the first critics of Cartesian mechanism, few objected to Descartes' mechanical view of the human body. As L.C. Rosenfield points out: "this is one of the strange things about the whole quarrel, none of the ardent defenders of the animal soul in this first period took up the cudgel to preserve the human body from the taint of mechanism" (Rosenfield 1968: 25).

26. F. Graus (1967) states that "The name 'Cockaigne' first occurred in the 13th century (*Cucaniensis* comes presumably from *Kucken*), and seems to have been used in parody," since the first context in which it is found is a satire of an English monastery in the time of Edward II (Graus1967: 9). Graus discusses the difference between the medieval concept of "Wonderland" and the modern concept of Utopia, arguing that:

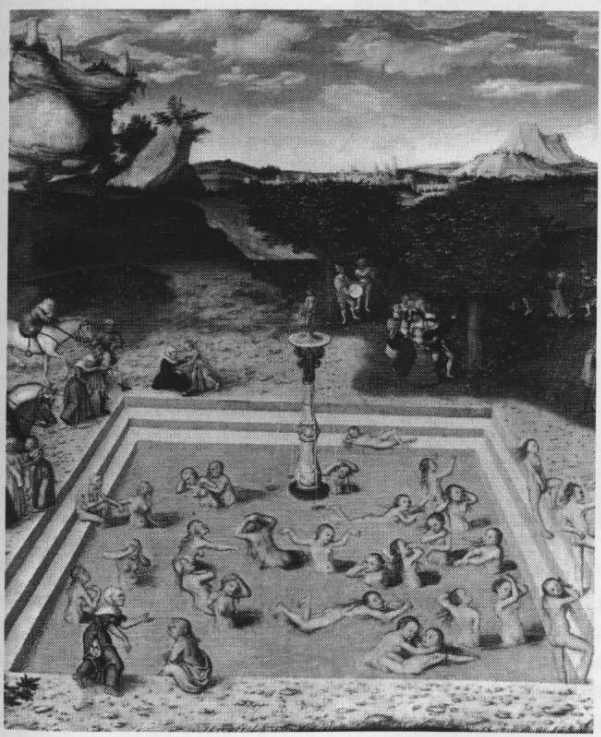
Pieter Bruegel, LAND OF COCKAIGNE (1567).

> In modern times the basic idea of the constructability of the ideal world means that Utopia must be populated with ideal beings who have rid themselves of their faults. The inhabitants of Utopia are marked by their justice and intelligence....The utopian visions of the Middle Ages on the other hand start from man as he is and seek to fulfill his present desires (*ibid.*: 6).

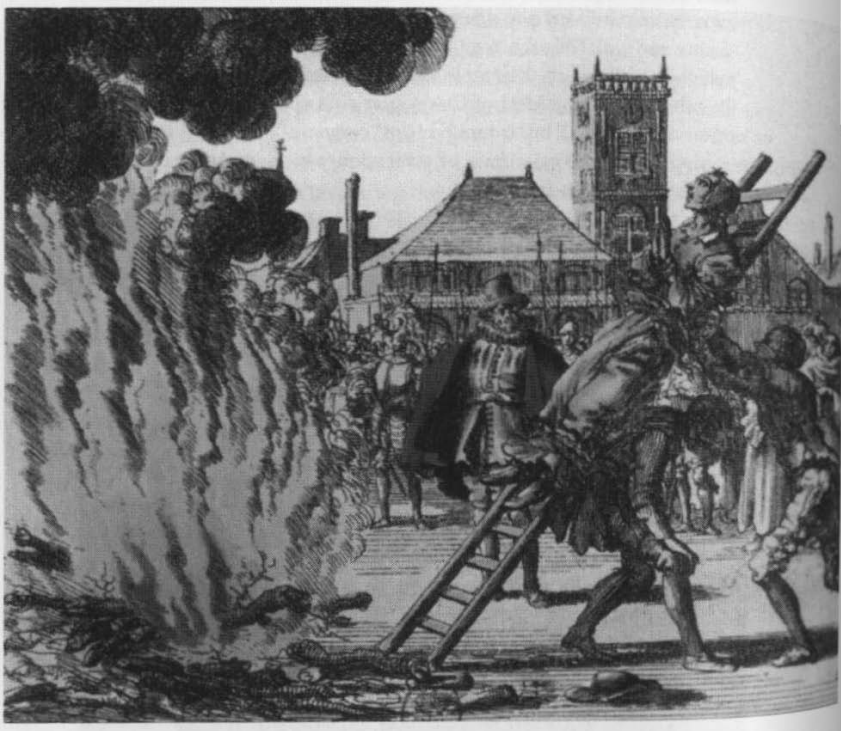
In Cockaigne (*Schlaraffenland*), for instance, there is food and drink in abundance, there is no desire to "nourish oneself" sensibly, but only to gluttonize, just as one had longed to do in everyday life.

> In this Cockaigne...there is also the fountain of youth, which men and women step into on one side to emerge at the other side as handsome youths and girls. Then the story proceeds with its "Wishing Table" attitude, which so well reflects the simple view of an ideal life (Graus 1967: 7-8).

In other words, the ideal of Cockaigne does not embody any rational scheme or notion of "progress," but is much more "concrete," "lean[ing] heavily on the village setting," and "depicts a state of perfection which in modern times knows no further advance (Graus *ibid.*).



Lucas Cranach. THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH.



Jan Luyken. The execution of Anne Hendricks for witchcraft in Amsterdam in 1571.

The linguistic loop:

It's clear a total transformation is needed. The question that burns is *how*, but maybe the how brings us back to the fact of the matter. *It's clear a total transformation is needed.* Okay, when? But time has never been a good indicator of anything; look at how probability seems to wax and wane depending on the century. Across societies, across time, one thing has remained clear—a total transformation is needed. Indeed. Does this mean a return to atavistic society? We're getting ahead of ourselves—back to the point: a total transformation is needed. But what are the practicalities, will it happen on a Wednesday? Will it be continuous? Will we need to rewrite the master script before we can set it in motion? Here, some start to weary and resign themselves to an alienated life. We plead with them, A TOTAL TRANSFORMATION IS NEEDED!

....

And it can go on and on like this for many years.

CHAPTER THREE

WOMEN, WATER AND MEMORY

Um Muhammad

Al zulm, injustice, is a peasant's fate, particularly if the peasant is a woman. There are in particular two tragedies that can ruin a woman in the village. The first is infertility; the other is to give birth to only girls. Um Muhammad is the old village mid wife; she is much older than all the rest. Her daughter-in-law, Estehar calls her *"Sett Um el balad,"* the mother of the village, but she was not born in the village. Um Muhammad knows all about women's tormented lives and hidden passions. She is so old, she can talk about whatever she wants. Sett Um el balad knows all the inner secrets, the joys and sorrows of the village. A mid-wife and healer is a woman with baraka (البركة). There is a shrine out in the khala that belongs to a special woman who gained religious recognition because she was a healer and washer of bodies. It is also said that she was close to the angels. Her shrine was often visited on the way to fetch the water, especially at the times of great distress *"Nobody noticed if we took the long way to the spring."* Today, it's difficult to visit the shrine because Israeli military or settlers control the area: *"They are afraid we women will kill them,"* she snorted.

She lived when beauty was tattooed on the face. Um Muhammad has a tattoo on her forehead and chin, and this, she tells me proudly on our first meeting, few women have. It was much later that she came over to me to tell me that her maiden name is Faleeha Mufleh Flayyan—but that only the old women know her name, to the rest she is simply Um Muhammad. She is a widow living with her youngest son, Muhammad, his wife and seven grand-children. Her name is very unlike the other names in the village; she explained that she is of Bedouin origin, born in Al Far'a in the Jordan Valley. This is the reason why she looks so different, *"Do you think I am beautiful?"* she asked me one day, *"Yes I do,"* I replied. Pinching my cheeks, she teased *"Oh you are a good girl."*

Um Muhammad's name, Faleeha, and her tradition, she said, are different from the rural habits of the people of the village, but because she had lived so long in the village, she has acquired many of their

Figure 6. Um Muhammad.

ways. Peasants in villages, she said, do not trust Bedouins. *"We Bedouins are open-minded. It is in our blood."* Peasants, on the other hand *"are closed. I am not like them at all."* She referred to their building plans; they build homes on a hill and have at least one watch tower for safety against the Bedouin raids. When she first arrived to Musharafah Um Muhammad tried very hard to make the other women trust her. It was not difficult because it became quickly known that she was a skilled mid-wife. In addition she had extraordinary healing powers.

Her father, Mufleh, had three wives from the same tribe, *"that means they were all Bedouins. I had many brothers and sisters, and we all used to live in a tent in the Far'a Valley with a flock of sheep. Our tribe had a chief called 'sheikh' and had its own social rules and way of living."* I interrupted to ask the name of the tribe, but she did not remember: "I will tell you in my own words."

She married a man who was not from Al Far'a and who was not of Bedouin origin, *"Well, it seems strange at first, but it happened and I will tell you why and how. I was thinking of marrying my uncle's son at first, but my father refused. He did not want him, because my father quarrelled with his brother. There was no choice in marriage. A girl like me could not think for herself. What is suitable for a father, what he has in his mind should be done—and without hesitation."* She was quiet, and thinking she was tired I made the gesture of leaving and asked if I could come back another day. *"No, don't go. I just do not know how to tell a young woman like you how an old woman like me can still feel a heart-break."* It was not only her father who had quarrelled with his brother, but, as she told me later, her mother hated her husband's family. She got the other wives to convince the father that he should marry his daughter off to some peasant, so that maybe life would be easier for her.

"Then one day three men from Musharafah passed by their tent. With the three men was the village head. Bedouins are hospitable people, the most generous people in the world, more than people in the village and towns." So of course the men were invited in the tent of the father. *"They spent a long time in my father's hospitality, I was asked by my mother to serve. Before they left one of the men asked for my hand. My father called me and showed me the chief of the guests, saying 'This is going to be your husband.' I agreed, and later thanked my father. He had a good face and was young. But then my misfortune; my father lied to me. The man I said yes to was not the man my father had chosen. He was not my man! My man was another one among the guests, and he was completely different."* She stopped to wipe away the tears.

A couple of days later, I told her that I had been thinking a lot about her story. I wanted to know the rest. I also said that I would not write it if she did not want me to, but that I just wanted to know the rest of the story. Um Muhammad repeated that she was telling me what she wanted me to know, and that she wanted me to write the story *"The way I am telling it."*

"I had no possibility to refuse this man. I was taken to Musharafah after the wedding celebrations. I was dressed in an ornamental dress and taken away from my family." I was curious about her reasons, was the man her father picked for her ugly, old, fat, violent…?

> When I saw him I let out a small cry. He was not the same one I saw in my father's tent, but it was useless. I had nothing to say or do. I did not have any hope to change the situation or refuse my fate. I did, however, stay in my father's tent for some time, refusing to eat or move. But then I accepted my fate and new life. But I was a very sad young bride. My husband was small, old, fat and very ugly. His smell made me want to vomit. May God forgive me and rest his soul.

Her marriage lasted only seven years; he died because of old age. She was left on her own to support four children. But the burdens of duties were easier than living with him; her husband was much older and became very sick. She had no ʿESWAH, in the village except for her sons, and they were too small to take care of her. Anyway, when they grew it was still difficult because they did not have any NASAB in the village. NASAB comes with ʿESWAH. *"Nobody wants to be around people with no ʿeswah. Hamulah is a man's word; it is what men have. Women, if they are lucky,"* she said, *"have a dar, and if they are very lucky they have their ʿeswah around them to protect them."*

She was blessed with *"a gift from God to heal the sick,"* and had also inherited the gift of mid-wife from her mother. Her stories describing public health and social workers coming to the village to check on the villagers are full of humour and dislike for *"those who think I am backwards."* She describes how they came one day to watch her deliver a baby boy and care for him. This she did not like at all, because, as she said, they were in the village only to criticize and tell young women that they should go to hospital to deliver.

How can anybody go to any hospital when the Jews do not even let the men go to their job? She argued. To be "*Daya* (mid-wife)," she said, *"is a blessing some women get from God,"* and not everyone can do it. To be the mid-wife in the village is not only to know how to receive

the babies, but it involves a deep knowledge of the village and the peasants who live in the village, *"every dar has a story and every woman has a thousand stories to tell."* She knows the women so well; they trust her because she can look deep into their heart, so the baby is not restless when 'he' is born.

But today young women want to go to hospital to get their babies, and they dress them with clothes they buy in Ramallah, and then they come back to the village and give the baby milk from the bottle, *"They want to be like foreigners."* She was especially sceptical to the returnees whom she did not know *"…and do not want to know,"* and who did not nurse their babies, *"Why do they think God gave women breasts?"* These new women have always drunk water from a bottle, she explains to me; they have never tasted the water from the spring, so they use a bottle for their babies, *"Yah Allah (oh God) they are stupid."*

Women she assists have all tasted the spring water. It by far more healthy because it has flowed down from the higher mountains and passed through the earth, and God has blessed it. The village women were also healthy because they were always moving and worked going to fetch fuel, caring for the animals, baking bread, harvesting olives: all until the seconds of delivery. Their bodies were smooth and delivery was very rarely difficult. There were, of course, difficult deliveries and sad deliveries. She remembers especially one of the women who died giving birth to her thirteenth daughter; *"…but it was better that way; her husband was going to divorce her because she failed to give him the son. I took the baby to a neighbour who was still nursing her little ones. She nursed her and today the baby is a teacher. God Bless her. I have a special place in my heart for this one."*

Healing and working as a mid-wife were not enough to support her household, so she also cleaned, washed and herded for other families in Musharafah in exchange for food and some clothing. Hard and constant work made it possible for her to send two of her four children to university.

> I am also gifted in the knowledge of healing. This is knowledge I acquired from one of my fathers wives. She did not have children, but she loved me like her own. I even think she loved me more than my own mother. I learned from her to treat all kinds of fever, injuries, burns and fractures. I used to treat and cure all the cases with herbs, which I gathered, and bandages that I sewed from old clothes. I was known for all the people in Musharafah as 'the healer.'

She also kept a small garden where she grew lentils, beans, and tomatoes *"Good for the health."* For work as a healer she never asked for payment; *"the blessing from God,"* she said. As a Muslim she also helped FI SABIL ALLAH, for the love of God. Sometimes she was given milk, eggs, flour and the like for the healing and receiving babies. Like all other women she fetched water, baked her bread, and she took her laundry to the water spring of TALAT AL BIR (طلعة البير) This is the spring they shared with women from the neighbouring village. It was by the springs, either the BIR ROMMANI (بير رومانى) or TALAT AL BIR that she was usually told of women's ailments, especially the ones concerning emotional disorder, sadness or infertility. It was safer to make a discreet sign to Um Muhammad by the spring than in the village where fathers, brothers, mothers, husbands and mothers-in-law were watching.

The relationships and contacts around the water spring, Um Muhammad explained, were a challenge. She was not only there to carry out her own chores but also her work as a healer and mid-wife. The mothers sought her advice on strong, healthy brides for their sons, *"They wanted a bride who will work hard and also give them boys."* Carrying out the chores of housework for others was an easier task than the tensions that sometimes developed at the spring. She spoke of the sadness she felt when trying to heal the sorrow of young brides who were suffering in a hostile home. She made a vow at the shrine that if God kept her children healthy she would never torment her daughters-in-law, and she says she kept her promise.

Springs were in the KHALA, and that is good because the movement is easy; women can speak together without anyone suspecting something. And since she was the healer she was expected to speak to the women at the spring without bringing about any suspicion; it was more problematic when the young women walked over to her.

For a healer to achieve her objective she needs nature, and Um Muhammad believes that these ground rules are fading away, because every corner in the KHALA is being build on: *"Soon nobody can breathe."* It was at times difficult to understand her concern for overcrowding in the landscape. On several of my walks to Bir Zeit village, I walked for hours without meeting a single person or animal in an area with large stretches of open landscape and a couple of scattered homes. According to her, healing plants cannot grow if they are either uprooted or built on. Vegetation will disappear, and nobody will remember what the flora was for or even what the plants looked liked. She would have

liked the university people to show more interest in the mountain plants of Palestine, instead of destroying people's faith in her competence as mid-wife and healer.

Aside from talking about her work as a mid wife and healer, Um Muhammad liked to tell me about village history. She is so old, she would say, that she has experienced Ottoman rule as a child and has many amusing stories about how the Bedouins and peasants always tried to fool the Sultan's men. Her stories are supplemented by the many stories she heard in the village as a young bride. When the Ottomans were in Palestine, the peasants were left mostly in peace. Um Muhammad believes that mountains and inaccessible location of their village protected them from the interest of the Ottomans.

Those people, the Turks, she told me, were not used to walking on uneven ground; even their horses were too fine. *"One day, a group of Turks came up to the village and the young children were sent down to the spring to fetch nice fresh water for them to wash their face and hands, and drink. Then the older women rushed to the taboun to bake bread. But they were not bad with us; sometimes they saw a nice strong boy, and they would take him in the army."* The mother would cry and say that she has lost a son, but then Um Muhammad said with a smile, the mother knew he would have a better life than here in the village. If the boy came back she would be respected and established *"A full woman."* Still, she must cry to show sorrow and not too much happiness, "*to shun away the envious eyes of the other women."*

Um Muhammad remembers the English well, and she liked them, because they were reasonable and never bothered anybody in the village. She knows that the English, like the Ottomans and later the Jordanians and the Jews *"…and even Palestinians in the towns"* look at the peasants in the JEBEL as backward and dirty. But, *"The English like to walk a lot and they like to show peasants other ways of living, so we saw them more than our own people in the town."* She liked the foreigners, but did not always like the way they watched the women walking and doing their chores:

> They did not know that our custom says that a man should not watch a woman like they do. With us the men have to pretend that they are not watching. The English did not understand that when they watch, the men in the village make trouble for us afterwards.

She knew the young, beautiful village girl who was killed because she fell in love with a British soldier. She is still a tormented spirit. Um

Muhammad is sad that her legs are weak, and she no longer can walk to ʿAYN AL BALAD (عين البلد), which used to be the most frequently used spring in the village, where the dead girl's apparitions are. Before, when she could still walk easily, she would go to speak to the young girl and calm her; *"May one day God rest her soul."*

Foreign women were different from their men. They were very beautiful, and they smiled at her and the other peasant women in the village. They also bought vegetables and bread from the women in the village. In spite of the fact that the English women were friendly and beautiful, Um Muhammad disapproved from their presence and rule over her land. She maintains that the way of the English is different and that it is impossible for them to understand Palestinian heritage, *"You have to feel the land in you and drink its water."* Her life was poor and very different from the English women, nonetheless she believes God decided her life, and therefore it was good. She did not care much for the Jordanians; they took many workers from the village *"emptying the village of all the men."* After the Jordanians the women suffered the hardships of the Jews.

Sitt um al balad speaks of a sister who lives in Gaza. When she was young and travelling was easier she came to visit Um Muhammad. It was during these visits that she was offered her first Egyptian cigarette. She always reminded me to bring a pack of 'Egyptian cigarettes' on my visits to the village. Being a fervent non-smoker myself I felt obliged to repeat that smoking is bad for her health, and that maybe she must try harder to quit. Um Muhammad obviously enjoyed my little monologues about the evils of smoking, smiling and giving me always the same reply *"I have lived longer than you and everyone in Palestine. I have had children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Everyday I walked to the spring and to the khala collecting fuel; I manage to walk to the spring and carry on my head. You and Estehar do not even manage to lift the jug from the floor."* Never knowing how to respond, this was always a good time for me to concentrate on my notebook. I could get out of an embarrassing situation, and she would tell me what I want to know: *"the way we do things here."*

Um Muhammad had a hard life; beside her work as esteemed midwife of the village, she also did all the other chores of a wife, later widow and mother. When her husband was alive he did not care how late she stayed beside a woman to deliver a child, as long as he got what he wanted and his animals were watered:

> I went at night between midnight and 0200 to the ʻayn and slept at the source. I even gave birth to one of my children at the ʻayn. Wiped him up, wrapped him, fetched the water and walked back. They were happy when I came back with a boy.

She points to her neck:

> You see how beautiful my neck is. It is because I was the best at carrying water on my head. A woman who could do that was clever. Not like today; they moan when you walk from the chair to the bed. Today women, when they give birth, they stay in bed. We never said anything. We always went together and joked and sang. Today nobody is with anybody. Everyone is in her home getting a big behind. Before a woman walked with her Jarra straight, proud SHAYFA ʻHALHA (شايفة حالها) (aware of herself). She showed she was clever, carried the JARRA and CALLA with pride. The ones who carry on their heads have a more beautiful neck than those women of today. Look at Estehar, and she pointed to her daughter-in-law; she has a neck like a man. But look at my neck, and she pushed her head shawl to the side to show me her long well-toned neck.

Today Um Muhammad lives in the house she moved to in the late eighties. She moved out of the old village in 1987. She had been a widow for most of her life and was tired. She moved in with her youngest son and his family. Her son, she said, had built the home *"all on his own."* But they did not have so much money, so they could not afford to construct a well. And it is more expensive to build a well after the house is finished. *"I regret that we could not afford a well when we built this house. It is cheaper with a well, and in summer the water is cut for 15 days."* said Estehar. Um Muhammad is hoping that her oldest son who is working in Jordan will be able to send home enough money for them to dig a well and install an electric pump.

On one of my visits I stood chatting to Estehar while she was baking bread on an electric plate and preparing dinner at the same time. She argued that she has more time on her hands than her own mother and mother-in-law and can therefore be more informed about happenings. Overhearing the conversation Um Muhammad shouted back from the porch: *"How can you find out what's happening when you are always inside the home? Look at what the ZAMAN has done to us. This cursed INTIFDAH made our life even more miserable."*

Um Qays

Solid family connections and good relatives close by are both a blessing from God and a curse from hell. A blessing if you do not have too much land and wealth, because then your relatives have to help you. It is a curse when you have wealth *"and everybody is suddenly your family and wants a piece; because of tradition you cannot refuse."*

Um Qays was born Wagiha Abdel Magid Ali in Musharafah in the beginning of the Mandate years, and she has always lived in the village. She had two older brothers and five younger sisters; *"Some lived, some died."* She had a happy childhood. Her father was a good and pious man; everyone came to him for advice. Her paternal grandfather was a sheikh and taught all his children, also the girls, to read. For various reasons, unfortunately Um Qays did not get the same possibility. But her father kept a record of the birth of all his children, also the girls. She was born in the olive season in 1920. Her father held his daughters in high regards; *"Just like the prophet, also my father cared for his daughters."*

Um Qays was blessed because her father's NASAB was strong, and the ʿESWAH was "like iron." "Asabya is when a man in any of the three hamulah in Musharafah wants to marry a girl from his hamulah. He can do so. A girl cannot object because she would be killed. But here luckily no girl has ever been killed because we know the customs."

Her father and her mother were God fearing peasants who believed in hard work and *"never took anything from anybody. God is my witness."* They were in her mind true Palestinian peasants who preserved the Palestinian values of generosity, hard work and honesty. Her father worked in the field for the feudal household. Unlike others she spoke favourably of the feudal family; they treated her family well and never offended them. Her father died an old man, but her mother died when she was still very young, just after Wagiha got married. She remembers her mother as a woman who never sat down to rest; she was always doing chores; *"I never saw my mother put food in her mouth. God bless her soul."* Her reserve and restraint was passed on to her daughter Wagiha, so it was very easy to find a husband, rumours about hard working girls travel fast.

Wagiha got married at twelve to her paternal cousin. She knows that her father got many offers, but he liked his brother and believed it best to keep the family together, so also her sisters were married off to paternal cousins:

> In my marriage we were four instead of two. My brother married my husband's sister, so also his cousin. This way was rather popular with the peasants in the past. Before marriage my brother, who was supposed to marry, was in the army service in Jordan. The family waited for his attendance but it took 12 days till he came so the wedding and the marriage celebration took all this period. When my brother came he arranged the whole matter. He bought a silk dress, gold earrings, a ring, a silver chain for the head, a wooden box for the clothes, a woollen mattress and a quilt. My future husband did the same for his sister. The following day, the marriage meal was served. All the people from the three hayamel attended the meal. The other guests from the nearby villages also attended, before I went to my new home after the women had decorated me. They sang a lot and when it was time to leave I was put on a horse's back and a large group of women followed. I was so happy because everybody was looking at me. After the wedding I stayed inside for one week.

Then she was taken in a beautiful procession of 'TALAT AL BIR':

> It was a wonderful day, and I was like a young gazelle, walking with my head held high, so that all saw me coming out of my husband's dar. They all sang around me. I had on my beautiful gold bracelets, and they made lots of sound, a beautiful sound. My 'eswah was large, and I was protected. We all carried water jars; I was very small, only 12-years-old, so I carried a tin painted with red shapes, and I had placed herbs on it. I had with me halawah (sweets) for the sid el 'ayn (for the spirit of the spring). So that the evil spirit does not ruin my dar, and that my mother-in-law is satisfied with my work. Then I went out to the spring to drink water. The taste was bitter to help me give my husband a boy. I filled a jarra and carried back water to the house. This was a good marriage because I married in al-'Asabiyya.
>
> Her 'ASABIYYA regards cousins only. These are the sons of paternal uncles, and Um Qays added the proverb *"I and my brother are against my cousin; I and my cousin are against the stranger."*

During the first weeks, Wagiha was happy and the centre of everybody's attention. Then things changed. Her life took an unexpected turn when she got into everyday routines. There were no more festivities, and Wagiha felt more and more isolated. She was no longer among her own family, but in the home of her mother-in-law. Tears in her eyes she tell me how home is always the domain of the oldest woman. Men are only home to sleep and eat; otherwise they are always outside the home. When men come home from work they expect everything to be in order; they must never experience that things are not as they should

be: *"never give him a headache about homelife."* Men, Wagiha explained, do not care where the water comes from, as long as they get their tea and food. They do not want to see a tired woman making an effort; everything has to look easy, and a woman has to look as if she enjoys everything she is put to do.

Even though Wagiha married a man *"she cared for,"* she did not like living with her mother-in-law. It was a big disappointment to find out that her mother-in-law was not the kind woman she thought her to be. Instead she was a brutal person who regularly beat her. She wanted the young bride to work to death, and that is why Wagiha had several spontaneous abortions. Then one morning on her way back from the spring she met her father, he noticing a blue mark on her face and a limp in her walk, *"My father loved me more than life."* He immediately interfered and demanded that his daughter come back to his home; *"There were many talks back and forth between my father and his brother."*

She remembers clearly how she and her mother who was very sick at the time had to calm him down *"We did not want him to end his friendship with his brother."* The other members of the family got very upset, but proudly she described how her father told them he would not send his daughter back unless the mother-in-law promised that she would treat his daughter well. She promised and never *"laid her hands on me again."* Of course the relationship between the two women was *"correct but never warm."*

Wagiha became Um Qays one year after she moved back to her husband *"I was happy to be back with my husband."* Life became better after the birth of her first son because *"God heard my prayers, and I had given my husband a healthy son to carry on the honour of the family."* Um Qays explains that God has been kind to her, because she has several sons. Four daughters *"also came."* She says that had not her father interfered, she would probably have died of fatigue. But she managed to survive. She gave her husband's DAR and the village sons *"one gives birth to a country;"* the legacy of the DAR and the village are a woman's domain.

Her children's life experiences are very different from her own, and yet she has tried to teach them *"as I teach you,"* all about Palestinian family values.

> We are Muslims, and we were daughters; the men are always carefully watching our goings and comings. The whole village would yak yak yak about any young girl. People in a village like to wreck other people's homes. Always someone was waiting to say something nasty about someone else. So our behaviour was the honour of our father, brother,

> uncles, the honour of all the men in the dar. We were all married at the age of twelve or thirteen, sometimes as late as fourteen. Some of us were married before we were really women. It was the mothers who wanted to marry off the girls early, because when the girl is married she is safer from gossip. Mothers-in-law kept their eye on us; our responsibility was to produce sons, mothering them, keeping our homes clean and feeding our husbands and taking care of the household's every need. God has decided everything.

Her children are different. One of her sons is an engineer in America; he is married to a Palestinian girl who has never been to Palestine or indeed any country in the Middle East; they have *"only two children. Girls."* But he is good and sends money to his mother, so she lacks nothing. One of her daughters is doing her PhD in London and has not been back to Palestine, *"I feel she does not want to come back here with her husband who is from Sudan. She knows that the people here in the village will not be happy with the way I have let her do what she wants. Her husband is black you know, and my daughter is very white like milk. I do not know if I will see her before I die."* Her other two sons work in the Gulf and visit her frequently. Three daughters have moved to Jerusalem and work with international organisations. She knows they are angry with her because she made them work a lot when they were small, *"They visit, but I feel anger from them."*

Um Qays used to wake up her daughters in the middle of the night to fetch water and feed the animals, *"But here we cannot ask the man to do that."* Maybe, she says the spring was a curse that made the young girls want to leave the village, but today she knows that she is blessed with a son who sends money to pay for the water bills and electricity bills and the maintenance of the cistern. She has enough money to take a taxi to buy her vegetables from the market or shops in Ramallah or El Bireh, but the other women cannot. So she helps the other women, FI SABIL ALLAH, for the love of God, *"I am a Muslim and we do that."*

Um Qays lives with her youngest son. Using Egyptian Arabic she told me how her sons were *"The light of my eyes."* Her civil status was a sensitive issue; she told students who came to the village to interview old people about Palestinian culture that she was a widow. To me she said, *"Abu Qays is not here anymore;"* he left the village to find work in Jerusalem in construction, and he used to come back home every month; then he said that one of the men at the construction site had a brother who worked in Jordan, and he left for Amman. He came back to the village a couple of times to visit his family and then the money

and the visits stopped. His sons have tried to trace him down, but that was many years ago; still, for her *"He was a good man."*

Her youngest son who is living with her is married and has five children, *"He has not been blessed with sons, only daughters."* But she has encouraged her daughter-in-law, Jasmine, to try for a son. She said that the sixth or eighth is usually a boy. Jasmine is educated; she is a primary school teacher and does not want any more children. *"She is lucky,"* Um Qays says about Jasmine. *"I am not like my mother-in-law. I am good with her, but I think she has to get a son, because then she will keep her husband."* According to Um Qays, her daughter-in-law has only herself to think about; she has her mother-in-law living with her, taking care of the children, cooking and cleaning while she can work. Jasmine has a lot to learn from the older women in village, who can tell her about Palestinian values. For Um Qays the life she and her older neighbours have lived is *"real Palestinian life."* Her daughter-in-law does not know anything about KHALA, water, vegetation, or hard physical work.

Now that women have electricity and water pipes in the house, they no longer go out to do their chores. Um Qays misses going to the spring to fetch water and is upset that the spring is not maintained. She confirms that fetching water and fuel for the oven was very hard work, but bread baked in the TABOUN is best, and water fetched from the spring is *"natural."* Water springs are located in the KHALA *"the land of God"*; walking back and forth is good for the *"Body and mind."* She would have liked to have both, the spring outside and tap water inside the house. She is not so lonely, and her son takes care of her financially, yet she feels for most of the women in the village who suffer from poverty and loneliness.

Recollecting the spring brings a smile to her face. These are cherished moments when women told each other stories and provided each other with emotional and practical assistance. Men were not there to see them resting, joking, crying, gossiping or even sleeping. All this happiness and kindness is gone and replaced by *"more poverty and a tap inside."*

Materially, she said, they were much poorer. There was only one kettle to share between the neighbours, they did not have a television, washing machines or proper beds to sleep in, and the men had too much power over them.

> The man goes to the field and he feels he is great. And I had to find water and feed for his horse. All had to be ready. I wanted to take the

> horse down to fetch water. But he did not allow me. I had to find the water. My mind went mad when I could not collect enough drops of water. His only concern was whether the horse had enough to drink. I had to find enough water for the horse and for the house. When it was hot, the months of eight and nine, all night I was out to find water, and I did not sleep. My head went around (confused) looking for water and making him and my mother-in-law happy.

If it were not for the spring women could never have stopped to rest.

> The water spring was the only place young mothers could permit themselves to sit or lie down. We rested without losing integrity, without showing any signs of weakness and being accused of being idle or bad workers. And because we are peasants we like to be in the khala of the jebel. It makes us feel strong. This is not possible today.

She feels sorry for young women, *"They do not know that freedom. There is a good inner sensation that they will never know."* With the ʿAYN she and her neighbours could afford to eat better than they do today. The same amount of water was available for all, and *"everything had taste."*

Um Fathi

Also in the village of Musharafah larger political events have left their mark. Nothing stays the same, things do not turn out as expected and hardship is the fate of the peasants. For Fatima Muhammad Abu Maryam, known as Um Fathi, the intifadah is the one event that has turned everything in her life *"on its head."*

Fatima Muhammad Abu Maryam was born in the neighbouring village of Kobar and moved to Musharafah when she got married. Today she is living alone in a one room house. Her husband left for work one day and never came back. She is happy that when she moved from her village she did not have to go too far away, *"It is good to be close to the place where you are born."* Her life become worse with the intifadah.

> This mess came a short while after they put our water in pipes. Then trouble started with our boys throwing stones at the Military. I have a son and a grandson who have been in and out of the Jewish prison. My home has been turned upside down many times by soldiers looking for them. I remember like it was yesterday. One day they shouted that I should get out of the way. It was dark, and I heard one of their soldiers say in Arabic 'Don't stand in my way or I might shoot one of you old women by mistake.'

Figure 7. Um Fathi.

At times she shares her home with her sons, but that is very seldom because they are wanted by the Israeli military.

Um Fathi is terrified and angry when soldiers search her home. A couple of times soldiers came when her sons were visiting, and they pulled them out. *"It burns my heart to see how they push my boys around,"* she cried. She talks about how the intifadah is a curse on her life; today she is old, alone and poor; *"This is not a life."* Her relatives are all going about their own lives with their own problems, and *"because I am poor and alone they don't know me anymore."* She had hoped that God would reward her for all the work she has done and because she is a good Muslim.

Um Fathi remembers very well the first visits to the village from the health people and how eager she was to help. Also she wanted to improve the *"backwardness"* of the village. Young social and health workers, and university people went around from home to home and asked the women and men join in a meeting with the people of Kobar. The few men who still live in the village attended, so the women did not go. Um Fathi informed the team that men will never tolerate hearing their women speak in public. So the university arranged a meeting for women, and it was headed by an older female social worker and a female nurse from Ramallah.

Um Fathi went to convince Um Muhammad to join the meeting. *"Um Muhammad thinks these people are the reason young women go to the clinic to give birth."* Then she added, *"Men and women see the world differently. Women have different needs than men; they have different concerns and hopes for their children."* At that meeting women talked about their problems and suggested solutions. All the women wanted piped water:

> We were all tired of running up and down fetching water. We had enough to do. Many men were gone working in Israel or another country, and we were alone taking care of the olives. We also have our housework, going to the taboun, gathering fuel, herding animals, feeding children, and some were even more unlucky and still had the mother-in-law living in excellent health with them.

The question of health was a good number two after water. Since it is women who take care of children, they were concerned with high infant mortality in the village,

> I remember Um Muhammad was very angry with me. Because I have always been more interested and willing to try modern things. This way

> I am very different from other women. And I saw that the Christians and the foreigners in Bir Zeit had better health than us. Nearly all of us have watched children die and I think it comes from the dirt in this village. We lived close to the animals. I think it spreads diseases.

Women also wanted better and more regular public transportation so they could travel more easily to Ramallah, El Bireh, even to Jerusalem, *"Selling our products brought in money to the household."*

Eventually, Um Fathi said, the great event happened in the mid and late eighties. The village managed to collect enough money. Most of the funds came from the *"feudal family and others who had family working abroad."* Finally, the Israeli authorities agreed to connect the village to the pipes. These were wonderful times, and the villagers celebrated with food, music and dance. Um Fathi goes on:

> They said that NIS.38 would be the minimum rate to pay for the water. At that time we did not think much of it, and we agreed that we would help each other pay the water and electricity bills. All our men were working. Everyone was so very happy, and we wanted to live like town people. We wanted water, washing machines and televisions. But the world went wrong.

The first intifadah broke out in 1987, and many young men joined in. It did not take long before the Israeli military found their way up to Musharafah. *"They arrived like an invasion"* and started searching homes, breaking windows and doors. Uniformed men arrived at any time, without notice, even in the middle of the night; they just kicked down doors, broke windows looking for the young men. The boys they found were taken and put in prison without any trials, some for a couple of days, others for years. Men who were working in Israel lost their jobs and left to find work in Jordan or the other Arab countries. Many of the women in the village were already widows or abandoned and depended on their children's financial help. At the same time as this was happening, contractors were building a new settlement, and diverting the water to the 'Jews.'

According to the society of women, Jewish settlers attempted to break the ʿAYN AL BALAD, its the spring closest to the village, also called BIR ROMMANI. The poorer women stored their water in large containers on the roof of their houses. Others used large containers to store *"winter water,"* sometimes also called *"water from the rain."* She tries to find reasons for why they did not go back to fetching water from bir Rommani:

> We very quickly got used to having water in the house, and it was good to have that water. Housework was easier. We were getting old, and all our young daughters were getting an education or living their own life outside the village. But I think, to tell you the truth, we did not want to go back to the heavy work of fetching water; we wanted to go together and sit around the ʿayn together, but we cannot just do that. It was strange, but we forgot that here women have to work the whole time or else people talk. So it was impossible to just lounge in the khala.
>
> She went on: *"You see we are simple, shame and zulm dominate our life."* For her shame is a value in itself; it teaches restraint and morality, qualities she believes belong to the past, *"and keep me from going completely mad."* As for ZULM, *"God forgive me for saying this. But He forgets us."*

Many times she compared solidarity and pleasures of the past to the harshness between people today. Obviously, she says, life lived and experienced in the past was not easy. And yet everything was on a much smaller scale, and it was possible to overcome difficult times. Um Fathi was married at the age of fourteen to a poor man who was already married to *"a good woman"* who treated her nicely and helped her with the birth of every child. They became close friends, especially after her husband left the house to find work in a city. Both women shared sorrows and joys. Her mother-in-law was also a kind woman.

Early marriage is a good thing, because girls are not too old to mould; *"girls can still be bent the right way."* The mother-in-law and the older co-wives train and help the bride to become a suitable wife for the man; the girl will then grow *"under the eyes"* of the older women. There must not be any room for the young bride or her mother to develop other ideas. It is easier to teach a younger girl discipline than an older girl; *"Old girls are stubborn."* If the bride did not perform all her duties, the mother-in-law would find another much better wife for her son, and this is an important job for the mother-in-law. It is becoming difficult today when girls are found in towns instead from the village: *"A mother can end up today with a useless daughter-in-law who does not know her head from her feet and has no respect her mother-in-law."*

Life in the village gets more and more complicated. Um Fathi is not quite sure if centralisation of water and electricity have been a good thing for village life. *"Maybe,"* she reflected once, *"we wanted to change our way of life, and that is not a wise thing to do."* Curious about how women can miss fetching water I said something about the workload; her response was that at the ʿAYN *"women put their jugs and tins in line. Then we sat there*

waiting our turn under an olive tree. The rule was first come first served. Wonderful. It was a time to rest, take catnaps, gossip and stay together."

Every fifteen days they went down to the spring with the laundry and their small children. Everybody brought along food to share. They would hang their covers beside each other on the largest olive tree to shelter them from the men and the heat. Protected by this screen of cloth, they washed their clothes, the children, and themselves, *"it was like an outing. The water at the spring washed away all our pains and sorrows."* There was a difference between the two main springs the women used in the village. Bir Rommani had two taps, and Um Fathi went there about four to five times a day.

The Turks dug this spring during her parents' time, and then later during her time the 'English' constructed two taps. The other spring, talat al bir, was also built by the 'English,' but it had only one tap and women from her home village used it also. There was also the ghost, *"the beautiful and unhappy young woman; we used to keep her company. She told us a thing or two about heartaches."* Um Fathi misses her. Nobody goes there anymore, but she knows that the water is just left to flow in the valley, and some peasants use it for irrigation when the Jews are not looking.

Speaking about the ghost brings back fond memories of her mother-in-law. *"She never shouted. Always a soft voice, especially with the children. She was a very religious person and always thanked God for everything he has blessed her with."* They walked frequently passed a shrine on their way to the spring. Both women tried to help others who were even in more difficulty than themselves: *"My mother-in-law and me we know how to say 'there is only one God and Muhammad is his prophet.'"* A shrine does not necessarily need to be a building with a known prophet buried inside, she explained. Um Fathi came from a poor family and so did her husband, so she has never been to visit the shrine of Nabi Musa. Instead she visited and still visits the shrines of holy persons in the khala. These are just marked by stones, and the names are not known.

Um Khaled

Baraka, miraculous claims and faith were constant themes when we spoke of the spring, because there are several holy places around the area where women go, either alone when they are herding, or in groups on the way to or from the water spring. Um Khaled knows that the

BARAKA, blessing, is bestowed on the landscape of Musharafah. Although this is a 'red' village, *"we know God, and there have been many with special gifts here."* As peasants their whole circle of life is made up of living according to tradition with the olive trees and water running down from the higher mountain to be collected in the springs or collected from the rain into containers.

Um Khaled is sad about the disappearance of life by the spring. Activities around the ʿAYN involved picnics under the olive trees, where they washed, embroidered and talked. The buildings at the entrance of the village are destroying village characteristics. When she visits Um Muhammad they speak of how the pipes and constructions do not blend with the stones: *"It is so ugly now. Yah Allah, they have no sense of the wonders of the Almighty."* Both Um Kahled and Um Muhammad agree that all the digging and building hinders the growth of wild plants like the strongly fragrant mountain thyme that grows in-between stones *"Nothing seems to be sacred anymore,"* and with the first intifadah she says that the landscape became even more closed up and ruined. *"Today nobody, not even the men who are more free to move around, can enjoy Palestinian nature."*

Um Khaled insists always on washing her granddaughter's hair with cistern water. Now that the spring is dry, she has only the *"winter water"* to wash *"the body"* of the little girl. The water is fetched up in a bucket; she cannot afford a mechanised pump. When the water is hauled up, she collects it in a big basin. The water is yellowish, frothy and has a distinct stagnant smell. The basin is left outside in the sun to *"soak up the warmth of the sun. It has BARAKA."* Flies circle around the basin, and there is green rim on the inside of the basin. Every time she is going to bath her granddaughter there is a shouting match between Um Khaled and the girl's mother, Samia. The grandmother calls it *"winter water,"* and Samia, in tears, yells *"How can you use sewage to wash my daughter?"*

Samia is actually her ex daughter-in-law, who is living next door with her widowed mother. Um Khaled is also a widow living in a one-room. Her son just got remarried to a girl from Ramallah. *"The new bride refuses to move up to live in the middle of nowhere,"* laughed Um Khaled. At one time Samia whispered to me *"lucky her."* Khaled and his new bride moved to Ramallah where both have good jobs. Samia is today Um Khaled closest neighbour. When I asked why the child was not in Samia's care, Um Khaled was shocked and scolded me back *"are you out of your mind? I am his mother. This is the way we do it here. The mother of the boy is best;"* looking crossly at me, she repeated *"She is always best."* She was very disappointed in hearing that it was my mother who took care

Figure 8. Um Khaled.

of my children, and that my husband accepted that. She disregarded me the rest of that evening.

The next day, during breakfast Um Khaled handed me a glass of tea, stroked me on the head and said, *"I decide when Samia can spend time with the child. But just the other day, Samia started to talk about her rights,"* and she laughed loudly at what she saw as a ridiculous idea. *"Who has rights? Nobody! We are peasants; not even men have rights. But Samia she works in Bir Zeit and watches all these films from Egypt. They put ideas in her head, like they put ideas in your head also."* Um Khaled had spent long hours telling me horror stories about her mother-in-law, so I reminded her and asked whether she also would have liked to have more rights. Would she have liked the possibility to say what she wanted to her demanding mother-in-law? Would she have liked to refuse to go to the oven and to fetch water on her head? Wouldn't she have liked to rest when she felt like it, and not just steal some moments of sleep when she was waiting by the spring? Did she really like her mother-in-law's meddling in bringing up her children? Instead of getting angry again, as I feared, she gave me a big smile.

> Before we had no time to think about rights and not rights. We thought of nothing. I did not have time to think of what my mother-in-law did to me. We were between the spring, the oven and the olives. Between being pregnant, nursing, pregnant again and so on. And then the children, they also have to grow. The head has no time to think.

Um Khaled's life is not very different from those of the women living in her village or the other neighbouring villages. She was married at the age of thirteen (she thinks) to a man from the neighbouring village. He was living with his mother, two wives and five children. He was a respected man in the village, and everyone thought she was very lucky. She moved into a crowded home, sharing it with nine humans, a donkey and a couple of goats, sheep and chicken. Yes, she explained, all the women had thought of a better, easier life, because they watched the town ladies when they went to the market to sell their harvest: *"They were all covered up, but they had fine clothes and soft hands. Yah Allah how soft their hands looked."* Foreign ladies *"Walking everywhere"* were also different from them. They also used to compare their lives with those of the feudal family.

Um Khaled lost a child, and said *"I was young, and they made me work all the time. I was tired walking back from the spring; I fell backwards. As I fell I pushed the two walking behind me, they joined in the fall. But no one was angry*

with me. We were all young girls and friends. But it was too late; I lost the child in my stomach." I said something about tap water making it easier for girls today; they don't fall on the way to the spring and abort their baby. *"You do not understand. I am tired in my head today. Like the young people today; they are tired in the head. Boys do the work of girls, and girls do the work of boys; it is not the way God made us. Before I was only tired in my body. It is better to be tired in the body; then we do not think about our fate. Now I sit and think a lot, and sometimes the tears start rolling."*

Um Khaled is aware and very concerned with the foreigners' interest in traditional rural folklore; she strongly believes that only the old can tell the story *"like it really was."* Her youngest son has friends who study at Bir Zeit university. He often sends his foreign friends, students and visiting scholars to his mother *"He tells them that I know about Palestinian customs. Jihad is very proud of his Palestinian origin, and he likes me to teach them. So they can go back to their country and tell their family that we have good customs."* During many of my visits to her home, we would sit on the outside porch, and Palestinian students would drop in groups of twos and threes, with questionnaires, ticking off the boxes according to the answers of Um Khaled. They tell her that they are interested in talking to the senior women of the Palestinian villages, *"to learn about our Palestinian heritage, our 'adat and taqalid."*

Student projects vary from ancient homes, traditional furniture, tending the animals, baking in the traditional oven, TABOUN, and embroidery. Um Khaled answers all their questions. She puts on a white TAUB and prepares tea for SHABAB FILISTIN (شباب فلسطين), the Palestinian youths. She loves to tell them about *"the way we do things here"* and always inquires into their family background. She wants to know if they are engaged or married, if not Um Khaled wants to know the reasons. These visits and conversations are popular because she believes deeply in the Palestinian cause, and she wants the younger generation to take care of the *"Palestinian belief in God, our 'adat and taqalid, and pass them on to their children."* After nearly each visit, Um Khaled would call Samia over; *"They come to learn from me; why can't you do the same?"*

Students remind her of the old days. On several occasions she would turn to me and tell them about my research—that I was the only one who ever asked her about water. *"It makes me open up to her."* Once after an especially long day with students, she held my hand and said *"I want you to go back to the people you live with and tell them about us, how we filled the water and carried it on our head, how we struggled, but we fed our family. And*

that we have pure hearts." But *"Was this a good life?"* I asked. *"It is our way of life, and it was good, because we thanked Him."*

Samia is a dutiful daughter. She is constantly trying to please her mother and mother-in-law, but *"everything is difficult to deal with."* Samia's mother, Um Sherif has her two older daughters in the neighbouring village; both are married with several children and leading what Samia described to me as *"normal Palestinian lives; you know like the movies."* Then there are the sons, all living with their own families in the Gulf.

The boys send money home to their mother. Samia said that she also helps support her mother with her salary as a primary school teacher near Bir Zeit. But it's the boys who matter in her mother's world. Only they are seen as the providers. Last time I spoke with Samia she was planning to move out of the village *"leave this gloomy place."* When she moves she will take her daughter with her. *"Um Khaled lives in another world. She will make my daughter as backward as she is. She doesn't understand new ideas. She still wants women to fetch water from the spring and bake in the taboun. I want a life."*

Um Sherif thinks her neighbour, Um Khaled, is behaving as expected from a concerned mother-in-law. She cannot do otherwise: *"These are our customs. This is the way we have been taught by our mothers and they by their mothers and all the mothers before them. This is our way of living together in the village. We need to follow our customs because then we do not get muddled up."* She explained that neither fetching water nor keeping the communal stone oven are backward. *"We are peasants; we have always been in the khala; now we are all inside doing nothing. It is against nature. You know it's like a program I watched on television about wild cats in cages. It's not normal."* Jokingly I asked how she compares to a wild cat. *"You should have seen me and the other women here walking up and down to the water. We were strong."*

As for Samia's comments about her mother-in-law, Um Sherif did not think they were reasonable; for one thing, Samia learned these demands by watching soap operas with other moral messages, and she absorbs these ideas, forgetting where she comes from. Um Khaled just did her chores, which were physical, and she had neither the energy nor the time to think about her lot in life, *"There is God and his Goodness."*

It is, according to Um Sherif, unfair to demand that Um Khaled deny what she was brought up to do and respect. And Um Khaled knows that Samia has no NASAB in the village or near the village; a woman is stronger when she has her ʿESWAH. It is true, that all the village homes have televisions today and that also the old women sit and watch the

same soaps as the young girls, but when they speak of women's right to marry for love or to have the same rights as men to careers, they cannot relate. They wonder about what will happen to the DAR if they were to just do what women do on television. What will happen to the Palestinian way of life?

Um Khaled, like her neighbours in the village and the other villages, was a responsible mother-in-law running the chores of the home. Like her own mother-in-law and the senior co-wives she had the job of picking the bride. This was done by watching the young girls walking to the spring and carrying water. She noticed Samia—*"straight back going to fetch water, bake bread and taking care of her younger siblings."* However, of all the tasks a girl had to manage, fetching water was the most definite in assessing the young Samia. Um Khaled recalls that while her son was looking out for a beautiful spouse, she scouted for the good workers *"Men are not very practical in life things."*

Um Jihad

I used to assume that folk costumes are basically fixed to patterns created in a far past. My rude awakening came during preparations for a wedding celebration. Um Jihad explained that embroidery is all about every day life.

Um Jihad, who is in her seventies, was born Zeinab Muhammad Ali. She lives with her husband, her youngest son and his family and one unmarried handicapped daughter. They are living well because her husband worked for a good construction company in Israel and she contributed to the household with her professional and beautiful embroidery, which she sold to a man who had a shop in the old city of Jerusalem.

Abu Jihad keeps up his olive trees and the little parcel behind the house. His wife says he aches for his past active life. But the ZAMAN forced him to work in Israel. On Fridays he goes with the other men in the village to the mosque. After prayers they walk back to one of the houses where they sit and drink tea together before they go home for lunch. He says that without the job he had in Israel they would never have afforded to educate their younger children or pay the electricity and water bills. They also invested in a well behind the house and an

electric pump. When I asked what he thought of the women missing the water spring, he laughed. *"Believe me, I also miss the water spring."* He, like the other boys, watched the girls going back and forth from the water spring: *"They knew we watched them. You know girls like to show off. They also liked to go to the spring because women like to gossip."* Although *"Women just gossip,"* the spring is part of Palestinian village life. And when the women went to fetch water, *"Life in the village was more under control."*

People were careful about keeping up their traditions of living in a village. He has experienced life in town and seen how everyone is on his own. But in village life there are other demands; people must keep close together, because they love and need each other; nature is harsher in the mountains. Most of his children have met their spouses outside the village *"God knows in what sort of places they find each other. It's all out of control,"* and Abu Jihad is upset about that. Before, when boys watched the girls go to the spring, and mothers were on the look out for healthy brides for their sons, *"Affairs of the home were under control."* Another serious issue he wanted to talk about was the change in attitude toward inheritance of land between sisters and brothers. Formally, girls can also inherit land, *"But they never do that because it upsets the family structure and village life. Here in the balad men decide; we have to protect the women and make sure that the honour is kept within the hamulah. Today I know two homes where the girls are claiming their share of inheritance. They want to sell to help their husband buy a home in Ramallah or el Bireh."*

Abu Jihad repeated his point about how boys must have the possibility to observe girls doing household chores. When this option is gone they end up with girls with only education and careers *"And all kinds of ideas."* The same problem applies to girls from the village. Also they meet boys from other villages or towns when they study and end up marrying not only outside the village but also outside their own HAMULAH. When I mentioned to him that women speak of DAR, and not HAMULAH, his response was that this proves his proves his case: *"Women do not understand the same things like men."* Women should leave men to take care of village affairs. This is challenged when more girls are demanding their share: *"This will only lead to brother against sister."*

Um Jihad agrees with her husband. Values have changed and divides in families are becoming more common. There are not only pressures from Israeli occupation but also among families in the village. Um Jihad and Abu Jihad argued on several occasions that the late president Nasser was the greatest man who ever lived. He was the only one who

cared about the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian peasant *"more than Abu 'Ammar,"* they said. They keep a cassette with one of the Nasser's speeches. On the wall in the sitting room Abu Jihad had taped several newspaper cuttings and pictures of Nasser. Not only did he fight against the British, Abu Jihad explained, but also against the feudal landowners in Egypt. Nasser gave back the land to the oppressed. Abu 'Ammar, on the contrary, would never force the rich Palestinian peasants to give back land they took from poorer peasants.

Fetching water, Abu Jihad said was women's work, and the spring was a place for women to gossip. He talked about men's and women's tasks, and about the importance of traditions. Um Jihad also talked about village traditions, but from another position *"Our village is a typical Palestinian village. Women have to follow customs or else…,"* Um Jihad said making a gesture of slitting her throat.

Producing children is a woman's most significant attribute. When women met by the ʿAYN they discussed betrothals between their children. Um Jihad was the only one in the society of women who spoke about how important it was for her to choose according to personal likes and dislikes of potential in-laws *"I always tried to match my children with children of the women I liked."* And she was always successful.

Like her husband, Um Jihad is upset about girls demanding their share in inheritance. Women challenging their brothers and male kin for land could never have happened if women were still meeting at the water spring. At the ʿAYN the village was bustling with movement and the sound of small children, laughter, gossip and singing. Even though Musharafah is a 'communist' village, she went on, there have always been traditional restrictions on movements. *"Life for the old women in this village is lonely and sad. Nothing happens here anymore."*

Um Jihad has made professional and beautiful embroidery. Her eyes were getting weak and she did not see as well as she once did, but traditional embroidery, TATRIZ (تطريز), was a pastime she loved and which she still tries to keep up. Um Jihad learned TATRIZ with the sole mission of preparing her trousseau for marriage. At an early age she was taught how *"to put the thread through the needle."* At the start she only learned to cross-stitch. When her stitching was 'clean,' she was taught to copy other simple motifs of the village she lived in.

As a child, Um Jihad lived for a couple of years in a village in the Jordan valley. Several of the motifs she embroidered were images of lush fields around her. Older aunts and other old women in the village,

who had time to spare, taught and helped her in the beginning. She was very gifted and soon she began at a much younger age than the rest in her family to embroider the panels for her JIHAS (الجهاز), trousseau, and garments.

Um Jihad took up embroidery as a profession during the 1930s. It was a period with growing interest in lavish embroidery and foreigners in the neighbouring village of Bir Zeit were collecting Palestinian embroidery. Several embroidery centres grew during the 1930s, and Um Jihad had no problem selling her work. The less a woman worked in the fields and her home, the more time she had to adorn her garments and help her daughters prepare for the trousseau. This was not the case in Musharafah. Women who lived in the old village were poor and could not afford embroidery threads and garments which were luxuries for the rich peasants or women in the towns. They went mostly about in their JINNEH U NAR (الجنة والنار) dress; these were everyday working garments. All the older women with whom I spent time were always dressed in their traditional embroidered dresses, and some had flowing white veils which must not to be confused with the Islamic veil.

Demand for embroidery increased when men from Musharafah found work in Jordan or the United States and sent remittances back home to their families in the village. Um Jihad explains that time spent on embroidery is always an indicator for interpreting economic and social changes in the village life. Today, several Palestinian co-operatives and organisations encourage women to keep up the traditional stitches and sell them through religious and secular organisations that actively market Palestinian traditional craft. The arts include handicrafts such as pottery, glass, baskets, and rug weaving.

Um Ali

Fatima Muhammad Ali is Um Jihad's younger half sister. She married the man she wanted to marry. Abu Ali was her cousin, and he was young like her when they got married. All her children were born by the spring, "*even my son the professor.*" She described how after each birth she simply wrapped the new-born and walked with it up again to the village. All this while steadying a full jug of water on her head. If the baby was a girl, "*the women and me said nothing.*" If the new-born was a boy, a procession of women would announce the news to the village by a penetrating yell, the ulvating. Regardless of whether it was boy

or girl, the young Um Ali walked back to the village to continue her work at the bread oven, feeding the animals, cooking for the house, going back to fetch more water for the household, walking the long distance to fetch fuel for the oven and later in the afternoon herding the animals.

She is very proud of her son, Ali, who is a professor of Natural Science at the University of Bir Zeit. He, she repeatedly told me, has opened her eyes to what is happening to the Palestinian peasant. But, she is also concerned about his belief only in politics and not enough in God, *"I try always to tell him to remember al arkan al khamsah. But he has all this communist stuff in his head."* She often serves tea, and sometimes even makes dinner for his foreign friends from other universities. *"They all sit around the table, with papers and books scattered everywhere. I always serve them the best I can. But nobody asks me. Maybe I could tell them a thing or two about life."* She would have liked her son to tell his 'friends' more about village life, and to ask her questions about *"how we did things in the village and what I think of today's ways."* Um Ali often confronted 'the Professor' in front of me saying, *"she is doing what you never want to hear about."* Although she sees the *"good that comes with water in the tap,"* she also thinks that without the ʿAYN, 'real' Palestinian ʿADAT and TAQALID will be lost.

ʿADAT and TAQALID were obvious, Um Ali said, in the division of labour between men and women. She sees that by labouring for the Israelis the Palestinian peasant is giving away the 'wealth' of Palestinian way of life. Obviously, the consequence of wage labour in Israel is not without contradictions; for the old it means not only that production of goods and services in the home diminishes but also labour. This means that the old women are dependent on an income from family members working either in a narrow Palestinian market or making a living working for Israel, and the revenue is irregular. Um Ali is concerned with the fact that in Musharafah today it is the old women who keep up the agriculture: *"It is us who maintain whatever is left of small family plots."* Women not only contribute with agricultural labour, but they also *"dry, can and pickle food, make soap and jams, and grind wheat."*

Um Ali has a ʿESWAH, and she does not come from the poorest family in Musharafah; still life has never been easy. She describes her chores as routine:

> I was always pregnant. I would fill water in tins and jugs, prepare the bread dough, wash the room, and walk back to the bread oven to bake

> the bread and then nurse the baby. Prepare the morning meal for my husband and his father and mother. Then the children. All these rounds were done, and the sun would be still rising. If the baby was no more than four months, I would wrap it up and tie it to my THAUB and walk down to the olive orchard to join others during the season of olives.

Still, they were not lacking in vegetables, fruits and water. There was never too much of anything, but there was enough to keep the body going. Today the problem is that vegetables and fruits are too expensive because water is piped, and this costs money. Although she has a relatively better life than many of her female neighbours, she is ashamed that other women suffer.

When water was out in the KHALA, it was regulated by nature, she said, so it was more natural. When there was much water it retreated back into nature and was stored; today, when it is piped, there is either too little, or, when there is too much, it is wasted, because there is no natural system. In her view, the problem lies in that the village is mostly populated with old women who neither have ʿESWAH nor NASAB to support them. Um Ali says that she misses the togetherness around the water spring, the walk down, the singing and the gossiping. Most of all, she remembered, *"We knew God. We are Muslims and we knew how to thank Him."* But, she also remembered the hardship, especially in summer, looking for water *"Until my head went in circles."* Today what makes her head go in circles is what people say about her youngest sister Samiha, who wears trousers in the village, lived alone until recently, and works like the men in town. This, Um Ali says, is not the way of a Muslim girl, *"I always tell her to remember God and that we all have to answer to Him when He remembers us."*

Um Ali was happy that her daughters went to school—also the Prophet said that learning is important, she said, but she is not happy that Samiha did not do what a true Palestinian woman is expected to do in the village *"She should marry and have children, like all the other women here do."* It is sad that Samiha never experienced the joy and fulfilment of singing and laughing and wearing a young bride's THAUB. She will never know the feeling of being celebrated by everyone and walking with the other women to the spring of TALAT AL BIR after the wedding.[1]

[1] I want to specify here that although this spring shares the same name as the ritual of talat al bir and was the spring most frequently used for the procession, the women told me it was not the only spring used in connection with this ceremony.

Samiha

While village mothers used the spring for assessing the strength and beauty of eligible girls and it was the location where in reality the contracting of engagements was facilitated, it was also here that these same marriage arrangements were broken off. Samiha experienced just that. She is Fatima's sister and is in her fifties, living alone, and running her own embroidery business. *"I should have been born a man—I defy village values,"* she repeated during our discussions.

Samiha, like all other girls in the village, went to fetch water with her mother and sister at the spring. She was the youngest; *"My father loved and spoilt me more than anybody else. He was against me going to the spring, because he thought I was too intelligent."* She went to school and finished primary and secondary school; then she went to work for a Christian woman in Bir Zeit who made and sold traditional Palestinian handicraft. In the meantime, the family she was promised to lost interest and broke the engagement:

> They wanted someone to walk up and down fetching water, baking bread, cleaning houses and producing children. I was the wrong kind, and Fatima was very sad, but she also believed in education. I know that Fatima is sad that I am not married.

Samiha was gifted in the craft of embroidery, and soon her work was noticed also in the neighbouring villages and towns. During the late seventies and beginning of the eighties there was a lot of demand for such work, and she managed to put aside enough money to build a small home in the village, and, with another co-worker, bought a small atelier in Ramallah. Her business went very well, with an inactive period during the first Palestinian uprising, but then Palestinian returnees started to invest in embroidery, and her business picked up again.

For Samiha piped water is a break with what she described as *"obsolete, oppressive and primitive village ways,"* but occupation obstructs *"total break with our archaic ways."* It is impossible to modernise Palestine when its people cannot benefit because they do not have the means to participate in the process. She joined the other women at one of the meetings held by Palestinian heath officials and foreign NGOs from Ramallah. Although her relationship with several women in Musharafah is tense, Samiha, dressed in her thaub, spoke up several times with passion for her village and *"peasant life."*

She argued that peasants are not *"only dim-witted"*—they are a very pragmatic people. Even if peasants are good and believe and place their life in the hands of God, still livelihood depends on well-structured plans. They need to know what they have; if officials want to help them—because they have German, Italian or other money to use (donor money)—they must first *"do their homework;"* find out who actually lives in Musharafah and whether or not officials can guarantee that the *"different way of life will not mess up more than the occupation already has,"* Samiha explained. She wanted solutions that recognise needs of people, especially old women's requirements under occupation.

Samiha remembers the euphoria that followed the piped water in the village; *"It was like a Mulid celebration."* But she also remembers the rush of anxieties in the village when the first bills arrived. By that time many women were living alone or were responsible for the households. In addition she believes that Musharafah is unique in its political awareness and socialist sympathies *"For people's rights."* Still, maintenance is an explicit demonstration of the gap between those who can afford to pay water and electricity bills and *"Have fancy household equipment,"* and those who cannot afford these changes. Matters became more complicated with the first intifadah, and all the homes in villages were under constant harassment from settlers and the Israeli army, *"The intifadah is a break with these men in Gaza* [PLO], *who do nothing for the people."*

Um Ibrahim

On our first meeting Um Ibrahim told me that she is different from all the other women in the village. She made it very clear that, although she lives in a village, she comes from a prominent and dominant land owning family living in Jerusalem. Today her own family is like all other urban families in Jerusalem. She went to school and never goes around in a THAUB unless it's a festive Palestinian occasion. *"I come from a good family, and I am more open to foreign ideas. I also do not believe in primitive healing methods."* She was born Zeinab in a family that owned *"Many dunums"*[2] of good land which provided a good income for the family. She was not only the youngest child but also the only daughter, so her father doted on her: *"My father gave me all I wanted, even the man*

[2] One dunum equals approximately one-fourth of an acre.

I wanted to marry," she laughed. Ahmad Ibn dar Ganzuri was a clever young man from the same HAMULAH as Zeinab; he came also from a prosperous family, but, she insisted, he was not spoilt. The man she married was always a tough worker. He worked hard for his father and later also a little for his father in law.

Abu Ibrahim was a progressive man and wanted to know more about the British and their ways. He noticed that they were much more advanced in most things, and he wanted to transfer those ideas to his people. So he started to work with them *"Not for them, like they think here in the village."* Eventually, he managed to put enough money aside to buy most of the land in Musharafah. At the time the village was *"Just a khirbeh [hamlet]. The peasants were poor and the children were dying from dirt and bad nourishment."* His project included making life more prosperous in the village. She is fully aware of what the other women say about her. Unfortunately, they never talk about Abu Ibrahim's generosity with the peasants. Today they help with the olives and take most of them *"As revenge for the ZULM they think my husband is responsible for."* When I asked if she discusses the distribution of the harvest with other women, she shook her head and quickly changed the subject to what we were going to cook for supper.

It was several weeks later that we went back to talking about her neighbours and her life in Musharafah. Obviously, the walks to and from the spring were long and hard, but she could not fetch water, because it was not fitting for a woman from her background to be seen outside doing manual work. Still, although she never went to the ʿAYN, Um Ibrahim is nostalgic about the old ways and says that, to know Palestine, you have to appreciate the life around the ʿAYN, which is all the KHALA around; she pointed to the hills and terraces on all sides. She is also a peasant and carries within her the pride of the Palestinian culture, and she added her belief that *"There is one god, and Mohammed is his prophet."* One cannot, Um Ibrahim said, speak about the Palestinians' love for their land without talking about the wonders of God. It is in the land of God that life is decided and the Palestinian heritage is passed on.

Um Ibrahim told me repeatedly that she is the lady, the wife of the richest owner, "They call him the IQTAʾI. I know they told you that. And that is all right. I understand. But they do not know how much I understand them, because also we are peasants." I mentioned that several Palestinian academicians disproved of use feudalism in a Palestinian

context. She did not agree with the criticism because she knew that for the neighbours her home is the house of the feudal lord: "Of course you use it. I have not problems with it." Most of her life she watched the other women fetch water; they passed under her home, and she heard them chatting, singing and laughing. They had bare feet, and the stones were hot in summer and cold in winter, and always sharp. But in spite of the hardship she never heard them complaining. One of the first rules a girl learned was never to talk about herself; only women without shame did so.

When they grew older, the girls knew that it was especially during the walk back to the village from the water spring that they were most attractive: A straight back and a jug well balanced on a slim well-toned neck was not only a sign of inner strength and determination but was also very attractive. Girls were observed while walking along the water route; young men from their village, and also other villages, watched them as they passed, observing their brides-to-be *"I know that my sons used to watch them."* It's a problem that there are no 'legitimate' girl-watchings in several villages today. Um Ibrahim knows this also from one of her sons who teaches at university; several of his male colleagues have complained that their sons find their brides *"From every other place."*

The job of finding a match for a son or a daughter was never a man's domain. It was always the wife who pointed out the possibilities available and left the men to sort out the contracts. Today mothers do not have a meeting point, and men have no longer the good advice of the wife. In the urban areas women, like her, meet at each others homes for tea and gossip, but in the villages it is different. Peasant women cannot just sit around and do nothing; *"The worse thing you say about the village women is that they are lazy."*

Um Ibrahim speaks with much sympathy for the peasant women whom she at first admits having disliked and looked down on. She did not want to have anything to do with them until her sons started frequenting a political group near the village. They eventually left the country to study in the Soviet Union and in England. Two stayed abroad and have only visited a couple of times. The other two came back, one with his foreign wife, but she did not stay long. The ones who came back also brought back ideas, and they wanted to educate the peasants: *"They believed in a revolution against the rich and the occupation. They started youth clubs and helped finance the education of the young people in*

the village." It amuses Um Ibrahim to think that it was in reality her sons who helped the peasants in the village rise up against the feudal landlord—her own husband, *"He had a heart of gold. God rest his soul."*

Because they are Arabs, and Arabs—especially peasants—are an honourable and hospitable people, they were good with the rich landlord. And, she pointed out *"Also we are good. We know God and my husband did things FI SABIL ALLAH."* But the atmosphere in the village changed. People became much more politically aware and suspicious of programs introduced by the outside. The women still maintained a certain respectful distance to the landlord and his family, but their children were different. Also this eventually changed; she felt that the women still kept a distance, but it was no longer respectful. Nevertheless, she understands the pain they are passing through, having worked all their lives *"This is not an honourable way for an old Palestinian woman to end her life. This is not the way it is supposed to finish."*

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