

Radical Sense
Here Reader Volume 2

I Want to Read at the White House

By Joshua Clover

I want to read at the white house.

I want to read poems at the white house.

**I want to read poems at the white house
with all the pomp available.**

**With celebratory music and all my beloveds
watching.**

**With Baraka and DiPrima and Roque Dalton
behind me**

I want to read at the white house.

**I want to read poems at the white house
wearing my favorite clothes probably a
hoodie or perhaps my Belgian suit.**

**Belgium is a failed state in the heart of
Europe which is something to aspire to.**

**I like Belgium and one day I might like to
read poems at the palace of the
nation but for now I want to read poems
at the white house.**

**I want to read poems and sing karaoke and I
will probably tell a few nervous jokes.**

It will be like all the other readings.

We will be there together.

**I want to read poems at the white house and
then like any house reading we will all
clean up together.**

**We will clean up the mess we have made
together.**

**All that rubble and all those ashes. These
are my conditions.**

Fusings

NATALIE DIAZ

Alchemical Dream of We

Here, I won't speak in metaphor. Let me speak in memory, and in remembering, let me return to our bodies as having been dreamed, and as having been the dreamers. Let me say, *We* and *Us*, and let it be a divine occurrence, not *on* land but *of* land, having happened and having yet to happen, in transformation and arrival.

The mountain dreamed me and I dreamed the mountain—a flesh-being bearing its first dreamself. I dream the stone I am of and the stones I am among. '*Avii Imaanvenych*, we say—*We are of the mountain*.

Of as reciprocity. *Of* as a responsibility to tend and be tended. *Of* as toward the world, a practice of living, for and with others, not alone but among. Autonomous lives in collective living.

Since water is the first body, we are also *of* the water. '*Aha Makav*, we say, because the river happens to our bodies as it happens to our lands. Cut a channel into my chest and the red water will rise up and overrun it, a rivering. The river from which I came. The river *of* which I continue to become. I carry it in all my bodies—flesh, land, dream, beloved. I am *of* the water's abundant eruptions and dangerous satiations. From the river I learn the course and currents of love, of the livingness that emerges from love—how to witness and wash, how to jump and break, when to soften or carve, sink or carry, when to hold or tread or dive, babble or flood, to shape while being shaped, how to drink, how to thirst, how to clean what is in me but not of me.

I have abandoned the metaphor, so I can hold the river. Not in my hands or my mouth. Not in my bowl or my cup. I hold the river in my body and in this holding I behold my being and its relationship with our world.

I am in alchemy with the river. In the water, I learn both what I am *of* and what I become. A fusing—to return to our first body of water and to the knowledge system of our original liquid form. This knowledge shapes a

methodology of cycle, how to be among the earth and the sky, the plants and animals, how to move with, against, toward, and through one another and our worlds—in rush, flow, and current; in hold or carry; crystallizing; vaporizing; cleaning; ebb and tide; reorganizing gravity and pressure; to fall; to still; to recharge.

If this fusing is our call to acknowledge our body of water, a way to recognize our bodies as connected to one another, let us say, *There are only two directions—to be turned toward the water or to be turned away from the water.* We are of consequence to one another—the river, its body, your body and mine. How we embrace the world and enact our desires upon it through our practices of thirst and quench, desire and sate, determines the world we live in and how we know it anew, as a relative.

As it is with our waters, let me say, *I am of consequence to your body.*

As it is with our waters, let me say, *I am a consequence of your body.*

We live within the consequences of a relational *all*. *Mat tayuuch*, we say, from the verb *ataay*, which is the way the *all*, the *We*, the *Us*, happens. The *all* is our occurrence in this world. We who are the imagining of both land and water, thus created in their image from their elemental desires. We are the body of land and the body of water become other bodies. Nitrogen, carbon, iron. Clay and oxygen. Hydrogen, salt, and bone.

We are the flesh-manifestation of land's and water's dream. In this reciprocal dream, we must also do the dreaming, from within the created world toward the world we must help create. The alchemical *We*. Transmuting, passing, crossing, in migration and language toward and away from one another, carrying and carried by our stories.

The Rock Who Cried

When the Creator died, the story of his death trembled the valley, carried by wind and light, by the Colorado River, which we call 'Aha Haviily. Word tumbled along the river's bed, in ripples and waves that jumped the banks. The story echoed the rushes of rivercane, who quavered and snapped under

the weight of the loss. The loss was carried by the clouds who, heavy and tired with this original hurt, fell in long shadows that slipped down the sand dunes. It moved in thunder along the riverine cliffs where the grieved swallows busted apart their mud homes and rent the water's surface, gnashing at the mosquitoes and flies swimming there. In one of these ways or another, the mountains and rocks learned of the Creator's death. One small mountain, small enough that it was mostly thought of as a rock and not a mountain, was overcome by the news and dropped to the ground and wept. The rock's grief was old and it cried for its whole life, for the life of the Creator, and for all its relatives the Creator had given to life. The rock cried and cried and cried; as it did, its color deepened and darkened. It cried in such a way that even today it stands out purple-red along the beige-blue ridgeline, as if it is still wet and weeping. As if it is still struck with grief, as if it is both hearing and carrying the story of the Creator's death. 'Avii Himiich is its name, or The Rock Who Cried.

The Rock Who Cried is not myth or metaphor or anecdote. This is a story of one practice of migration. Like story, migration is a sensual movement of knowledge, a system of how one receives knowledge and how knowledge arrives—the same way we arrive to and receive of one another. Both story and migration are an alchemy. They catalyze change and transformation. Migration reminds the flesh-body that it is *of*—of the river and the mountain, one story among many stories of living, one grief among many griefs, an energy that is not the beginning or the end but a process out of time. To migrate is to risk that this world can change. To migrate is to risk that our lives are of consequence to the world that has yet to occur.

The Circle as Surround

As Mojaves migrated across the desert and along the rivers, toward the Gulf of Mexico and Pacific Ocean and then back from those waters, they marked stories on rocks where they stopped for rest or shelter. One of the stories or symbols left for others was a dot with a circle drawn around it, sometimes

called a circumpunct. Those small marks were messages to who might come behind them, and possibly to remind themselves of this text, if they arrived to that place again. The dot with a circle around it can generally mean, *Don't pass here*. More precisely and generously, a dot with a circle around it, *There are other ways to pass beyond this one way*. The circle surrounding the dot is a resounding, an image calling us to imagine outward, beyond the singular or particular way of seeing and knowing, moving through or across. An invitation to strike and reverb, to be of consequence to a collective movement.

This is land knowledge, which doesn't mean we know something about the land, rather it means we are learning to live in the ways land lives. Not just the marking on the stone conveys a language. The language itself is the practice of possibility-making in the surround and resound of the land—the single line of the circle amplifies the myriad pathways yet unknown, and the choices we might make as we share and fuse new and old traditions of arriving and receiving one another in land and water. These knowledges were taught to people by the land, as part of its relation to us, its tending and weeding, its seeding and harvest of us.

Not all knowledge is for everyone, but such land and water knowledge as this one is legible to and used by those who are willing to defy the map and look into the surround. The surround is where relation occurs. As the word *relation* suggests, this is the knowledge for those *called back* to the land and water before colonial surveys and properties.

Where am I if not in surround of you, my strangers and my beloveds? How often is the dot of my life, the way I choose to mark or don't realize I am marking the world, ungenerous to everyone but me? How malleable or porous must I be or can I be to those moving with me or against me, toward me or away from me?

The dot surrounded by a circle does not mean I can't pass or cross here—rather, it is a warning and a wondering, about what will be asked of me if I decide the pathway I am on is the only pathway, or the easy route. It is a message about what moving in the way I am moving will require of my body, of my life, of those I love and those I don't yet love, who are in migration

with me, seen or unseen, known or unknown, here or in other lands and waters, whom I need and rely on to see me in their surround.

Mat Tayuuch

One way I try to understand the concepts and practices of relationality is through the language we use to express it. I begin thinking about most complex concepts through etymology. I chase the written word back as far as I can, migrating through its many origins and textual episodes—its early dreams, its optimisms and plans for progress, its terrible acts, its beloveds and its enemies. I read the story the word's ancestors told—the moments when its people transformed themselves for better or worse and thus changed a word's intention or memory, thus changed or at least masked their own intentions and memories. Then I set that English word alongside my Mojave language in order to find the English word's limits of imagination and generosity; places I might pressure or tweak its memory; how I might reorganize it or demand a greater capacity for our lives within its meanings or understandings.

I set the word *relation* next to the Mojave phrase *mat tayuuch*, which I invoked earlier. *Ataay* is an unknown, an unquantifiable and therefore ever-possible, ever-capacious *all*. It is the *all* that must remain undefined and yet held, carried and storied, like water, like river—it must be ready to be more abundant, more inclusive, more of itself, until its *We*, its *Us* is gathered and fed, convened and armed, corrected and returned to the fold, dreamed so they can dream. *Mat tayuuch* is a practice that refers to both land and body, an act of *relating* people and land to one another in a great constellated story. In these tellings, all things Mojave, all things imbued with life force, were touched and held, in name and in narrative, of where they'd been and what they had done, and how we were *of* and in relation to those stories. No architecture, or roof, or room can hold *mat tayuuch*. There could never be enough windows to open. It was first spoken outside where the stars showed its infiniteness. It often took numerous people to tell, and it stretched beyond

any historical records of time or map, beyond any colonial order of temporal or spatial relationships. There is no line long enough. The lands and waters spoken of in *mat tayuuch* have Mojave names. The people also have Mojave names, and it was they who dreamed our first dreams. In the knowledge system of *mat tayuuch*, where the *all* is an action, a way of land and people occurring, I learned that my life is only as possible as the lives around me and that my actions and inactions are of consequence to and a consequence of the *all* I am of.

What Is the Language We Need to Live?

When I wake up in the morning, I ask myself: *Natalie, what is the language you need to live right now?* I mean the language of words, speech and text. What should we talk about when so many words exist to destroy us? How to speak the language made of words that deny us, and realize us in capture, humiliation, wound, or murder?

The border. The patrol. The wall. The bullet. The ballot. The line. The State. The State Park. The Nation. The spaceship. The oil. The man camp. The pipeline. The pipe. The copper. The mine. Theirs. The dam. The museum. The Church. The priest. The high-capacity magazine. The semi-automatic. The repeating firearm. How it repeats. The Occupiers. Their Occupation. Their religion. Their map. The property. The work. The wage. The water. The policeman. The body cam. The white man. The white woman. Their children. Those citizens. Those individuals and their freedoms. The task force. The unmasked. The brotherhood. The money. The sugar. The taxes. The membership fees. The self-driving cars. The recalls. The apologies. Their medicine. Their opioids. Not my brother's opioids. The warrant. The sentence. The inside. The outside. The university. The End of the Pandemic. The Blood Quantum. The Pledge of Allegiance. The law. The court. The concertina wire. The cyclone fence. The visiting hours. The trade agreement. The desalination plant. The grid. The chicken. The eggs. The layaway. The committee. The other committee. The faculty. The monocrop.

The crop duster. Wheat. The microplasts. The rent. The landlord. The president. The president's kids. The rising sea. The Territorial Sea. The carbon. The BIA. The DOI. The DOAs. The detention center. The hidden detention center. The surveillance tower. The satellite. The shipping container. The Prevention Through Deterrence. The cages. The icebox. The Credible Fear. The Settlement. The Settlers. The Settlers. The Settlers.

How might we speak of life beyond the State's designs and borders?

How to imagine the living we've yet to do if the State language we have now is rooted in our suffering? What is the language we need to live right now? Like the circle surrounding the dot marked on the rock by my ancestors, relationality blooms in the surround and reverb of what was understood and what was meant. It is rooted in that unknown space where we are illegible and irreconcilable to one another, in the lush spaces between and among us, where we are not touching and are not known.

To relate is to not know, and it is to be alongside in that unknowing, which is not an undangerous relationship. For example, the snake doesn't know me with her eyes—I don't reiterate what she knows when she sees me. The snake arrives at me by tasting the air surrounding me, licks together the atmosphere that holds me. For the snake, I am also what I am not, and we meet in that condition, in the way I move through the world and reshape the atomic. The snake gathers my chemical reaction to the world with her tongue, pulls it in behind her fangs, and lifts my scent into the Jacob's organ located on the roof of her mouth, where those chemicals become who I might be in any direction of her. For the snake, I am a sensual alchemy of enemy, beloved, predator, prey, and wonder. The body language of our bodies in relation exists outside the typical definitions by which life is measured.

I'm not suggesting we need the snake languages my relatives have spoken. English is the context for my Settler State, and it also violently contextualizes my beloveds beneath its lexical infrastructures. **Our relationality has to exist outside Settler State borders of meaning.** We require a language beyond the English language of citizenship. I don't seek our future *We* and *Us* or dream our relational practices from inside the vocabulary of the English language. Like Sixo, in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, like our

ancestors before us, I don't believe there is a future seeded in the English language.

Sixto calls us toward a different listening, a practice of tuning in to our *before language* and *after language*. Despite the hundred years war English waged to silence my Indigenous language, it has been taught to me. My Elders outlasted our nations' lexical designs to destroy us. I have my language to speak about love, a love I deserve and a love I am capable of. I have my language to speak about dreams, through which I learn of our existence before English and through which I will imagine our existence after English. For Morrison's Sixto *then*, and now for me and for *Us*—this *other language*, this *before language* and *after language*, is a choice we can still make.

English has always frayed beneath our presence inside it. Our Native and Indigenous languages, our ways of water, our stories, our griefs, our *allness*, *ataayk*—for which English has such small capability—bear again and again on it. We tremble it. We falter and doubt it. There is no English language without *Us*, and while I am often in it or beneath it, I am not of it or its values. It isn't going to teach us how to speak to one another about the world we are dreaming.

I don't believe English was seeded with our future, but I am also *of* the desert. I have witnessed the bright-green desire of the mesquite tree to grow from dark seeds tightly sheathed in its golden pods. And how the land, water, and animals collaborate in the marvelous labor of scarification to ensure the seeds break free and take root. In flash floods, the slick brown seeds are beat against stones as they are rocked over and through the washes, hammered against hard surfaces, which break the seeds from their casings, spreading them across the sands where they will grow. When the flood has yet to come, the Coyote, our teacher, feasts on the sweet pods, eating them whole or in ragged chunks, shredding the husks, releasing the seeds into his belly and intestines. Then he wanders off into the desert, stopping here and there to shit out the seeds, where they will eventually sprout. Though there are other designs by which to create life and beauty, this relationship of *wantneeds* is an important story of the desert. English never believed itself to

be a garden or field in which we might bloom, but we also learn from Coyote that we can grow and cultivate abundance from shit, even the shit of a Settler State.

June Jordan's "designs of revolution"

For the last several years, I have carried an image of a page from one of June Jordan's spiral notebooks. It was sent to me by the poet Solmaz Sharif, who took the photo on her phone and texted it to me while researching in the Jordan archives at Harvard. She sent it to me because Jordan studied architecture, and I have an obsession with furniture, in particular lamps and chairs. I am interested in the power that furniture and architecture have over our relationships and interactions with one another—how each can prophesy our bodies into action or inaction, into rest or restlessness. I am compelled by the ways furniture shapes our imaginations of one another, how it can control our bodies, urge us to touch, to look, to disengage, to dream even. The bedroom. The HUD house. The classroom. The courtroom. The museum. The library. The prison cell. We walk into a room and suddenly have an idea of what we deserve in an hour, in a conversation, in a meal, in a life.

In my Mojave language a chair is what you do. It is a place. That place is where the verb can happen. The chair came after our body and mimics our body. The chair becomes the impetus for the body to act even though the body was what the chair was shaped after. However, in the current hierarchy of furniture, if there were no chair, I might not sit, though the body can rest without the chair. For example, if I were to sit on the floor, in my language I would be doing the thing the chair is, *hinaak*. The chair is not a thing except in an architecture of power, except in asking or demanding the body to act, or not act.

The chair becomes the site of where the body can rest and therefore its presence determines its possibility. I can offer you my chair, or I can pull the chair out from under you. I can throw the chair in the funeral pyre when you die, so you have a place to rest in the next world. Or, more sinister, since the

chair is firmly rooted in the power of furniture, the chair is also central to the design of many forms of punishment—to be forced to sit in a chair, tied to it, or to be denied a chair to sit in. The chair is designed to create a relationship between us and to define our future within that space.

In the image of the page I carry from her notebook, Jordan has written these questions, among others, in blue ink: *How to design tables and chairs for a really new life? Will we still use knives?* I interpret her question, at least partly, as implication that it is the “civility” of the table that requires we make and use knives. The more advanced the civility or civilization, the larger the table required to seat equally large men around, where they prophesy more terrible knives and more sinister meats to turn them upon.

The chair exists as a place for a thing we must do and only becomes itself when we do that thing. How many national historical paintings and photographs exist of kings’ tables; and around which how many wars were drawn and signed into being; and what feasts were those men fed to fuel their long hours of war-making whilst sitting at those tables and chairs, with their big knives and pens, slicing away at the lands and waters mapped before them as if the map was our flesh?

Back to Jordan’s questions: *How to design tables and chairs for a really new life?* The furniture she was referring to in the notes was part of her vision for “These designs of Revolution.” She writes:

*These designs of Revolution
require a turning away from
the enemy,
They require a kind of going
up into the hills or
mountains, as did Castro,
scheming, around the clock,
a really different universe, or, as did Elijah, tuning
in-to a really different frequency
—the still small voice.*

The still small voice recalls an old sensuality, one that is both illegible to the State's surveillance and also capable of speaking beyond it. The still small voice—of 'Avii Himiich, of Sixo, and of Jordan. The still small voice of the snake and her ancestral way of recognizing who I am of and how I am of her world. What is the “really different frequency” we need to remember or discover in order to be in best relation to one another, so that we might relate to and tend the living world we live in and, in doing so, tend one another? What is this frequency that exists outside or beyond the English language and its measurements of time and map, border and surveillance, labor and death? Is it a rock marked by a dot surrounded by a circle, urging us toward the beyond and resound? Is it a cry? Is it a song? Is it the way we turn our heads or hands? Is it a furniture we need to reorganize the spaces where we both come together and live apart?

If we are creating the world we want to live in now, what can we salvage from history's furniture? What station should we tune in to? Or how high up on a mountaintop or deep into a cave must we go to hear or sense one another's desires to live? The still small voice, I believe, is my voice. It is the voice I will hear differently because I have turned away from the enemy and toward you, where I will hear your voice first, and in the same way the snake recognizes me, or similar to how I carry the river in me, I will recognize my own life in your desire to live.

Where Is the Future Located?

And if English has no future in it, then where is our future located? Where in our mouths and minds, where in the marks we make, where in our texts and drawings, in our books or dreams?

I talk about the future, rarely knowing where it is, still unsure of which borders and boundaries of today are present there. Which ruins of the nation, the State, or my people will remain in that new or old place. The Settler State weaves its ideas of future into us—its empire, in some ways, can only exist in that future, where it keeps its people precarious and urgent *now*, in an

+++ America ++ Hoard of Property + is a debris
+ of my cells— limestone ++ wound-porous +
sea-floor ++ basalt + trilobite + camel bones +
+ , glass and Blackmountain +++

+
++++
++++++

+++ We professional mourners ++
+ crying for our lives + and for hire +++
From dark-colonies + in the caves behind our hearts
++ we weep the sun to fall + and bats into the sky

+++ We weep the saguaros to bloom + Eastward
+ and moonwhite ++ soft-petaled wounds +
+ circling their night-wrists and crowns +++
+ Grief is our lush and luxury—

+ , The strain + of anything + that grows
+++ Sand rose ++ iron wood ++ smoke tree +++
We tend dune-gardens + from Deadlands ++
+ till the halite beds ++ reap selenite thorns +
from the horned toads' backs +++

+++ In the a.m. heatwarp + vultures
+ ripple the violet skydome +++
A swarm of bloodgloved-archivists +++
+ They sky-write +++ ++
+++++ ++ + ++
+++ ++ + directions—
+++++ +++++

Thundercats of love + greening the desert—
, Pale grasses + fruit in my breath
++ grey-green along the belly of the nightbranch +++

We are + unacreable
+++ We abrade + the transit + the survey
++ hold tight and repeat ourselves +
in crystal lattice +++

Come morning +++ Come Mercurylight +++
We are blessed and scattered +++
Shards + of a horsehead + water jar—
, Lonely for a body ++ and aching +
for the cool taste + and shape the first water once took +++

This Nation + is a white bright + magnesium
+ NDN burn +++
I fume and illumine + in its quantum-arson—
, Indian Iron Alchemy Horse +++

+++ My brothers are the Cold Killers ++
shovelers + of silver anthracite ++
fuelgods + of the midnight train
+ boxcar + jumptrack + jolt-light
+++ Vaporing ++ nightsalt + to cloud—
, Mustanging +++

Every desert highway is sacred +
and gas station pumps + break our hearts +++
We have pedal bones + white doctors call coffin bones

+++ That's why I'm always dying—

+++ That's why—
, I'm always halfghost ++ half-back ++ half-dressed
+ as the war party who will return—
, With a full tank of gas +++
 , And a stick of scalps +++

Tonight the city ++ is a tectonic bone radio—
 , Our ancestors are on every channel +++

Scorpions whip and fluoresce + from the shadows of Settler houses
Green-eyed wolf spiders + emerge from their dens +
 to join the dark hunt +++

The midnight train + monsoons + around the bend
++ recognizes me + as a relation + and cries +
 Chuk+Shon Chuk+Shon Chuk+Shon

++ ++ ++ ++ ++ ++
++ ++ ++ ++ ++ ++
++ ++ ++ ++ ++ ++

+++ We are each + the other's + passenger +++

+++ On the horizon + my warriors volcano +++
 +++ I shatter cinders + from my hair
++ I'll watch them eat the day-aliens with flame
 +++ American + NDN + horse pyre +++

The Hohokam canals + crack awake ++
gush their ghostwaters + through the settlement streets +++

blister + and boneflower + + +

I war whoop out + into the empty + displaced hip +
of the Ghost-sea + + and the Ghost-sea +
war-weeps back +
spiraling + the etched shells of my ears + + +

+ + + A + M + E + R + I + C + A—
, Haunted hotel + shiprock + rockwreck + ship of fools + + +
, Little giant cemetery + of braids
++ ++ ++ ++
x x x x
+++ +++ +++ +++
x x x x
++ ++ ++ ++
+ + + +

+ + + Beloved Occupiers + + I am posting notice—
, There is no more vacancy + + +

When this world has ended + I will carry my people + Home
+ + +

When it comes to art and creation, the idea of a common, shared perception
is inconceivable. The truth is always a question.

NADIA YALA KISUKIDI

This poem was first published as Birago Diop, 'Souffles', from the collection Leurres et lueurs, Présence Africaine, 1960 for the French language edition. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. Translated from French by Nicholas Mandel-baum.

Listen more often
To Things than to Beings
The Voice of Fire is heard,
Hear the Voice of Water.
Listen in the Wind
To the Sobbing Bush:
It is the Breath of the ancestors.

Those who are dead have never left:
They are in the Shadow that lightens
And in the shadow that thickens.
The Dead are not Underground:
They are in the shivering Tree,
They are in the moaning Grove,
They are in the flowing Water,
They are in the sleeping Water,
They are in the Hut, they are in the Crowd:
The Dead are not dead.

Listen more often
To Things than to Beings
The voice of Fire is heard,
Hear the Voice of Water.
Listen in the Wind
To the Sobbing Bush:
It is the Breath of the dead Ancestors,
Who are not gone
Who are not Underground
Who are not dead.

Those who are dead have never left:
They are in the Woman's Breast,
They are in the wailing Child
And in the Ember that catches fire.
The Dead are not Underground:
They are in the dying Fire,
They are in the weeping Grasses,
They are in the moaning Rock,
They are in the Forest, they are in the Dwelling,
The Dead are not dead.

Listen more often
To Things than to Beings,
The Voice of Fire is heard,
Hear the Voice of Water
Listen in the Wind
To the Sobbing Bush,
It is the Breath of the Ancestors.

It repeats the Pact each day,
The great Pact that binds,
That binds our Fate to the Law,
That binds stronger Breaths to the Actions
The Fate of our Dead who are not dead,
The weighty Pact that binds us to Life.
The weighty Law that binds us to the Actions
Breaths that are dying
In the River's bed and on its shore,
Breaths that are stirring
In the moaning Rock and in the weeping Grass.

Breaths that linger
In the ever lighter and ever thicker Shadow,
In the shivering Tree, in the moaning Grove
And in the flowing Water and in the sleeping Water,

The stronger Breaths that have captured
The Breath from the Dead who are not dead,
From the Dead who have not left,
From the Dead who are no longer Underground.

Listen more often
To Things than to Beings
The Voice of Fire is heard
Hear the Voice of Water
Listen in the Wind
To the Sobbing Bush,
It is the Breath of the Ancestors.

“WHEN HISTORY SLEEPS”: A BEGINNING

When history sleeps, it speaks in dreams: on the brow of the sleeping people, the poem is a constellation of blood. . . .

Octavio Paz, “Toward the Poem”

My mother has a tendency to dream out loud. I think it has something to do with her regular morning meditation. In the quiet darkness of her bedroom her third eye opens onto a new world, a beautiful light-filled place as peaceful as her state of mind. She never had to utter a word to describe her inner peace; like morning sunlight, it radiated out to everyone in her presence. My mother knows this, which is why for the past two decades she has taken the name Ananda (“bliss”). Her other two eyes never let her forget where we lived. The cops, drug dealers, social workers, the rusty tapwater, roaches and rodents, the urine-scented hallways, and the piles of garbage were constant reminders that our world began and ended in a battered Harlem/Washington Heights tenement apartment on 157th and Amsterdam.

Yet she would not allow us to live as victims. Instead, we were a family of caretakers who inherited this earth. We were expected to help any living creature in need, even if that meant giving up

2 *Freedom Dreams*

our last piece of bread. Strange, needy people always passed through our house, occasionally staying for long stretches of time. (My mom once helped me bring home a New York City pigeon with a broken leg in a failed effort to nurse her back to health!) We were expected to stand apart from the crowd and befriend the misfits, to embrace the kids who stuttered, smelled bad, or had holes in their clothes. My mother taught us that the Marvelous was free—in the patterns of a stray bird feather, in a Hudson River sunset, in the view from our fire escape, in the stories she told us, in the way she sang Gershwin’s “Summertime,” in a curbside rainbow created by the alchemy of motor oil and water from an open hydrant. She simply wanted us to live through our third eyes, to see life as possibility. She wanted us to imagine a world free of patriarchy, a world where gender and sexual relations could be reconstructed. She wanted us to see the poetic and prophetic in the richness of our daily lives. She wanted us to visualize a more expansive, fluid, “cosmos-politan” definition of blackness, to teach us that we are not merely inheritors of a culture but its makers.

So with her eyes wide open my mother dreamed and dreamed some more, describing what life could be for us. She wasn’t talking about a postmortem world, some kind of heaven or afterlife; and she was not speaking of reincarnation (which she believes in, by the way). She dreamed of land, a spacious house, fresh air, organic food, and endless meadows without boundaries, free of evil and violence, free of toxins and environmental hazards, free of poverty, racism, and sexism . . . just free. She never talked about how we might create such a world, nor had she connected her vision to any political ideology. But she convinced my siblings and me that change is possible and that we didn’t have to be stuck there forever.

The idea that we could possibly go somewhere that exists only in our imaginations—that is, “nowhere”—is the classic definition of *utopia*. Call me utopian, but I inherited my mother’s belief that the map to a new world is in the imagination, in what we see in our third eyes rather than in the desolation that surrounds

us. Now that I look back with hindsight, my writing and the kind of politics to which I’ve been drawn have more to do with imagining a different future than being pissed off about the present. Not that I haven’t been angry, frustrated, and critical of the misery created by race, gender, and class oppression—past and present. That goes without saying. My point is that the *dream of a new world*, my mother’s dream, was the catalyst for my own political engagement. I came to black nationalism filled with idealistic dreams of a communal society free of all oppressions, a world where we owned the land and shared the wealth and white folks were out of sight and out of mind. It was what I imagined pre-colonial Africa to be. Sure, I was naive, still in my teens, but my imaginary portrait, derived from the writings of Cheikh Anta Diop, Chancellor Williams, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Kwame Ture, and others, gave me a sense of hope and possibility of what a *postcolonial* Africa could look like.

Very quickly, I learned that the old past wasn’t as glorious, peaceful, or communal as I had thought—though I still believe that it was many times better than what we found when we got to the Americas. The stories from the former colonies—whether Mobutu’s Zaire, Amin’s Uganda, or Forbes Burnham’s Guyana—dashed most of my expectations about what it would take to achieve real freedom. In college, like all the other neophyte revolutionaries influenced by events in southern Africa, El Salvador and Nicaragua, Cuba and Grenada, I studied Third World liberation movements and postemancipation societies in the hope of discovering different visions of freedom born out of the circumstances of struggle. I looked in vain for glimmers of a new society, in the “liberated zones” of Portugal’s African colonies during the wars of independence, in Maurice Bishop’s “New Jewel” movement in Grenada, in Guyana’s tragically short-lived nineteenth-century communal villages, in the brief moment when striking workers of Congo-Brazzaville momentarily seized state power and were poised to establish Africa’s first workers’ state. Granted, all these movements crashed against the rocks, wrecked by various internal and external forces, but they left behind at least some

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kind of vision, however fragmented or incomplete, of what they wanted their world to look like.

Like most of my comrades active in the early days of the Reagan era, I turned to Marxism for the same reasons I looked to the Third World. The misery of the proletariat (lumpen and otherwise) proved less interesting and less urgent than the promise of revolution. I was attracted to “small *c*” communism because, in theory, it sought to harness technology to solve human needs, give us less work and more leisure, and free us all to create, invent, explore, love, relax, and enjoy life without want of the basic necessities of life. My big sister Makani and I used to preach to others about the end of money; the withering away of poverty, property, and the state; and the destruction of the material basis for racism and patriarchy. I fell in love with the young Marx of *The German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto*, the visionary Marx who predicted the abolition of all exploitative institutions. I followed young Marx, via the late English historian Edward P. Thompson, to those romantic renegade socialists like William Morris who wanted to break with all vestiges of capitalist production and rationalization. Morris was less concerned with socialist efficiency than with transforming social relations and constructing new, free, democratic communities built on, as Thompson put it, “the ethic of cooperation, the energies of love.”

There are very few contemporary political spaces where the energies of love and imagination are understood and respected as powerful social forces. The socialists, utopian and scientific, had little to say about this, so my search for an even more elaborate, complete dream of freedom forced me to take a more imaginative turn. Thanks to many wonderful chance encounters with Franklin and Penelope Rosemont, Ted Joans, Laura Corsiglia, and Jayne Cortez, I discovered surrealism, not so much in the writings and doings of André Breton or Louis Aragon or other leaders of the surrealist movement that emerged in Paris after World War I, but under my nose, so to speak, buried in the rich, black soil of Afrodiasporic culture. In it I found a most miraculous weapon with no birth date, no expiration date, no trademark.

I traced the Marvelous from the ancient practices of Maroon societies and shamanism back to the future, to the metropolises of Europe, to the blues people of North America, to the colonized and semicolonized world that produced the likes of Aimé and Suzanne Césaire and Wifredo Lam. The surrealists not only taught me that any serious motion toward freedom must begin in the mind, but they have also given us some of the most imaginative, expansive, and playful dreams of a new world I have ever known. Contrary to popular belief, surrealism is not an aesthetic doctrine but an international revolutionary movement concerned with the emancipation of thought. According to the Chicago Surrealist Group,

Surrealism is the exaltation of freedom, revolt, imagination and love. . . . Its basic aim is to lessen and eventually to completely resolve the contradiction between everyday life and our wildest dreams. By definition subversive, surrealist thought and action are intended not only to discredit and destroy the forces of repression, but also to emancipate desire and supply it with new poetic weapons. . . . Beginning with the abolition of imaginative slavery, it advances to the creation of a free society in which everyone will be a poet—a society in which everyone will be able to develop his or her potentialities fully and freely.

Members of the Surrealist Group in Madrid, for example, see their work as an intervention in life rather than literature, a protracted battle against all forms of oppression that aims to replace “suspicion, fear and anger with curiosity, adventure and desire” and “a model space for collective living—a space from which separation and isolation are banished forever.”

The surrealists are talking about total transformation of society, not just granting aggrieved populations greater political and economic power. They are speaking of new social relationships, new ways of living and interacting, new attitudes toward work and leisure and community. In this respect, they share much with radical feminists whose revolutionary vision extended into every aspect of social life. Radical feminists taught us that there is nothing

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natural or inevitable about gender roles, male dominance, the overrepresentation of men in positions of power, or the tendency of men to use violence as a means to resolve conflict. Radical feminists of color, in particular, reveal how race, gender, and class work in tandem to subordinate most of society while complicating easy notions of universal sisterhood or biological arguments that establish men as the universal enemy. Like all the other movements that caught my attention, radical feminism, as well as the ideas emerging out of the lesbian and gay movements, proved attractive not simply for their critiques of patriarchy but for their freedom dreams. The work of these movements taken as a whole interrogates what is “normal”; shows us how the state and official culture polices our behavior with regard to sexuality, gender roles, and social relationships; and encourages us to construct a politics rooted in desire.

Black intellectuals associated with each of these movements not only imagined a different future, but in many instances their emancipatory vision proved more radical and inclusive than what their compatriots proposed.* Indeed, throughout the book I argue that these renegade black intellectuals/activists/artists challenged and reshaped communism, surrealism, and radical feminism, and in so doing produced brilliant theoretical insights that might have pushed these movements in new directions. In most cases, however, the critical visions of black radicals were held at bay, if not completely marginalized. Of course, there are many people still struggling to realize these dreams—extending, elaborating, and refining their vision as the battle wears on. This book

*Let me emphasize that I am interested in *black people's* dreams of the new society. A fascinating book by William H. Pease and Jane Pease, *Black Utopia: Negro Communal Experiments in America*, looks at white abolitionist and liberal designs for black communities whose main goal was to “train the Negro for complete freedom” (p. 19). Freedom was defined according to Jeffersonian values, determined of course by the white architects of these Negro villages. While most communal societies were socialist or communist oriented, the settlements created for black people centered on enterprise, thrift, and individual accumulation—in short, their goal was to instill ex-slaves with middle-class capitalist values in order to prepare them to be productive members of the mainstream. Black people in their study are largely objects of white liberal ideology, not agents pursuing their own vision of freedom.

is about those dreams of freedom; it is merely a brief, idiosyncratic outline of a history of black radical imagination in the twentieth century. I don't pretend to have written anything approaching a movement history or an intellectual history, and I am not interested in explaining why these dreams of revolution have not succeeded (yet!). Rather, I simply want to explore the different ways self-proclaimed renegades imagined life after the revolution and where their ideas came from. Although *Freedom Dreams* is no memoir, it is a very personal book. It is loosely organized around my own political journey, around the dreams I once shared or still share—from the dreams of an African utopia to the surreal world of our imagination, from the communist and feminist dreams of abolishing all forms of exploitation to the four-hundred-year-old dream of payback for slavery and Jim Crow.

My purpose in writing this book is simply to reopen a very old conversation about what kind of world we want to struggle for. I'm not the only one interested in the work of dreaming—obviously there are many activists and thinkers having this conversation right now, ranging from my sister Makani Themba-Nixon, Cornel West, and Lian and Eric Mann to Cleveland's Norma Jean Freeman and Don Freeman, Newark's Amina and Amiri Baraka, and Detroit's Grace Lee Boggs, to name but a few. For decades, these and other folks have dared to talk openly of revolution and dream of a new society, sometimes creating cultural works that enable communities to envision what's possible with collective action, personal self-transformation, and will.

I did not write this book for those traditional leftists who have traded in their dreams for orthodoxy and sectarianism. Most of those folks are hopeless, I'm sad to say. And they will be the first to dismiss this book as utopian, idealistic, and romantic. Instead, I wrote it for anyone bold enough still to dream, especially young people who are growing up in what critic Henry Giroux perceptively calls “the culture of cynicism”—young people whose dreams have been utterly coopted by the marketplace. In a world where so many youth believe that “getting paid” and living ostentatiously was the goal of the black freedom movement, there

is little space to even *discuss* building a radical democratic public culture. Too many young people really believe that this is the best we can do. Young faces, however, have been popping up en masse at the antiglobalization demonstrations beginning in Seattle in 1999, and the success of the college antisweatshop campaign No Sweat owes much of its success to a growing number of radicalized students. The Black Radical Congress, launched in 1997, has attracted hundreds of activists under age twenty-five, and so has the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal. So there is hope.

The question remains: What are today's young activists dreaming about? We know what they are fighting against, but what are they fighting for? These are crucial questions, for one of the basic premises of this book is that the most powerful, visionary dreams of a new society don't come from little think tanks of smart people or out of the atomized, individualistic world of consumer capitalism where raging against the status quo is simply the hip thing to do. Revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement; collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge. While this may seem obvious, I am increasingly surrounded by well-meaning students who want to be activists but exhibit anxiety about doing intellectual work. They often differentiate the two, positioning activism and intellectual work as inherently incompatible. They speak of the "real" world as some concrete wilderness overrun with violence and despair, and the university as if it were some sanitized sanctuary distant from actual people's lives and struggles. At the other extreme, I have had students argue that the problems facing "real people" today can be solved by merely bridging the gap between our superior knowledge and people outside the ivy walls who simply do not have access to that knowledge. Unwitting advocates of a kind of "talented tenth" ideology of racial uplift, their stated goal is to "reach the people" with more "accessible" knowledge, to carry back to the 'hood the information folks need to liberate themselves. While it is heartening to see young people excited about learning and cognizant of the political implications of knowledge, it worries me when

they believe that simply “droppin’ science” on the people will generate new, liberatory social movements.

I am convinced that the opposite is true: Social movements generate new knowledge, new theories, new questions. The most radical ideas often grow out of a concrete intellectual engagement with the problems of aggrieved populations confronting systems of oppression. For example, the academic study of race has always been inextricably intertwined with political struggles. Just as imperialism, colonialism, and post-Reconstruction redemption politics created the intellectual ground for Social Darwinism and other manifestations of scientific racism, the struggle against racism generated cultural relativist and social constructionist scholarship on race. The great works by W. E. B. Du Bois, Franz Boas, Oliver Cox, and many others were invariably shaped by social movements as well as social crises such as the proliferation of lynching and the rise of fascism. Similarly, gender analysis was brought to us by the feminist movement, not simply by the individual genius of the Grimke sisters or Anna Julia Cooper, Simone de Beauvoir, or Audre Lorde. Thinking on gender and the possibility of transformation evolved largely in relationship to social struggle.

Progressive social movements do not simply produce statistics and narratives of oppression; rather, the best ones do what great poetry always does: transport us to another place, compel us to relive horrors and, more importantly, enable us to imagine a new society. We must remember that the conditions and the very existence of social movements enable participants to imagine something different, to realize that things need not always be this way. It is *that* imagination, that effort to see the future in the present, that I shall call “poetry” or “poetic knowledge.” I take my lead from Aimé Césaire’s great essay “Poetry and Knowledge,” first published in 1945. Opening with the simple but provocative proposition that “Poetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge,” he then demonstrates why poetry is the only way to achieve the kind of knowledge we need to move beyond the world’s crises. “What presides over the poem,” he writes,

“is not the most lucid intelligence, the sharpest sensibility or the subtlest feelings, but experience as a whole.” This means everything, every history, every future, every dream, every life form from plant to animal, every creative impulse—plumbed from the depths of the unconscious. Poetry, therefore, is not what we simply recognize as the formal “poem,” but a revolt: a scream in the night, an emancipation of language and old ways of thinking. Consider Césaire’s third proposition regarding poetic knowledge: “Poetic knowledge is that in which man spatters the object with all of his mobilized riches.”

In the poetics of struggle and lived experience, in the utterances of ordinary folk, in the cultural products of social movements, in the reflections of activists, we discover the many different cognitive maps of the future, of the world not yet born. Recovering the poetry of social movements, however, particularly the poetry that dreams of a new world, is not such an easy task. For obvious reasons, what we are against tends to take precedence over what we are for, which is always a more complicated and ambiguous matter. It is a testament to the legacies of oppression that opposition is so frequently contained, or that efforts to find “free spaces” for articulating or even realizing our dreams are so rare or marginalized. George Lipsitz helps explain the problem when he writes in *Dangerous Crossroads*, “The desire to work through existing contradictions rather than stand outside them represents not so much a preference for melioristic reform over revolutionary change, but rather a recognition of the impossibility of standing outside totalitarian systems of domination.” Besides, even if we could gather together our dreams of a new world, how do we figure them out in a culture dominated by the marketplace? How can social movements actually reshape the desires and dreams of the participants?

Another problem, of course, is that such dreaming is often suppressed and policed not only by our enemies but by leaders of social movements themselves. The utopian visions of male nationalists or so-called socialists often depend on the suppression of women, of youth, of gays and lesbians, of people of color. Desire

can be crushed by so-called revolutionary ideology. I don't know how many times self-proclaimed leftists talk of universalizing “working-class culture,” focusing only on what they think is uplifting and politically correct but never paying attention to, say, the ecstatic. I remember attending a conference in Vermont about the future of socialism, where a bunch of us got into a fight with an older generation of white leftists who proposed replacing retrograde “pop” music with the revolutionary “working-class” music of Phil Ochs, Woody Guthrie, preelectric Bob Dylan, and songs from the Spanish Civil War. And there I was, comically screaming at the top of my lungs, “No way! After the revolution, we STILL want Bootsy! That's right, we want Bootsy! We need the funk!”

Sometimes I think the conditions of daily life, of everyday oppressions, of survival, not to mention the temporary pleasures accessible to most of us, render much of our imagination inert. We are constantly putting out fires, responding to emergencies, finding temporary refuge, all of which make it difficult to see anything other than the present. As the great poet Keorapetse Kgositsile put it, “When the clouds clear / We shall know the colour of the sky.” When movements have been unable to clear the clouds, it has been the poets—no matter the medium—who have succeeded in imagining the color of the sky, in rendering the kinds of dreams and futures social movements are capable of producing. Knowing the color of the sky is far more important than counting clouds. Or to put it another way, the most radical art is not protest art but works that take us to another place, envision a different way of seeing, perhaps a different way of feeling. This is what poet Askia Muhammad Toure meant when, in a 1964 article in *Liberator* magazine, he called black rhythm-and-blues artists “poet philosophers” and described their music as a “potent weapon in the black freedom struggle.” For Toure, the “movement” was more than sit-ins at lunch counters, voter registration campaigns, and freedom rides; it was about self-transformation, changing the way we think, live, love, and handle pain. While the music frequently negatively mirrored the larger cul-

ture, it nonetheless helped generate community pride, challenged racial self-hatred, and built self-respect. It created a world of pleasure, not just to escape the everyday brutalities of capitalism, patriarchy, and white supremacy, but to build community, establish fellowship, play and laugh, and plant seeds for a different way of living, a different way of hearing. As Amiri Baraka put it in his famous essay, “The Changing Same,” black music has the potential to usher in a new future based on love: “The change to Love. The freedom to (of) Love.”

Freedom and love may be the most revolutionary ideas available to us, and yet as intellectuals we have failed miserably to grapple with their political and analytical importance. Despite having spent a decade and a half writing about radical social movements, I am only just beginning to see what animated, motivated, and knitted together these gatherings of aggrieved folk. I have come to realize that once we strip radical social movements down to their bare essence and understand the collective desires of people in motion, freedom and love lay at the very heart of the matter. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that freedom and love constitute the foundation for spirituality, another elusive and intangible force with which few scholars of social movements have come to terms. These insights were always there in the movements I’ve studied, but I was unable to see it, acknowledge it, or bring it to the surface. I hope this little book might be a beginning.

THANK YOU TERROR

We thank the world
by living. We pray

in rust & suture
in pistil & pine.

This ruined world
my only prayer:

if I can't love it for me
I will love it for you.

(Mathias Svalina)

The Potosí Principle: Another View of Totality

Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui

*A note for the present English translation.

As I was reviewing the translation of this piece for *e-misférica*, I realized that my article would become part of an issue devoted to the *Decolonial Gesture*. I want to state frankly that I do not agree with the term decolonial, nor with all the redundant literature that has stemmed from it, to the point that it has almost become a school of thought and theory, with more followers in the South than in the North. For me, it is a rather infelicitous galicism that hurts my ears, and since I mistrust all forms of branding, I have come to dislike the unintelligible, elitist, and utterly boring debate that it has provoked up to now. Above all, I find the term practically useless for action in the streets and for engaging with concrete indigenous struggles. It has, nevertheless, been cleverly adopted by new aspirants to internal colonialist power, in Bolivia and elsewhere, and this is an even more pressing reason for remaining outside its lure. When somebody asked me what alternative terms I would suggest, I frankly and impolitely said that along with many Bolivians, I prefer to speak about “demolition” instead of “deconstruction,” and “anticolonial” instead of “decolonial,” because I think it is more coherent to try to connect with the direct language of subalterns, rather than with the word-games of high-brow *afrancesado* intellectuals. Gesture is a nice word, and writing for this issue is a form of recognizing that most of the authors here go beyond the straight jacket of the decolonial towards the performative and the imaginary.

This text was originally published in Spanish in *Principio Potosí Reverso*, which served as an accompanying text to the *Principio Potosí* exhibition at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in 2010.

If we propose to approach the Potosí Principle as a concrete historical totality located in the Southern hemisphere, we should first situate the colonial paintings selected for the exhibit in a macro-scale map of sorts, which can trace the routes that set an order to this space. We could start

from an intermediate temporal horizon to the discovery in 1545 of a high-purity silver-mine in Potoxsi—a *wak'a* or sacred place visited by the *mit'ayos* of the Inka from the nearby Porco silver mine. In doing so, we have resorted to a textile-spatial metaphor, one marked by the ritual function of the *kipus* and their power to structure Andean space in its stately horizon. The structuring function of the *kipus* and the *thakis* survives the colonial invasion and re-articulates the territories/spaces of the Andes along new axes or nodes of power—the churches and the patron saints—in a complex and motley heterogeneous ritual frame. It is the lived experience of that rituality in the present that grants intuitive force to our desire for reconstitution. It is sensing the presence of the mountains, listening to the voices of the landscapes, and all the substrates of memories that speak to us from their summits, lakes, ponds, or from its multiple *apachetas* and roads. *Thaki* is a polysemic Aymara word that connotes the itineraries of ritual libations, dances, and chants in the routes that connect the *wak'as* with the centers of power in successive historical horizons of signification and territorialization. The Church and Money—the new colonial *wak'as*—inscribe themselves in a dense and laboriously constructed semantic fabric. This connects distant spaces in a pan-Andean frame that re-actualizes the gestures, motives, and semantic practices, which decipher and penetrate through the crevices of colonial violence, rearticulating that which is deranged, joining forces to repair the “pierced fishing net” that the cosmos became for the peoples of the Andes. The paintings and churches that set the itinerary of this overview inscribe themselves in this space. A new and modern centralization—that of the museum—functions as a powerful force of de-territorialization and loss of meaning.

The traces of their spatial inscription—pilgrimages, commemorations, and devotions—have been lost; the paintings hang on empty space, decontextualized. What paradoxically persists is the act of expropriation, the colonial emblem of financial accumulation; the circulation of the Andean baroque as a spectacle and as a commodity of high symbolic and monetary value. The capitalist circuits of art and the state's appropriation of the communal patrimonies are nurtured by the fissures of the republican states. Their privatization rests in the hands

of the *encomenderos*' descendants, who have become the heirs of the principle and of the commodities of internal colonialism, which is thus internalized in the marrow of the entire structure of domination. We will deal with this patriarchal and totalizing dimension in the right side, the white and masculine face of this book.

Its left face—dark and feminine—internally traverses the lived space of the Andean geography in the cycle of festivities that mark turning points in time/space (*pacha*). This is where the paintings are re-inscribed in the context of the community of devotees who worship them and dance in their honor. They insert themselves in the networks of signification that connect them to their dead ancestors, with the cycles of water, with the *apachetas* and the celestial phenomena. They also provide a link with the cycles of money and the pulsations of the market, with the emblems and the new forms of property and power that arrived from Europe and that are today blended in the *ch'enko* of these insubordinate societies.

Devotions are not professed specifically towards paintings, but towards the deities they represent. The Virgins and the Saints dig their roots in the Andean cosmos and are associated with the contradictory energies of each place, in a palimpsest that uncovers various horizons of meaning throughout each annual cycle. Stemming from the materiality of the carved plaster or the oil painting, the holy image is at one time singular, many-faceted, and multiple. It is not an epiphenomenon of a unique and abstract deity. Virgins and saints encompass different and peculiar connections, meanings, entwined mythical accounts, which are constantly transformed and reread. The territorial fabric inscribes itself finally in the bodies, in the ways of drinking, dancing, and sharing food and love, in the ways in which each person feels the surrounding space in their flesh—the powerful force of the sacred.

Carabuco, Caquiaviri, Chuchulaya, and Guaqui in the surrounding region of Lake Titica in the high Andean plateau, as well as the Churches of San Pedro and Tata Gran Poder in two of the nodal cities of this space are the *wak'as* that articulate our itinerary. The symbolic travels of the images involve disputes, transferals, and re-foundations.

The cities and the vast transnational Diasporas are routes that lead the urbandinos and quechumara cholos[1] to expand their cults and enthrone their saints and virgins in the confines of the world-system.

In each locality, imaginary lines emerge from the churches, reaching the mountain peaks and chapels in their environs. An ensemble of enfolding semantic layers unfolds from this central seed, clothing itself in overlapping materiality. In their columns and baroque arches one can see the vestiges of the ways indigenous carvers found to give shape to their cross-dressed deities. The four corners of the plaza are oriented according to a larger design, which the ritual cycle transcribes in the dancing bodies, in the cult images, the fraternities, and the *ayllus* articulated in the *marka*. We observe their east, their north, their west, and their south. We see the marks in the surrounding landscape: the major wak'as and achachilas that encircle it. The roads are lost in the pampa and connect the plaza with the places of worship and with mountains no one can see, but which every inhabitant is aware of, both metaphorically and experientially. In the plaza the dances succeed one other; the population groups and ayllus are interwoven in a game of oppositions and alliances that renews the contentious dynamics of local societies and that each dancing couple re-actualizes in the loving *tinku* (encounter) of dance. A labor of millennia has constructed these sacred territories that, since the sixteenth century, have been ravaged, fragmented, and drastically reorganized. The vertical articulating logic between plateau, valleys, *yungas*, and Pacific coast has been confined in successive colonial borders: within *corregimientos*, provinces, departments, and republics. The current routes of contraband, between the Andean territory of Bolivia and its neighbors, Peru, Chile, and Argentina, evoke, despite their multiple transformations, this successively woven and reconfigured fabric. A vital layer of the palimpsest continues, just as in the sixteenth century, to set an order to the territoriality and subjectivity of the Andean people: the internal market of Potosí and its substrate of material and symbolic meanings. The *sigis*, apachitas, thakis, *achachilas*, and wak'as that preceded it constitute the visual and imaginary trajectory of our circuit through the colonial paintings in the *Principio Potosí* exhibit.

Chi'xi Baroque

Hundreds of dancers, grouped in eight different Morenada dance ensembles, arrived to the festivities of Santiago de Guaqui on July 29, 2009, from different confines of the *altiplano* and even from other countries. The principal patron of the festivities, Edgar Limachi, arrived with his wife from the Charrúa neighborhood in Buenos Aires, where he directs a successful textile workshop that provides contracts to many subsidiary workshops. His factory, together with the network of micro-enterprises that it articulates, gives jobs to hundreds of his countrymen from the province as piece-rate day laborers. He also provides work for many of his godchildren and retailers from other localities. It is said that the Limachi family spent fifty thousand dollars in the week of excesses, intense pilgrimages, and dancing circuits. People did not sleep that night, not just because of their ethylic enthusiasm, but because it was impossible to find lodging. The collective delirium lit up, together with the immense fireworks structures made of cane, which visually heated the exalted day, marked by an intense and penetrating cold. The day dawned as people huddled around bonfires, with a deadly hangover [*ch'akhi*]. As the first rays of the sun shined, they healed their bodies with a rehabilitating infusion of herbs sold by the women in the plaza. Soon enough, another round of beer libations began in preparation for the mass. At dawn, some families had set ablaze bundles with offerings made by the *yatiris*, the region's ritual specialists who are devotees of the Lightning bolt deity [Santiago]. The audience, who had looked on respectfully under the sunlight at the spectacle of morenada dance ensembles, became also, during the night, a variegated, dancing mob. The multitude had unleashed amorous energies, brawls, and fistfights. It all prompted a change in the atmosphere: the devotional visage of the celebration came to light. The emotive tune of the night allowed for the *amuyt'awi* (reflexive thinking) to blossom; the whispers of conjugal, personal, and communal languages directed the activities, and determined what to ask for and what *countergift* reclaim from deities. The fights and bloody events of the festivities were perceived as further signs, messages from the earth, manifestations of its whims and demands. It is said that the blood that is spilled that day is an

offering to the Tata Santiago, the Lightning-Wa'ka that descends from the heavens and sinks into the earth. It is said that under the Church there is a lake wak'a in which golden ducks swim. It is also said that there are two entwined serpents in its towers that undergird the Church and root it in the earth. These serpents are an enchantment of sorts. If someone could bring them back to life, the upside-down world would turn upon itself; the flipside of history would be brought back to the surface.

The patron of the second ensemble is also an entrepreneur of the textile sector, but he devotes himself to large-scale contraband of fabrics produced in one of the thousands of sweatshops in some industrial neighborhood of Beijing. The Central *Morenada* adopted as its emblem a *matraca* [large rattle] with the stereotypical figure of the "china-man," as homage to his successful "oriental connection" which has allowed him to spend more than thirty thousand dollars to celebrate Tata Santiago. He hired a famous *cumbia villera* band, which has reaped considerable success in Buenos Aires with its lyrics that speak of the pain and suffering of migration, but also of the agency and success of hard working families.

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS IMPLY ABOUT THE SIGNIFICATIONS AND RE-SIGNIFICATIONS OF THE POTOSI PRINCIPLE? CAN WE RESIGN OURSELVES TO THE DUALISTIC AND MANICHEAN IMAGE THAT PITS A MERCANTILE AND CAPITALIST WEST AGAINST A SOUTHEAST OF BACKWARD OR REBELLIOUS INDIANS WHO RESIST IN THE INERTIA OF THEIR "NATURAL" ECONOMY OR BURST SPASMODICALLY IN ROARS OF PAIN AND VINDICTIVE VIOLENCE? OR RATHER, FROM AN OPPOSITE POLE OF REASONING, CAN WE SAY THAT WE ARE ASSISTING HERE TO A NEW, GLOBALIZED, AND HOMOGENIZING CITIZENSHIP, A KIND OF TRANSNATIONAL MESTIZAJE WHO'S MAIN ASSET WOULD BE IT'S OWN "HYBRIDITY" AND INDETERMINATION?

We have contrasted the idea of the *ch'ixi* (mottled, stained) to the concept of hybridity, in the understanding that the scenario we describe manifests an active recombination of opposed worlds and contradictory meanings, which forms a fabric in the very frontier of these antagonistic poles. The vitality of this process of recombination broadens this frontier, rendering it into an intermediate interwoven fabric, a *taypi*—an arena of antagonisms and seductions. These are the borderland spaces in which the *ch'ixi* performativity of the fiesta blossoms. The notion of a Church/Wak'a is affirmed in this contentious and reverberating duality, which sometimes flows into an explosive moment of rebellion and always runs the risk of succumbing to the self-inflicted violence of re-colonization.

Of Trinities and Dominions

We can picture the four *suyus* of the Inka Empire as the quadrants of a diagonal cross. But the relations between them were not framed by territories or maps, nor were they fenced in by borders: "...as the ancients in Spain divided her in provinces, so these Indians, in order to count the provinces in such a large land, understand it through its roads," comments Cieza de León ([1550] 2005:240). This chronicler, a converted Jew who arrived with the first conquistadors, describes the chants of the Indian women as follows: "Tricked by the demon, they adored various gods, just as the gentiles did. They used a sort of romance or chanting, with which they were able to retain a memory of their happenings, never forgetting them despite their lack of writing." (Cieza de León: 259) Song and road are paired heteronyms in *quechumara: taki-thaki*. They allude to a sonorous territoriality that displaces itself through space-time. The *thakis* of memory evoke imaginary lines called "ceques" (*siqis*), which were described by Bernabé Cobo. These peculiar visual formations were paths of libations and rites that started from each ceremonial center and led, through a series of radiating lines, to an array of *wak'as*—sites of remembrance of mythical ancestors. Sanctuaries erected by humans, the *wak'as* could also be natural formations on the earth, snow-capped summits, or sites touched by lightning, mountain ponds, and strangely shaped rocks. In the warrior society—the *awqa pacha* that anteceded the Inkas—the *wak'as* assumed a political and corporative face. It is through this

qhipnayra vision on the density of language and space, that we want to *understand* the popular imagination of colonization as a self-fulfilled prophecy, in which the violence of the conquest was formulated in terms of a symbolic dispute. Both societies confronted the challenge of transmuting the geography into some intelligible form. Ones understood their task as one of domination and extirpation. While the others—the many—understood it as a gesture of restitution and reconstitution. Ones brought syncretistic cults long tied to the holy word and the scholastics of a patriarchal God. The many traversed the colonial and postcolonial centuries walking, dancing, and producing life over this semantic density inscribed in the landscape, in the cosmos, in the pacha [both masculine and feminine]. In the akapacha of the neoliberal present and in the midst of the “theology of the total market” (Hinkerlammert) it is still possible to uncover the meanings and traces of this primordial tinku and read the narrative of this intermediate space, contentious and stained, that emerged out of this encounter/combat. The songs and paths of the present reveal the threads of this palimpsest. Successive layers and patches of the States—colonial and postcolonial—are imprinted in the clothing of each dancing Diablo or Moreno. In the polychromatic and confusing space of the postcolonial city, the symbolic stem-cells—the combinatorial abstract logic that underlies our linguistic and corporal practices—have not been erased.

The masculine and feminine authorities in current Andean communities are called *malkus* and *t’allas*. Their very bodies seem to replicate the sacred configuration of the landscape: mallku is the name of the venerated mountain peaks, t’alla that of the fertile pampas, givers of food. Their metonymy is the central plaza of the town: the major t’alla, the floor that supports the collective dance. The church steeple is the mallku, with its bells and all. Mallku is also the name of the condor, the holy bird of the mountain peaks. In the indigenous popular actions of the years 2000–2003, all the communal authorities from across the altiplano adopted it; it is the alias of their most famous leader, Felipe (Mallku) Quispe. This mobilization, as was the case with the Amaru-Katari movement in the eighteenth century, culminated in a siege of the centers of power, which nearly broke the territorial control of the

Bolivian state. Thus the polychromatic indigenous polis reemerged and sought to convert itself into a decolonizing state order, although the ages-old combat between reason and sentient thinking ended up transforming that purpose into a mere enunciation.

With these experiences, lived and inscribed in our own flesh for more than twenty years, we began to draw the outlines of an intellectual *thaki* that would not succumb to the truculence and horror vacuum of the Spanish baroque, neither to the irresistible disorder of postmodern cultural plazas, which deterritorialize and inject emptiness into whatever they cannot understand. Our absence seeks to be a presence, which would enable us to think in reverse: from the *jayamara* (ancient times) to the *qhipnayra* (future-past) through the *amuyt'awi* (reflexive thinking).

The map shown in the catalog (page 7, *Principio Potosi Reverso*) represents the space of the Qullasuyu, where the south figures above and the north below. In the center, along the lower-left quadrant, is the major Titizaqa wak'a and the sacred circuit of the lake. The mythical origin of the founding ancestors of the Inka state, this immense eye of the planet is the center around which the towns of Guaqui, Caquiaviri, Carabuco and Chuchulaya wak'as revolve. The aquatic axis forms an intermediate space, simultaneously a transcultural mark and a colonial *taypi*, which articulates the mercantile paths between Qusqu and Potosí through the roads/*kipus* that entwined coca with silver. The new language of monetary transactions enabled the reactivation of one of the most ancient associations in the mediation between humans and the sacred: the consumption of sacred entheogens and the mineral *illa*, which represent the back and forth movement to and from the colonial situation.

As in all journeys, this spatial structure is also a form of representing time: its cycles and its alternations between one state and another. A calendar has indeed come to life as a form of representing the order and sequence of the spaces traversed, which are, at the same time, a temporal cycle of successive or simultaneous ritual actions. Since the sixteenth century, the colonial pachakuti inaugurated a new world; the world of the individuated and rootless subject. Andeans have

deployed an immense labor—both productive and hermeneutical—in order to domesticate and allow the foreign gods to take root in a new landscape, along with their coins and symbols, in an endless process of self-fashioning [autopoiesis] of their own communal condition. Clandestinely, protected by night, in the privacy of their rural homes or suburban neighborhoods, along the Saint’s Days Calendar and in the Churches imposed by Catholicism, the silenced wak’as have returned to life. The social frameworks of memory, the polysemic quality of agglutinative languages and the inscription of the sacred in the materiality of the landscape are the building blocks or a transformational practice that has allowed us, century after century, to gaze back in dignity to our oppressors. The old silver currency coined in Potosí was called *makukina* when used for commerce and *phasxima* or *phaxsimama* (mother moon) when it was used as the central symbol in the fertility rites for money. Lightning represented, at the same time, the violence of the conquering sword, and the gifts of gold and silver generously donated by the deities of lightning bolt and hale to the hard toiling humans. The rituals, dances and songs in honor of Patron Saint festivities have founded a *ch’ixi* region, capable of expanding the borders of the middle, so that it becomes a civilizing pattern of textile artistry. Thus, the icon object of devotion incarnates a gesture of semiotic subversion against the totalizing principle of colonial domination. It is not a pure, uncontaminated icon, nor is it a luck charm: it is the broad waist belt woven by the palimpsest of a collective historical praxis.

Displacements

The idea that human displacements are forced movements, unilaterally imposed on a population, which becomes a passive victim of their impulse, is probably related with the connotation that this phenomenon has acquired in the contemporary world. Thus, in Colombia, millions of people have lost their lands and homes finding themselves trapped in the crossfire of the army and the guerrilla, or in the hands of paramilitary groups, which, even if they spare their lives, turn them into de-facto “disposable persons.” Here the mark of hegemony is deep: it configures their subjectivities, inscribes its logic in their own bodies and

places their humanity in a limbo of sorts. Slavery was also a form of brutally coercive displacement. Millions of human beings were captured or sold by their own internal enemies and transported across the Atlantic to populate the confines of the planet. In this sense, it is possible to affirm that the African contribution is constitutive; it has equal rights, together with the Indigenous roots, to the claim of being an “originary people,” one that is constitutive of the makeup of our continental being. Historically, the slave trade has nurtured the colonial principle par excellence: the creation of a localized subjectivity in the very limits of the human condition. Even if we consider the conflictive nature of this situation and the agency of those who resist it, we have to recognize the radical dislocating mark that this form of displacement carries with it: the irresistible force of deterritorialization.

In the Andean region, we can see a different configuration of collective subjectivity, which we have termed as a ch’ixi subjectivity, located in the middle zone or taypi of the colonial confrontation, and which is marked by a particular tension between the individual “I” and the collective “we.” We speak of a collective self-fashioning [autopoiesis] that lives out of its own contradictions: a dialectic that does not culminate in a synthesis but lives in permanent movement, articulating the autochthonous with the alien in subversive and mutually contaminating ways.

The ch’ixi collective subject summons a form of subjectivity that is configured in and through displacement. Doubtlessly, the world of ritual pilgrimages and the work turns of the mit’a in the mines or the maize fields of the Inka were transformed into a painful procession to the new colonial wak’a—the Rich Mountain of Potosí. But the syntax and the interpretive code that emerged from this taypi became the tool that enabled the confrontation and translation of the other, his symbols, mores, and the manners in which he exchanges both messages and commodities. The itinerant mode through which the indigenous polis was constituted, then, persisted throughout the colonial displacements. An indigenous elite of caciques, merchants, and *qullqi jaqi* or rich Indians was formed around the main routes of the mit’a, based upon

the strategic control of those key resources which allowed for the “production of circulation” (Glave). They used their ability to live simultaneously in both opposite worlds, and became mediators between them, using their strategic position as a source of social capital and competitive advantage. Our reading of the Potosí Principle is a way of understanding the reverse side of two important forms of displacement that stemmed from the colonial situation. The displacement of the ritual roads of the wak’as toward the churches and their patron saints (both male and female), and the displacement of labor tributes, marked in precolonial times by festive ceremonies and conspicuous ritual consumption, towards the commercial circuits stemming from the colonial wak’a, the silver-rich mountain which harbored in its entrails a New World and a new God: Money.

The Qhipnayra of Displacement

Upon arriving in Cajamarca in 1532, the Spaniards found a population in constant flux: travelers and chaskis transited the circulatory system of the *Qhapaq Ñan* from the coast to the high mountain passes of the Cordillera (Andean Mountain Range). Llama caravans circulated from the high punas to the valleys of the east (*manqha yunka*) and the west: *alax yunka* or the yungas of the seashores. Each family and each dual community, each ayllu, each moiety and each lordship, had access to diverse resources, sometimes located as far as two or three weeks traveling time from the centers in the highlands where the largest part of the population and ethnic authorities lived. They undertook seasonal or prolonged residential migrations—as *mitmaq*, artisans, or specialized farmers—in distant and diverse regions and climates, or as participants in various work rotations of the mit’a. These circulatory displacements of living energy, which were crystallized in goods for daily or sumptuary consumption, sustained public works for irrigation, the construction of temples, bridges, roads, and fortresses as well as military incursions into hostile territories. The feminine energy was devoted to the production of highly valued sumptuary or symbolic goods: textiles, beverages, entheogenic preparations, all of which were offered to the wak’as or to the mummies of local ancestors as well as to the lineages of ancient lords and Inka kings. The Inkas generously

compensated the tributary population with food, drink, and coca as well as textiles and other sumptuary goods, which served to seal the pacts between them and the royal authorities or the local lordships they gradually conquered and incorporated into the empire. These surplus materials were stored in the *qullqas*, *pirwas* or state food and textile storehouses. The main wak'as of Pachaqamaq, Titiqaqa, and Qusqu articulated the macro scale of this system: the knots/nodes of power that interwove exchanges and movements of people into an unceasing circulation and interconnection. This is why the communities and their pilgrims-dancers of the high-altitude wak'as were able to don lynx-fur or parrot-feather chestguards, consume coca and hot peppers, and fertilize their lands with the *wanu* that the birds deposited in the islands of the Pacific.

In the public ceremonies of all the great centers of power, we can imagine the variegated presence of *jatunrunas*, *orejones*, *aqllas*, *malkus*, and *kuraqas* that traveled there, as well as common people from all the corners of the Inka territory. In those bodies wrapped in intricately woven cloths, it was possible to read in silent languages the demarcations of ethnic frontiers and the symbols of power and prestige of their local wak'as. All of this was marked in the body. The wak'a also names the woven belt of tokapus that every person from every ayllu, marka and diarchy wore: a language of self-identification that was placed in the middle (*taypi*) of the body and divided the upper entrails (*chuyma*) from the lower ones (*puraka*) identifying those who wore them with the ascendant and parallel lines of their ancestors and the local wak'as. The wak'a, then, was not only a sign in the landscape, a marker on the road or an apacheta that integrated the routes of a ritual pilgrimage in the manner of a knot in the string of a kipu. It also meant the embodying of the sacred in every human being: an internal wak'a, which was the result of productive labor and the fulfillment of ritual obligations—the basis for gaining recognition from the community. The physical markings in the waist transformed their carriers into persons (*jaqi*), that is, into a distinctive part of a human community, recognized at the same time by his/her homology and by his/her difference, as one among the myriad of cells that conformed the vaster indigenous polis of the ayllu, the moitie, the lordship or local kingdom and ultimately of the Inka empire.

The Triumph of the Christ-Sun

The participants of the tinku in Macha see themselves as warriors of the Sun.[2] Their myth of origin narrates the triumph of the Christ-Sun over the Chullpas of the older Aymara lordships. But at the same time, the Macha see the nexus of these two spheres as the roots of a sacred tree: a kind of natural usnu through which the earth is fertilized as the roots of the tree reach and nurture the seeds that will be sown, mediated by human invocations and libations as well as the blood of animal sacrifices. As a transposition of the agricultural rites of fertility, the drops of silver portrayed in the Virgen del Cerro painting[3] seem to evoke the activation of the ancestral tree's veins in a metaphoric conjunction with the divine milk.

In Santa Bárbara of K'ulta the battle between the Christ-Sun and the Chullpas severed the link with the latter: the K'ulta could no longer consider them as their ancestors (Abercrombie). This conception of the world derived in the cult of Santa Barbara—a mediator between antagonistic forces, a feminine patron saint of the lightning-bolt. Pastora Osco, a resident of a community close to Guaqui confirmed this to me: Santa Barbara is Santa Warawara (Saint Star), who handles the feminine lightning bolts of the alaxpacha. The civilizing vision of these myths and images displays a process of sweetening and seduction (Platt), a game of language that seeks to balance opposing forces. In integrating previous beliefs into a common system of meanings and sacred hierarchies, the people of the Andes attempted to establish a domesticating gesture as a way of summoning the possibility of the imposed gods being real and sacred. But the Inka form of incorporating—seducing and appropriating the wak'as of others—was transformed into colonial terror, into devastation and destruction. An interpellating ethos was formed in order to face this new logic, founded in the tight bond between ritual pilgrimages and commercial circuits. Thus, the thaki became the great metaphor of subaltern colonial subjectivity, in the way in which it subverted and re-signified the icons and forms of the imposed economic forms.

The network of pilgrimage and commercial routes constituted a geographical display of trajectories and physical displacements, at the same time sacred and profane, stemming from this conceptual basis. Its meticulous order and detailed register was the basis of the state-form that had emerged in pre-colonial times, attaining its most sophisticated form with the Inka State. We can imagine this net as a macro-scale spatial kipu, taking inventory and organizing all the circuits by recounting the various ways of offering tribute and labor.

The coercive connotations attributed to displacement stand in contrast with this proactive and dense image of subjects that move around and adapt while resisting the forced mit'a draft, using symbolic and linguistic codes that date back to an immemorial past. Therefore, the notion of displacement can no longer be conceived as a unilateral product of oppression and violence. The colonial invasion implied a radical shift in itineraries, but it also opened up unprecedented ways for the reconstitution of routes and ceremonial travels.

This does not imply that I conceal the dark side of the colonial process: the fragmentation and disarticulation of the ancient diarchies that controlled the multiple ecological levels of the Andean landscape, their distribution into *encomiendas* (assigning population to *doctrinas* and *reducciones*), the disputes over the control of tributaries, the physical and symbolic violence, and the banishment of their gods. But it does imply showing that the two faces are part of an articulating strategy, a mutual need for intelligibility. The solar deities, as much as the fish goddesses, and the chthonic forces of the earth, were hurled unto the *manqhapacha*: the space-time of the ancestors that the early ecclesiastic interpreters mistranslated into "hell." The consequence was even more problematic than the diagnosis. The devil was incorporated into the autochthonous pantheon and is today a fundamental sacred force—at the same time generous and risky—in Andean religiosity. A space-territory was imposed over the networked geography that articulated the Inka polis, fenced in by administrative and ecclesiastical borders. European colonization formed a new map of fracturing powers: multiple obstacles and onerous fiscal burdens were imposed

on displacements. A new, unprecedented map of hierarchies and privileges emerged. However, the proliferation of an uprooted indigenous population, which abandoned its places of origin and was received as *forasteros* in faraway communities, resulted in concerted strategies of fiscal evasion, which were nurtured by the commercial opportunities of the Potosí circuit. Abercrombie studied a notable case of these combined strategies in the route between Oruro and Potosí. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, in the Church of San Bernardo in the Villa Imperial, the cacique and mit'a captain Juan Colque Guarachi still exercised control over the vast diarchy of the Killakas-Asanaqis. His power was legitimate and lasting, perhaps because he invited the mit'ayos to generous libations, undertook the ritual *akhulliku* of coca leaves, and sponsored the distribution of staple and prestige foodstuffs. He was a great storyteller in the drinking binges and revelries that linked the pilgrimages of the mit'ayos to the rich mountain and to the cycle of their patronal festivities. Through his kipus, Colque Guarachi took account of the material aspects of the communal contribution to the colonial mining enterprise. But the kipus could have also served for organizing sacrificial cycles of drinking and ritual offerings to bring good fortune and avoid the dangers that this mass displacement of people entailed. Like the mallku Fernández Guarachi of Caquiaviri, with whom he was related, Juan Colque Guarachi contributed to the construction of a monumental Church, along with the Siñani cacique family of Carabuco and many others. These caciques were important merchants of various goods in the Potosí circuit. The captaincies of the mit'a and the whole system of colonial transfers and relocations were experienced as an overlapping space of negotiation and resistance, which took place in and through the market. There, the circulation of money intersected with the flows of prestige and legitimacy; the cult of the devils who owned the minerals intersected with the construction of Churches and the painting of devotional canvases and murals. These complex actions signal an identity process and a spiritual gesture capable of casting the ancient ethos of the thaki and labor-ritual transhumance in the new framework of colonial iconography. The undoubtedly sincere adoption of Catholicism and

its main symbols and sacred narratives coexists, then, in a ch'ixi and variegated form, with a parallel continuity of practices of libation and memory that hark back to the earliest chroniclers' descriptions of the indigenous cults before the arrival of the invaders. They both mutually counterbalance and generate metaphors of each other. There are paradoxical aspects of Catholicism both in Christian cults and in the libation rites and the ch'alla cycles in the communities. There are also paradoxical icons of animals and indigenous deities carved in the portals of Churches, or embroidered in the mantas and costumes of the dancers of the *diablada*, *ch'uta*, or *morenada*. In this entire trajectory, a new space of contestation and symbolic resistance has been reconstituted: a heterodox form that is inscribed in the language, in the bodies, and in the commercial circuits, which we have named *takiy-thaki*.

Heterodoxies and Heteronyms

Paired heteronyms, so characteristic of Andean languages, help us to think through these historical forms of indigenous resistance in an oblique and skewed fashion. The distinctive mark of Andean philosophical thought is “relationality” (Estermann, 1998): a gesture of continuous contextualization, integration, and re-signification of all the elements of lived or imagined experience. When these conceptual pairings are formed, new disjunctions come to light: alternative and bifurcating roads. A woven fabric of ethical valuations that combines parody, irony and corporal-aesthetic sensuousness. Hence, our idea of the ch'ixi forms a part of an associated and disjointing pair: *ch'ixi-chhixi*. The former is a condition of being “stained,” a dialectic without synthesis between two antagonizing agencies: the ch'ixi pole. The latter is a hybrid mix, insubstantial and perishable, which stems from a process of fusion and softening of limits: the chhixi pole. Only a slight semantic twist, a mere accent, differentiates them. But in their opposition we can see alternatives and potentialities: on the one hand, the decolonizing taypi, the possibility of a conscious miscegenation of Indian and Castilian (or Jewish, Arab or Flemish) stains with a syntax inscribed in language and with the experience of a lived contradiction. On the other hand we can see the model for a simulacrum of

miscegenation: the “third republic,” hypocritical and mediocre, which has made of the mutual softening and seduction a *pã chuyma* tongue, a permanent process of duplicity, forgetting, and self-pity.

In the case of displacement, the thaki-taki pairing has given us a guideline to understand the transformations of Andean religiosity: the substitution of pre-Hispanic wak’as by Churches, saints and other sacred icons. The pilgrimage or ritual journey derives then in a taypi: a synthesis stained in both of its dimensions. The dancing procession is at once a thaki and a takiy, catholic and pagan, deployed in both devotion and transgression. It is the ch’ixi form, corporal and pragmatic, of the symbolic transactions that stemmed from the colonial tinku.

A last example of paired heteronyms can make our own dissidence with the official exhibit *Principio Potosi* more comprehensible. We regret that the only recognition Europeans have of our culture seems to be expressed either in terms of folklore or misery. This issue can be dealt through the opposition between *khiyki* and *kirki*. The former can be translated as the act of complaining, and has been incorporated into our Castimillano or urbandino dialect—the broken, obtuse Castilian—as the reflexive verbal form khaykhear: to publicly explode in cries or lamentations about one’s own woes and sufferings in the midst of a bout of drinking. *Kirkiña*, on the other hand, means to sing melodies, to express the sorrow of the soul in the rhythm and cadence of dance or ritual. Well-intentioned solidarity can be dangerous and paralyzing because it feeds an attitude of lamentation, and activates the perverse relation between Western guilt and Indian resentment. In contrast, the song cries out and untangles the knots of suffering, the bitterness of oppression, just as it exalts one’s own body in a liberating delirium. It does so from a solid subject position, from the standpoint of an autonomous consciousness.

Ch’ixi Displacements in the Global Market

The main Fiesta of Guaqui, in honor of Saint James (Santiago) is a spectacular stage for the symbolic self-representation of transnational Aymaras, those powerful entrepreneurs capable of the substantial

investments that we described in the beginning. Speaking to one of the dancers of the Morenada, I asked her why the sponsors (*pasantes*) had chosen the image of the “China-man” as the carved representation on the *matraca* (large hand rattle) that would be the emblem for the whole *comparsa* (dance troupe). She answered in Aymara: “that’s because those little Chinese are so intelligent... they know how to do everything, they produce everything.” China’s manufacturing power seems to have incarnated in the rattles that these dancers uniformly swirled in the air as they approached the Church, as if they were handling lucky and fertilizing illas of sorts. And this is not just a metaphor. Some of the organizers of Andean festivities intervene directly in the commercial circuits of the textile industry in Chinese cities. The women from the winning dance troupe of the Tata Gran Poder Fiesta of 2009 donned an outfit designed by the visual artist Mamani Mamani. In the lower fold of their skirts one could see a design of pumas in the Tiwanaku style, and an embroidered and stylized yellow-orange sun in their shawls (*mantas*). The sumptuous dress, worn by almost one thousand dancers, could be understood as a logo for these new aesthetic and productive forms. The *pasantes* import the fabrics all the way from China and take them through hidden contraband routes via Iquique or Arica to the Bolivian cities where the dances will be performed. In the process, they have activated dozens of transnational relations and affective bonds. As they reach La Paz or El Alto, it’s the turn of the *pollereras* (hand sewn pollera seamstresses) and macramé weavers of the long fringes of the shawls. The minutiae of these personalized processes allow these producers to satisfy a multitude of clients, according to their size, waistline and habits. Thus the finished garments have turned into an emblem, a prodigious product of the “globalization from below,” which is marked by informality and illegality, but nevertheless carries a powerful symbolic and material force, capable of obstructing or even diverting the very sense of direction of transnational capital’s domination. This is rational, from one standpoint, but it becomes irrational from the opposite one. Thus, what the euro centered mind names as progress and defines as the product of an organized development of scientific procedures and accounting practices, happens to be incomprehensible from the opposite

standpoint. For the cosmopolitan Indian couple who has sponsored the fiesta, how insipid life must be for those who enjoy their riches in solitude. Similarly, for the rational man it is surely absurd to believe in the miracles of Tata Santiago, which according to the pasante's family, will enable him a rapid recovery of the moneys squandered in his honor. But the community members ask themselves: What punishment will the angry saint inflict upon the non believers and the greedy?

One could even ask a common sense question: why would the huge expenditure in the sponsoring of a collective explosion of excesses, dances and revelries would be more irrational or savage than the speculative transactions in the stock exchanges of New York or London, stimulated by a couple of *jales* [lines of cocaine]? To what extent are dance and enjoyment, the overindulgence and binge drinking, opposed to the ethic of capitalism? The most intimate conviction of the participants points towards the long term social and collective value of these acts, their exclusion from the rational order of capital. This is because, in lieu of a savings account these entrepreneurs foster ritual redistribution, a gesture that is capable to create communal bonds that will be used and redirected towards the success of their transnational enterprises. One of the revelers in the festivity of Santiago told me joyfully: "Money is worthless, what is worth is affection." But at the same time he affirms that what the pasante spends today, even at the risk of falling into debt, Tata Santiago will return augmented throughout the year. Thus, the festivity recreates a community of loyalties, and at the same time feeds into the flow of labor displacements. A fabric is thus formed from threads of opposite colors, a transnational neo-community who's contradictory and ch'ixi identity allows for the permanently tense coexistence of the logics of accumulation and ritual consumption, of individual prestige and collective affirmation.

The transnational communities of migrant Aymaras transit, then, within a postcolonial thaki, constituted by cyclical ebbs and flows. In their displacements, they articulate fashion fads with recovered traditions; they invent genealogies and reinterpret myths, staining the fabrics of a global industry with their pumas and their suns, transforming their high-

tonnage trucks into altars for saints and demons. The scenario of the Aymara labor diaspora contains then something more than oppression and suffering: it is a space for the reconstitution of subjectivity and agency, as is surely the case with all the scenarios of domination—including the most brutal— if we dare to look beyond the figure of the sacrificial victim. The reverse action of the contemporary takisthakis alters the rhythm of the neocolonial capitalist machine, creates intermediary spaces, and re-appropriates the methods and practices of the global market, just as it affirms its autochthonous circuits, its repertoire of special knowledges, and the advantages and artifices that allow these communities and enterprises to self-confidently face this unequal scenario and its many forms of violence.

Notes

[1] William Camacho has coined the word *urbandinoto* allude to the Indian and *cholo* [*mestizo*] face of Bolivian cities. *Quechumarais*, another neologism, proposed by the linguist Rodolfo Cerrón Palomino to affirm the nexus between the main Andean languages: Qichwa and Aymara.

[2] Throughout this text I have alluded to the work of Teresa Gisbert, Wamán Puma de Ayala, John Murra, Olivia Harris, Therese Bouse, Enrique Tandeter, Verónica Cereceda, Denise Arnold, Juan de Dios Yapita, Luis Glave, Roland Barthes, Maurice Halbwachs, Gabriel Martínez, Carlos Sempat Assadourian, and further on to that of Tristan Platt (1996) and Thomas Abercrombie (2005). See Works Cited.

[3] Anonymous, eighteenth century. Museo Casa de la Moneda, Potosi. In *Principio Potosi Reverso*, p. 29.

ON BEING WATCHED FROM ABOVE

Carolyn Forché

They see everything not only from the air but from the side and rear.
To help you stay invisible these tips have been compiled.
There are no secrets to staying completely invisible so they are not included here.

Dig in. Everything is watched, everything from buildings to trees.

Camouflage yourself and your dwelling.

All changes in placement, color, or design are noticed.

They are above you nevertheless and will not disappear.

They will notice anything of interest.

There must continue to be nothing of interest about you.

Make use of what you have.

In the forest there are branches, turf, and grass.

In the settlements there are bricks, slate, and boards.

In the open, consider the time of year.

Use sand, snow, or leaves typical of the season.

Do not draw attention to yourself by throwing anything away.

Bag, bottle, wrapper, paper, all will make you visible.

If you are already in a littered space, there is no need to tidy up.

Avoid trampling new paths. Use the paths that were there before you.

Avoid straight lines. There are no straight lines in nature.

Avoid movement on roofs, between buildings, and near windows.

Do not stand where you will stand out.

Don't rush to cover the windows with blackout paper or blankets.

This changes the building's façade.

Use hidden routes that are difficult to see from above.

Leaves, branches, moss.

Hide the generator under a canopy.

Keep the fuel in a separate place.

Do not hide together with the fuel.

Keep increasing the number of hidden rooms.

Having one safe place where everyone can stay together is a big mistake.

Never gather more than three together.

Always have a second entrance in case the first is destroyed.
Backpacks, boxes, and zinc draw attention.
Do not smoke, use flashlights, or light bonfires at night.
Make sure your phones are in flight mode.
This helps you to stay invisible but don't be fooled.
If your phone is on, they can learn everything about you.
Your position can be detected with radio signals, Bluetooth and Wi-Fi.
More than three devices is considered a cluster that arouses interest.
If possible, create false clusters away from your positions.
Avoid moving. Avoid moving in groups.
They are looking for a human face.
Move tree to tree with spacing between yourselves.
Stop only in the shade. Hide only in the shadows.
Remember that rooting in a place kills.
Do not become predictable.
Do not become rooted.
Watch the air.
All objects in the air should be considered a danger to you.
The sooner you detect them, the more time you have to prepare.
During the day, they are first detected by sound.
At night, they can be seen in the thermal imager at a distance.
It is better to change your position at dawn or dusk when there are fewer in the air.
If you see them high in the distance, do not run.
If they hover above you, you are in their sights.
Take shelter or run in a snake but do not forget other threats.
Touching one that has fallen is not a good idea.
In the event of an attack, use of smoke may be necessary.
With a smoke screen you can hide movement or simulate damage.
A well-applied smoke screen can hide a position for some time.
Never however be in the center of the curtain of smoke.
Set the smoke screens differently depending on the wind.
Frontal, oblique, or flanking.
Here the tips end.
Watch the air.
Do not forget about the wind.

Based on Advice Portal of the Territorial Defense

The comrade who sets off in the fog every morning and walks into the stifling atmosphere of the factory or the office only to see the same faces - the foreman, the timekeeper, the spy of the moment, the stakhanovite with seven children to support - feels the need for revolution, the struggle and the physical clash, even a mortal one. But he also wants to bring himself some joy now, right away. And he nurtures this joy in his fantasies as he walks along head down in the fog, spends hours on trains or trams, suffocates in the pointless goings on of the office or amidst the useless bolts that serve to hold the useless mechanisms of capital together.

Remunerated joy, weekends off or annual holidays paid by the boss is like paying to make love. It seems the same but there is something lacking.

People are tired of meetings, the classics, pointless marches, theoretical discussions that split hairs in four, infinite delays, the monotony and poverty of certain political analyses. They prefer to make love, smoke, listen to music, go for walks, sleep, laugh, play, kill policemen, lame journalists, blow up barracks.

**Hurry to attack capital, before a new ideology makes it sacred to you. Hurry to refuse work before some new sophist tells you yet again that "work makes you free."
Hurry to play. Hurry to arm yourself.**

INTRODUCTION

This book was written in 1977 in the momentum of the revolutionary struggles taking place in Italy at the time, and that situation, now profoundly different, should be borne in mind when reading it today.

The revolutionary movement including the anarchist one was in a developing phase and anything seemed possible, even a generalisation of the armed clash.

But it was necessary to protect oneself from the danger of specialisation and militarisation that a restricted minority of militants intended to impose on the tens of thousands of comrades who were struggling with every possible means against repression and against the State's attempt - rather weak to tell the truth - to re-organise the management of capital.

That was the situation in Italy, but something similar was taking place in Germany, France, Great Britain and elsewhere.

It seemed essential to prevent the many actions carried out against the men and structures of power by comrades each day from being drawn into the planned logic of an armed party such as the Red Brigades in Italy.

That is the spirit of the book. To show how a practice of liberation and destruction can come forth from a joyful logic of struggle, not a mortal, schematic rigidity within the pre-established canons of a directing group.

Some of these problems no longer exist. They have been solved by the hard lessons of history. The collapse of real socialism suddenly redimensioned the directing ambitions of marxists of every tendency for good. On the other hand it has not extinguished, but possibly inflamed, the desire for freedom and anarchist communism that is spreading everywhere especially among the young generations, in many cases without having recourse to the traditional symbols of anarchism, its slogans and theories also considered with an understandable but not sharable gut refusal to be affected with ideology.

This book has become topical again, but in a different way. Not as a critique of a heavy monopolising structure that no longer exists, but because it can point out the potent capabilities of the individual on his or her road, with joy, to the destruction of all that which oppresses and regulates them.

Before ending I should mention that the book was ordered to be destroyed in Italy. The Italian Supreme Court ordered it to be burned. All the libraries who had a copy received a circular from the Home Ministry ordering its incineration. More than one librarian refused to burn the book, considering such a practice to be worthy of the Nazis or the Inquisition, but by law the volume cannot be consulted. For the same reason the book cannot be distributed legally in Italy and many comrades had copies confiscated during a vast wave of raids carried out for that purpose.

I was sentenced to eighteen months' prison for writing this book.

Alfredo M. Bonanno

Catania, 14 July 1993

*In Paris, 1848, the revolution was
a holiday without a beginning or an end.
Bakunin*

I

Why on earth did they shoot Montanelli in the legs? Wouldn't it have been better to have shot him in the head?

Of course it would. But it would also have been heavier. More vindictive and sombre. To lame a beast like that can have a deeper, more meaningful side to it which goes beyond revenge: that of punishing him for his responsibility, fascist journalist and lackey of the bosses that he is.

To lame him forces him to limp, makes him remember. Moreover, laming is a more agreeable pastime than shooting in the head with pieces of brain squirting all over the place.

The comrade who sets off in the fog every morning and walks into the stifling atmosphere of the factory or the office only to see the same faces — the foreman, the timekeeper, the spy of the moment, the stakhanovite-with-seven-children-to-support — feels the need for revolution, the struggle and the physical clash, even a mortal one. But he also wants to bring himself some joy now, right away. And he nurtures this joy in his fantasies as he walks along head down in the fog, spends hours on trains or trams, suffocates in the pointless goings on of the office or amidst the useless bolts that serve to hold the useless mechanisms of capital together.

Remunerated joy, weekends off or annual holidays paid by the boss is like paying to make love. It seems the same but there is something lacking.

Hundreds of theories pile up in books, pamphlets and revolutionary papers. We must do this, do that, see things the way this or that one said, because they are the true interpreters of this or that one of the past, those in capital letters who fill up the stifling volumes of the classics.

Even the need to keep them close at hand is all part of the liturgy. Not to have them would be a bad sign, would be suspect. It is useful to keep them handy in any case. Being heavy they could be thrown in the face of some nuisance. Not a new, but always a healthy confirmation of the validity of the revolutionary texts of the past (and present).

There is never anything about joy in these tomes. The austerity of the cloister has nothing to envy of the stifling atmosphere one breathes in their

pages. Their authors, priests of the revolution of revenge and punishment, pass their time weighing up blame and retribution.

On the other hand these vestals in jeans have taken a vow of chastity, so they also expect and impose it. They want to be rewarded for their sacrifice. First they abandoned the comfortable surroundings of their class of origin, then they put their capacities at the disposal of the disinherited. They have grown accustomed to using words that are not their own and to putting up with dirty table-cloths and unmade beds. So, one might at least listen to them.

They dream of orderly revolutions, neatly drawn up principles, anarchy without turbulence. If things take a different turn they start screaming, yelling loud enough for the police to hear them.

Revolutionaries are pious. The revolution is not.

I call a cat a cat.

Boileau

II

We are all concerned with the revolutionary problem of how and what to produce, but nobody points out that producing is a revolutionary problem.

If production is at the root of capitalist exploitation, to change the mode of production would merely change the mode of exploitation.

A cat, even if you paint it red, is still a cat.

The producer is sacred. Hands off. Sanctify his sacrifice in the name of the revolution, and *les jeux sont faits*.

"And what will we eat?" concerned people will ask. "Bread and string," say the realists, with one eye on the pot and the other on their gun. "Ideas," the muddling idealists state, with one eye on the book of dreams and the other on the human race.

Anyone who touches productivity has had it.

Capitalism and those fighting it will sit alongside each other on the producer's corpse, but production must go on.

The critique of political economy is a rationalisation of the modes of production with the least effort (by those who enjoy the benefits of it all). Every-

one else, those who experience exploitation, must take care to see nothing is lacking. Otherwise, how would we live?

When he comes out into the light the son of darkness sees nothing, just as when he was groping about in the dark. Joy blinds him. It kills him. So he says it is an hallucination and condemns it.

The fat, flabby bourgeois bask in opulent idleness. So enjoyment is sinful. That would mean sharing the same sensations as the bourgeoisie and betraying those of the producing proletariat.

Not so. The bourgeois goes to great lengths to keep the process of exploitation going. He is stressed too and never finds time for joy. His cruises are occasions for new investments, his lovers fifth columns for getting information on competitors.

The productivity god also kills his faithful disciples. Wrench their heads off, nothing but a deluge of rubbish will pour out.

The hungry wretch harbours feelings of revenge when he sees the rich surrounded by their fawning entourage. The enemy must be destroyed before anything else. But save the loot. Wealth must not be destroyed, it must be *used*. It doesn't matter what it is, what form it takes or what prospects of employment it allows. What counts is grabbing it from whoever is holding on to it at the time so that everyone can have access to it.

Everyone? Of course, everyone.

And how would that happen?

With revolutionary violence.

Good answer. But really, what will we do after we have cut off so many heads that we are bored with it? What will we do when there are no more landlords to be found, even if we go looking for them with lanterns?

Then it will be the reign of the revolution. To each according to his needs, from each according to his possibilities.

Just a minute, comrade. There is a smell of book-keeping here. We are talking of consumption and production. Everything is still in the dimension of productivity. Arithmetic makes you feel safe. Two and two make four. Who would dispute this 'truth'? Numbers rule the world. If they always have done until now, why shouldn't they continue to do so?

We all need something solid and durable. Stones with which to build a wall to stem the impulses that begin to choke us. We all need objectivity. The boss swears by his wallet, the peasant by his spade, the revolutionary by his gun. Let in a glimmer of criticism and the whole scaffolding would collapse.

In its heavy objectivity, the everyday world conditions and reproduces us. We are all children of daily banality. Even when we talk of 'serious' things like revolution, our eyes are still glued to the calendar. The boss fears the revolution because it would deprive him of his wealth, the peasant will make it to get a piece of land, the revolutionary to put his theory to the test.

If the problem is seen in these terms, there is no difference between wallet, land and revolutionary theory. All of these things are quite imaginary, nothing more than mirrors of human illusion.

Only the struggle is real.

It distinguishes boss from peasant and establishes the link between the latter and the revolutionary.

The forms of organisation that production takes are ideological vehicles to conceal illusory individual identity. This identity is projected into the economic concept of value. A code establishes its interpretation. The bosses control parts of this code, as we see in consumerism. The technologies of psychological warfare and total repression also give their contribution to enforcing the idea that one is human on condition that one produces.

Other parts of the code can be modified. They cannot undergo revolutionary change, but are simply adjusted from time to time. Think, for example, of the mass consumerism that has taken the place of the luxury consumerism of years gone by.

Then there are the more refined ones such as the self-managed control of production. A further element in the code of exploitation.

And so on. Anyone who decides to organise my life for me can never be my comrade. If they try to justify this with the excuse that someone must "produce" otherwise we will all lose our identity as human beings and be overcome by "wild, savage nature," we reply that the man-nature relationship is a product of the enlightened marxist bourgeoisie. Whyever did they want to turn a spade into a ploughshare? Why must Man continually strive to distinguish himself from nature?

Men, if they do not attain what is necessary, tire themselves with that which is useless.

Goethe

III

Man needs many things.

This statement is usually taken to mean that Man has needs, he is obliged to satisfy them.

In this way people are transformed from historically determined units into a duality (means and end simultaneously). They realise themselves through the satisfaction of their needs (i.e. through work) and so becomes the instrument of their own realisation.

Anyone can see how much mythology is concealed in statements such as these. If people distinguish themselves from nature through work, how can they fulfil themselves in the satisfaction of their needs? To do this they would already have become 'Man,' so have fulfilled their needs, which means that they would not need to work.

Commodities have a profoundly symbolic content. They become a point of reference, a unit of measure, an exchange value. The spectacle begins. Roles are cast and reproduce themselves to infinity. The actors continue to play their part with no modifications worthy of note.

The satisfaction of needs becomes no more than a reflex, marginal effect. What matters is the transformation of people into 'things' and everything else along with them. Nature becomes a 'thing.' Used, it is corrupted and with it Man's vital instincts. An abyss opens up between nature and Man. It needs to be filled, and the expansion of the commodity market is seeing to it. The spectacle is expanding to the point of devouring itself along with its contradictions. Audience and stage enter the same dimension, proposing themselves for a higher, more far-reaching level of reproduction of the same spectacle, and so on to infinity.

Anyone who escapes the commodity code avoids becoming reified and falls 'beyond' the real area of the spectacle. They are pointed at. They are isolated. If they refuse inglobation or an alternative form of codification, they are criminalised. They are clearly mad! It is forbidden to refuse the illusory in a world that has made illusion the basis of reality.

Armed Joy

Capital manages the spectacle according to the laws of accumulation. But nothing can be accumulated indefinitely. Not even capital. A quantitative process in absolute is an illusion, a quantitative illusion. This has been understood perfectly by the bosses. Exploitation takes on different forms and ideological models precisely to ensure this accumulation in a qualitatively different manner, as it could not continue to infinity in its quantitative aspect alone.

The fact that the whole process becomes paradoxical and illusory does not matter much to capital, because it is precisely this which holds the reigns and makes the rules. If it has to sell illusion for reality and that makes money, then let's just carry on without asking too many questions. It is the exploited who pay the bill. So it is up to them to see the trick and worry about recognising reality. For capital things are fine as they are, even though they are based upon the greatest swindle in the world.

The exploited are almost nostalgic about this swindle. They are accustomed to their chains and have grown attached to them. Now and then they have fantasies about uprisings and bloodbaths, then they let themselves be taken in by the speeches of the new political leaders. The revolutionary party extends capital's illusory perspective to horizons it could never reach on its own.

The quantitative illusion leads to slaughter yet again.

The exploited join together, count themselves. Fierce slogans make bourgeois hearts miss a beat. The greater the number, the more the leaders prance around arrogantly and the more they swindle. They draw up great programs or the seizure of power. This new power prepares to set itself up on the remains of the old. And Bonaparte's soul smiles with satisfaction.

Of course, deep changes are being programmed in the code of illusions. But everything must remain subject to the symbol of quantitative accumulation. As militant forces grow demands for revolution increase. In the same way, the rate of social profit which is taking the place of private profit must grow. So capital is entering a new, illusory, spectacular phase. Old needs press on insistently, bearing new labels. The productivity god continues to rule unvalled.

How good it is to count ourselves. It makes us feel strong. The unions count themselves. The parties count themselves. So do we. Ring a ring o' roses.

And when we stop counting ourselves, we try to keep things as they were before. If change cannot be avoided, we will bring it about without disturbing anyone.

Every now and again politics re-emerge. Capital often invents ingenious solutions. Then social peace hits us. The silence of the graveyard. The illusion spreads to such a level that the spectacle absorbs nearly all available forces. Not a sound. Then the defects and monotony of the *mis-en-scène*. The curtain rises on unforeseen situations. The capitalist machine takes a blow. Then revolutionary involvement is rediscovered. It happened in '68. Every one's eyes nearly fell out of their sockets. All extremely ferocious. Enough leaflets to drown in. Mountains of leaflets and pamphlets and papers and books. Old ideological differences lined up like tin soldiers. Even the anarchists rediscovered themselves. And they did so historically, according to the needs of the moment. Everyone was very obstinate, including the anarchist. Some people awoke from the spectacular dream and, looking around for space and air to breathe, seeing anarchists said to themselves. At last! Here's who want to be with. They soon realised their mistake. Even in that direction things did not go as they should have done. There too, obstinacy and spectacle. And so they ran away. They closed up in themselves. They fell apart. Accepted capital's game. Or if they didn't accept it they were banished, even by the anarchists.

The machinery of '68 produced the best civil servants of the new techno-bureaucratic State. But it also produced the anti-bodies. The process of the quantitative illusion became visible. On the one hand it received fresh lymph to build a new vision of the commodity spectacle, on the other there has been a split.

The ineffectiveness of confrontation at the level of productivity has become blatant. Take over the factories, the fields, the schools and the neighbourhoods and self-manage them, proclaimed the old revolutionary anarchist. We will destroy power in all its forms, they added. But they did not go right to the root of the problem. Although conscious of its gravity and extent, the preferred to ignore it, putting their hopes in the creative spontaneity of the revolution. But they wanted to keep control of production as they waited for the results from this spontaneity. Whatever happens, whatever creative form the revolution may take, we must possess the means of production, they maintained. Otherwise the enemy will defeat us at that level. And in order to do this they came to accept all kinds of compromise. So they ended up creating another, even more grim, form of spectacle.

And spectacular illusion has its own rules. Whoever wants to direct must comply with them. They must know them, apply them and swear by

them. The first is that production affects everything. Anyone who does not produce is not a man, the revolution is not for them. Why should we tolerate parasites? Should we perhaps go to work in place of them? Should we see to their survival as well as our own? Besides, wouldn't all these people with vague ideas and a certain claim to doing as they like not turn out to be 'objectively' useful to the counter-revolution? Well, in that case better attack them right away. We know who our allies are and whom we want to side with. If we want to scare, then let's all do it together, organised and in perfect order, and let no one put their feet on the table.

Let's organise our specific structures. Let's train militants who know the techniques of struggle in production. It will be the producers who make the revolution, we will only be there to make sure they don't do anything silly.

No, that's not right. How will we be able to stop them from making mistakes? At the spectacular level of organisation there are those capable of making far more noise than we are. And they have breath to spare. Struggle at the workplace. Struggle for the defence of jobs. Struggle for production.

When will we break out of the circle? When will we stop biting our tails?

*The deformed man always finds mirrors
that make him handsome.
de Sade*

IV

What madness the love of work is!

With great scenic skill, capital has succeeded in making the exploited love exploitation, hanged men the rope and slaves their chains.

This idealisation of work has been the death of the revolution until now. The movement of the exploited has been corrupted by the bourgeois morality of production which is not only foreign, but even contrary to it. It is not an accident that the trade unions were the first sector to be corrupted, precisely because of their closer proximity to the management of the production spectacle.

It is time to oppose the work ethic with the non-work aesthetic.

We must oppose the satisfaction of spectacular needs imposed by the con-

sumer society with the satisfaction of Man's natural needs seen in the light of that primary, essential need: the need for communism.

In this way the quantitative evaluation of needs is upturned. The need for communism transforms all other needs and their pressures on Man.

Man's poverty, the consequence of exploitation, has been seen as the basis of future redemption. Christianity and revolutionary movements have gone hand in hand throughout history. We must suffer in order to conquer paradise or to acquire the class consciousness that will lead us to revolution. Without the work ethic the marxist notion of "proletariat" would not make sense. But the work ethic is a product of the same bourgeois rationalism that allowed the bourgeoisie to conquer power.

Corporatism resurges through the links of proletarian internationalism. Everyone struggles within their own sector. At most they contact similar ones in other countries, through the unions. The monolithic multinationals are opposed by the monolithic unions. We will make the revolution, but save the machine, the instrument of work, the mythical object that reproduces the historical virtue of the bourgeoisie, now in the hands of the proletariat.

The heir of the destiny of the revolution is a subject destined to become the consumer and principle actor of the capitalist spectacle of the future. Idealised at the level of the clash as the receiver of its outcome, the revolutionary class disappears into the idealism of production. When the exploited are enclosed within a class all the elements of the spectacular already exist, just as they do for the class of exploiters.

The only way for the exploited to escape the globalising project of capital is through the refusal of work, production and political economy.

But refusal of work must not be confused with 'lack of work' in a society that is based on the latter. The marginalised look for work. They do not find it. They are pushed into the ghetto. They are criminalised. All that then enters the management of the productive spectacle as a whole. Producers and unemployed are equally indispensable to capital. But the balance is a delicate one. Contradictions explode producing various kinds of crisis, and it is in this context that revolutionary intervention takes place.

So, the refusal of work, the destruction of work, is an affirmation of the need for *non-work*. The affirmation that Man can reproduce and objectify himself in non-work through the various kinds of solicitation that this stimulates in him. The idea of destroying work seems absurd if it is seen from the point of view of the work ethic. But how? So many people are looking for

work, there are so many unemployed, and you talk about destroying work? The Luddite ghost appears and puts all the revolutionaries-who-have-read-all-the-classics to fright. The rigid model of the frontal attack on capitalist forces must not be altered. Past failures and suffering are irrelevant: so is the shame and betrayal. Forward comrades, better days will come, forward again!

It is enough to show what the concept of 'free time,' a temporary suspension of work, is bogged down in today to scare the proletariat back into the stagnant atmosphere of working class organisations (parties, unions and hangers-on). The spectacle offered by the great leisure organisations is deliberately designed to depress even the most fertile imaginations. But this is no more than an ideological cover, one of the many instruments of the total war that I* es up the spectacle as a whole.

The need for communism transforms everything. Through the need for communism the need for non-work moves from the negative aspect (opposition to work) to the positive one: the individual's complete availability to himself, the possibility to express himself or herself, absolutely freely, breaking away from all models, even those considered to be fundamental and indispensable such as those of production.

But revolutionaries are dutiful people and are afraid to break with all models, not least that of 'revolution' which constitutes an obstacle to the full realisation of what the very concept means. They are afraid that they might find themselves without a role in life. Have you ever met a revolutionary without a revolutionary project? A project that is well defined and presented clearly to the masses? Whatever kind of revolutionary would be one who claimed to destroy the model, the wrapping, the very foundations of the revolution? By attacking concepts such as quantification, class, project, model, historical task and other such old stuff, one would run the risk of having nothing to do, of being obliged to act in reality, modestly, like everyone else. Like millions of others who are building the revolution day by day without waiting for signs of a fatal deadline. And to do this you need courage.

With rigid models and little quantitative games you remain within the realm of the unreal, the illusory project of the revolution, an amplification of the spectacle of capital. By abolishing the ethic of production you enter revolutionary reality directly.

It is difficult even to talk of such things because it does not make sense to talk of them through the pages of a treatise. To reduce these problems to a complete and final analysis would be to miss the point. The best thing would

be an informal discussion capable of bringing about the subtle magic of word-play.

It is a real contradiction to talk about joy seriously.

*Summer nights are heavy.
One sleeps badly in the tiny rooms. It is
the Eve of the Guillotine.
Zo d'Axa*

V

The exploited also find time to play. But their play is not joy. It is a gruesome ritual. An awaiting death. A suspension of work in order to lighten the pressure of violence accumulated during the activity of production. In the illusory world of commodities, play is also an illusion. We imagine that we are playing, while all we are doing is monotonously repeating the roles capital has assigned to us.

When we become conscious of the process of exploitation, the first thing we feel is a sense of revenge, the last is joy. Liberation is seen as setting right a balance that has been upset by the wickedness of capitalism, not as the coming of a world of play to take the place of the world of work.

This is the first phase in the attack on the bosses. The phase of immediate awareness. What strikes us are the chains, the whip, the prison walls, sexual and racial barriers. Everything must come down. So we arm ourselves and strike the adversary for their responsibility.

In the night of the guillotine the foundations for a new spectacle are laid. Capital regains strength: first the bosses' heads fall, then those of the revolutionaries.

It is not possible to make the revolution with the guillotine alone. Revenge is the ante-chamber of power. Whoever wants to avenge himself requires a leader. A leader to take them to victory and restore wounded justice. And whoever wants to avenge himself desires the possession of something that has been taken away from them. Right to the supreme abstraction: the appropriation of surplus value.

The world of the future must be one where everyone works. Fine! So we

will have imposed slavery on everyone, with the exception of those who will make it function and who, precisely for this reason, will become the new bosses.

No matter what, the bosses must 'pay' for their blame. Very well! We will thus have carried the Christian ethic of sin, judgement and reparation to within the revolution. As well as the concepts of 'debt' and 'payment,' clearly of mercantile origins.

That is all part of the spectacle. Even when it is not managed by the power structure directly, it can easily be taken over. Role reversal is part of the technique of drama.

At a certain level of the class struggle it can be necessary to attack using the arms of revenge and punishment. The movement does not possess any others. So then it is time for the guillotine. But revolutionaries must be aware of the limitations of such arms. They should not deceive themselves and others.

Within the paranoid framework of a rationalising machine such as capitalism the concept of the revolution of revenge can even become part of the spectacle as it continually adapts itself. The apparent movement of production comes about with the blessing of economic science but is still based on the illusory anthropology of the separation of tasks.

There is no joy in work, not even in self-managed work. The revolution cannot be reduced to a simple reorganisation of work. Not that alone.

There is no joy in sacrifice, death, revenge. Just as there is no joy in counting oneself. Arithmetic is the negation of joy.

Anyone who wants to live does not produce death. A transitory acceptance of the guillotine leads to its institutionalisation. But at the same time, no one who loves life embraces his exploiter. To do so would mean they are against life and for sacrifice, self-punishment, work and death.

In the graveyard of work, centuries of exploitation have accumulated a great mountain of revenge. The leaders of the revolution sit upon this mountain, impassively. They study the best way to draw profit from it. The charge of violence must therefore be aimed against the interests of the new power cast. Symbols and flags. Slogans and complicated analyses. The ideological apparatus avails itself to do what is necessary.

It is the work ethic that makes this utilisation possible. Whoever loves work and wants to take over the means of production does not want things to go ahead blindly. They know by experience that the bosses have had a strong

organisation on their side in order to make exploitation work. They think that just as strong and perfect an organisation will make liberation possible. Everything they can do must be done, productive growth must be saved at all costs.

What a swindle. The work ethic is the Christian ethic of sacrifice, the ethic of the bosses on the basis of which the massacres of history have followed each other with worrying regularity.

These people cannot comprehend that it is possible not to produce a surplus value, or that one could even refuse to do so. That it is possible to assert a will not to produce, capable of struggling both against the bosses' economic structures and the ideological ones that permeate the whole of Western thought.

It is essential to understand that the work ethic is at the basis of the quantitative revolutionary project. Any argument against work would be senseless if it were made by revolutionary organisations with their logic of quantitative growth.

To substitute the work ethic with the aesthetic of joy would not prevent life as so many worried comrades would have it. To the question: "What will we eat?" one could quite simply reply: "What we produce." Only production would no longer be the dimension in which man determines himself, as this would be transferred to the sphere of play and joy. One would be able to produce as something that became nature itself. So it would be possible to stop production at any moment, when there is enough. Only joy is uncontrollable. A force that will multiply the creative impulse of the revolution a thousandfold.

It would not be possible to measure the social wealth of the communist world by an accumulation of surplus value, even if it were managed by a minority calling itself the party of the proletariat. This situation reproduces power, and denies the very essence of anarchy. Communist social wealth comes from the potential for life that is realised with the revolution. Capitalist accumulation must not be substituted by a quantitative accumulation (even if managed by the party), but a qualitative one. The revolution of life takes the place of the simple economic revolution, productive potential that of crystallised production, joy that of the spectacle.

The negation of the spectacular market of capitalist illusions will create another kind of exchange. From fictitious quantitative change to a real qualitative one. Distribution will not base itself on objects and their illusionist reification, but on the meaning that the objects have for life. And this must be a life meaning, not a death one. So these objects will be limited to the precise

moment in which they are exchanged, and their significance will vary according to the situations in which they are exchanged.

The same object could have profoundly different 'values.' It will be personified. Nothing to do with production as we know it now in the dimension of capital. Exchange itself will have a different meaning when seen through the refusal of unlimited production.

There is no such thing as liberated work. There is no such thing as integrated labour (manual-intellectual). What does exist is the division of labour and the sale of the workforce, i.e. the capitalist world of production. The revolution is the negation of labour and the affirmation of joy. Any attempt to impose the idea of work, 'just' work, 'self-managed' work where the exploited are to reappropriate themselves of the productive process without exploitation, is a mystification.

The concept of self-management of production is only valid as a form of struggle against capitalism, in fact it cannot be separated from the idea of self-management of the struggle. If the struggle is extinguished, self-management becomes nothing more than self-management of one's own exploitation. If the struggle is victorious, the self-management of production becomes superfluous, because after the revolution the organisation of production becomes superfluous and counter-revolutionary.

value of labour. The search for joy can only come about through the search for play.

Play thus means something different to what we are used to considering it to be in the dimension of capital. Like serene idleness, the play that opposes itself to the responsibilities of life is a false, distorted image of what it really is. At the present stage of the clash and the relative constrictions in the struggle against capital, play is not a pastime but a weapon.

By a strange twist of irony the roles are reversed. If life is something serious, death is an illusion, in the sense that so long as we are alive death does not exist. Now the reign of death, i.e. the reign of capital, which denies our very existence as human beings and reduces us to 'things,' seems very serious, methodical and disciplined. But its possessive paroxysm, its ethical rigourousness, its obsession with 'doing' all hide a great illusion: the total emptiness of the commodity spectacle, the uselessness of indefinite accumulation and the absurdity of exploitation. So the great seriousness of the world of work and productivity hides a total lack of seriousness.

On the contrary, the refusal of this obtuse world, the pursuit of joy, dreams, utopia, in its declared "lack of seriousness," hides the most serious thing in life: the refusal of death.

Even on this side of the fence, in the physical confrontation with capital, play can take different forms. Many things can be done 'playfully' yet most of the things we do, we do very 'seriously,' wearing the death mask we have borrowed from capital.

Play is characterised by a vital impulse that is always new, always in movement. By acting as though we are playing, we charge our action with this impulse. We free ourselves from death. Play makes us feel alive. It gives us the emotion of life. In the other model of acting we do everything as though it were a task, as though we 'had' to do it as some kind of duty.

It is in the ever new emotion of play, quite the opposite of the alienation and madness of capital, that we are able to identify joy.

Here lies the possibility to break with the old world and identify with new aims and different values. Even if joy cannot be considered Man's aim, it is undoubtedly the dimension that makes the clash with capital different.

*Life is so boring there is nothing to do
except spend all our wages on the latest
skirt or shirt. Brothers and sisters, what
are your real desires? Sit in the drugstore,
look distant, empty, bored, drinking some
tasteless coffee? Or perhaps BLOW IT UP
OR BURN IT DOWN.
The Angry Brigade*

VII

The great spectacle of capital has swallowed us all up to our necks. Actors and spectators in turn. We alternate the roles, either staring open-mouthed at others or making others stare at us. We have alighted the glass coach, even though we know it is only a pumpkin. The fairy godmother's illusion has foiled our critical awareness. Now we must play the game. Until midnight, at least.

Poverty and hunger are still the driving forces of the revolution. But capital is widening the spectacle. It wants new actors on stage. The greatest spectacle in the world will continue to surprise us. Ever more complicated, better and better organised. New clowns are getting ready to mount the rostrum. New species of wild beasts will be tamed.

The supporters of quantity, the lovers of arithmetic, will be first in and will be blinded by the footlights. They will bring behind them the masses of necessity and the ideologies of blackmail.

But one thing they will not be able to get rid of is their seriousness. The greatest danger they face will be a laugh. In the spectacle of capital, joy is deadly. Everything is gloomy and funereal, everything is serious and orderly, everything is rational and programmed, precisely because it is all false and illusory.

As well as the crises, as well as other problems of under-development, as well as poverty and hunger, the last fight that capital will have to put up, the decisive one, is the fight against boredom.

The revolutionary movement will also have to fight its battles. Not just the traditional ones against capital but new ones, against itself. Boredom is attacking it from within, is breaking it up, making it asphyxiating, uninhabitable.

Let us leave those who love the spectacle of capitalism alone. Those who are quite happy to play their parts to the end. These people think that reforms can really change things. But this is more an ideological cover than anything else. They know only too well that changing parts is one of the rules of the system. Fixing things a little at a time turns out to be useful to capital.

Then there is the revolutionary movement, where there is no lack of those who attack the power of capital verbally. These people cause great confusion. They come out with great statements but no longer make any impression on anyone, least of all capital which cunningly uses them for the most difficult part of its spectacle. When it needs a soloist it puts one of these performers on stage. The result is pitiful.

The truth is that the spectacular mechanism of commodities must be broken by entering the domain of capital, its coordinating centres, inside the very nucleus of production. Think what a marvellous explosion of joy, what a great creative leap forward, what an extraordinarily aimless aim.

Only it is very difficult to enter the mechanism of capital joyfully, with the symbols of life. Armed struggle is often a symbol of death. Not because it gives death to the bosses and their servants, but because it claims to impose the structures of the dominion of death itself. Conceived differently, it really would be joy in action, capable of breaking the structural conditions imposed by the commodity spectacle such as the military party, the conquest of power, the vanguard.

This is the other enemy of the revolutionary movement. Incomprehension. Refusal of the new conditions of conflict. The insistence on imposing past models that have now become part of the commodity spectacle.

Ignorance of the new revolutionary reality leads to a lack of theoretical and strategic awareness of the revolutionary capacity of the movement itself. And there is no point in saying that there are enemies so near as to make it necessary to intervene right away without looking at questions of a theoretical nature. All this hides the incapacity to face the new reality of the movement and avoid the mistakes of the past that have serious consequences in the present. And this refusal feeds all kinds of rationalist political illusions.

Categories such as revenge, the leader, the party, the vanguard, quantitative growth, only mean anything in the dimension of this society, and this meaning favours the perpetuation of power. If one sees things from a revolutionary point of view, i.e. the complete final elimination of all power, these categories become meaningless.

By moving into the nowhere of utopia, upturning the work ethic in the here and now of joy in its realisation, we find ourselves within a kind of movement that is far from the historical forms of organisation.

This structure is continually changing, so escapes crystallisation. It is characterised by self-organisation of the producers at the workplace, and self-organisation of the struggle against work. Not taking over the means of production, but the refusal of production in organisational forms that are continually changing.

The same is happening among the unemployed and casual labour. Structures emerging on the basis of self-organisation, stimulated by boredom and alienation. The introduction of aims programmed and imposed by an outside organisation would kill the movement and consign it to the commodity spectacle.

Most of us are tied to this idea of revolutionary organisation. Even anarchists, who refuse authoritarian organisation, do not disdain it. On this basis we all accept the idea that the contradictory reality of capital can be attacked with similar means. We do so because we are convinced that these means are legitimate, emerging as they do from the same field of struggle as capital. We refuse to admit that everyone might NOT see things the way we do. Our theory is identical to the practice and strategy of our organisations.

The differences between ourselves and the authoritarians are many. But they all collapse before a common faith in the historical organisation. Anarchy will be reached through the work of these organisations (substantial differences only appear in methods of approach). But this faith demonstrates something very important: the claim of our whole rationalist culture to explain reality in progressive terms. This culture bases itself on the idea that history is irreversible, as well as that of the analytical capacity of science. All this makes us see the present as the point where all the efforts of the past meet, the culminating point of the struggle against the power of darkness (capitalist exploitation). As a result we are convinced that we are more advanced than our predecessors and capable of elaborating and putting into practice theories and organisational strategies that sum up all the experience of the past.

All those who reject this interpretation automatically find themselves beyond reality which is by definition history, progress and science. Whoever refuses such a reality is anti-historical, anti-progressive and anti-scientific. Sentenced without appeal.

Strengthened by this ideological armour we go out into the streets. Here we run into the reality of a struggle that is structured quite differently, from stimuli that do not enter the framework of our analyses. One fine morning, during a peaceful demonstration, the police start shooting. The structure reacts, comrades shoot too, policemen fall. Anathema! It was a peaceful demonstration. For it to have degenerated into individual guerilla actions, there must have been provocation. Nothing can go beyond the perfect framework of our ideological organisation, as it is not just a 'part' of reality, but is 'all' reality. Anything beyond it is madness and provocation. Supermarkets are destroyed, shops, food and arms depots are looted, luxury cars are burned. It is an attack on the commodity spectacle in its most conspicuous forms. The new structures are moving in that direction. They take form suddenly, with only the minimum strategic orientation necessary. No frills, no long analytical premises, no complex supporting theories. They attack. Comrades identify with these structures. They reject the organisations that give power, equilibrium, waiting, death. Their action is a critique of the wait and see suicidal positions of these organisations. Anathema! There must have been provocation.

There is a break away from traditional political models. This becomes a critique of the movement itself. Irony becomes a weapon. Not closed within a writer's study, but *en masse*, in the streets. As a result, not only the bosses' servants but also revolutionary leaders from a far off and recent past find themselves in difficulty. The mentality of the small-time boss and leading group is put in crisis. Anathema! The only legitimate critique is that against the bosses, and it must comply with the rules laid down by the historical tradition of the class struggle. Anyone who strays from the seminary is a provocateur.

People are tired of meetings, the classics, pointless marches, theoretical discussions that split hairs in four, infinite delays, the monotony and poverty of certain political analyses. They prefer to make love, smoke, listen to music, go for walks, sleep, laugh, play, kill policemen, lame journalists, blow up barracks. Anathema! The struggle is only legitimate when it is comprehensible to the leaders of the revolution. Otherwise, there being a risk that they might let the situation go beyond their control, there must have been a provocation.

Hurry comrade, shoot the policeman, the judge, the boss. Now, before a new police prevents you.

You are so nice to think of me. I'm sending
you care every day. Thank you for worrying
about us. Our cat is fine but scared of loud sounds.
She has been hiding under a pillow.
My sister went to the beach after dark to gather
white shells to plant around her tent. She made a design
you know? If you add beauty it's easier.
We had such lush vines last year,
our trees always gave olives,
it's very hard to think about them
all being gone.
And all the plants in pots. I'm not able to get
donations at all, my account is frozen.
If I could, I would give to my sisters,
my mother, she needs medicine,
it's very hard to find what anyone needs.
Even a band aid or Kleenex.
We have no men in this family, you know, we are
four women only, two sisters
in a tent with Mama, I have a loan
of a small room in another sector one hour
from them because of my job.
I still have a job thank goodness, so many people
do not because every place is crushed, you know?
The schools, the hospitals, the libraries,
everything a pile of stones. Everything we needed
for our lives. At my job, we are making care packages
of small things like hygiene products, socks,
and trying to distribute. It's incredible
to be treated worse than animals, to have small sacks
of bread thrown to a huge crowd, everyone starving
and scrambling to catch some, with soldiers laughing as they
throw it. We love our animals. That is a difference.

ONE

Multiple Jeopardy

Gender and Liberation in Palestine

We have more strength than any man. The strength that I showed the first day of the protests, I dare you to find it in anyone else.

—Razan Najjar (2014)

Palestinian women and queers in the homeland are often asked by concerned Westerners how we negotiate the challenges of living full, rewarding lives in a conservative society. Those of us in the Western diaspora are asked if we are not better off, really, living in “modern” societies, where we can wear whatever we want, go wherever we want. These questions are misguided. Instead, Palestinians should be asked how we persist, how we continue to live, love, and care, in a society that is living under a brutal system of apartheid intent on erasing our very existence and history. We should be asked how we persist under the rule of law of an ethno-supremacist country that views each and every one of us as a “demographic threat” simply for being who we are. We should be asked how our youth retain the impulse to be free when trigger-happy Israeli soldiers and snipers are ordered to kill unarmed children demanding their human rights. We should be asked how we continue to build community, nurture each other, and denounce settler colonialism in the same breath as we reject patriarchy. And anyone who is concerned that those of us in the diaspora are better off than in Palestine should stop and think about who the greater oppressor of the Palestinian people, including women and queers, is: Israel, which denies every Palestinian their basic rights, or Palestinian society, with its at times stifling “traditional values,” which are often little more than an attempt to hold on to one’s culture, threatened with erasure.¹ And they should consider that, for the millions of us longing for the homeland, our diaspora is not a choice but a reality imposed upon the Palestinian people by Israel.

I begin, reluctantly, with a brief discussion of the Western discourse on Palestine because I believe it is of critical importance to our circumstances, as the question of Palestine is a global one, with close to 80 percent of the entire Palestinian people forcibly displaced from their ancestral towns and villages, while Israel, which dispossessed us, receives financial support and political immunity from Western powers.² Indeed, the recognition of the West’s critical role in ending the oppression of the Palestinian people is implicit in the fact that the liberation strategy agreed upon by a broad coalition of Palestinian civil society organizations, namely the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, hinges on global solidarity by individuals living in those countries that can impact Israel—and these happen to be mostly in the West. Nevertheless, as far as the mainstream discourse in the West is concerned, Palestinian women and queers either do not exist or are oppressed by “Islamic fundamentalism,” with little recognition of Israel’s violence, much of which is gendered.

The long-standing Western refusal to address Palestinian women’s struggles was made clear in 1985, when a patronizing Betty Friedan, an icon of Western feminism, with its “the personal is political” rallying call, attempted to censor the prominent Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi at the United Nations International Conference on Women in Nairobi, Kenya. “Please do not bring up Palestine in your speech,” Friedan told El Saadawi. And in a stunning demonstration of bad faith and intellectual laziness, both stemming from unfettered racism, Friedan “explained” to the fiery Arab feminist that “this is a women’s conference, not a political conference.”³

Friedan obviously had no clue who she was dealing with. As El Saadawi later wrote, in a clear articulation of Palestinian women’s circumstances:

Of course in my speech, I did not heed what she [Friedan] had said to me since I believe that women’s issues cannot be dealt with in isolation from politics. The emancipation of women in the Arab region is closely linked to the regimes under which we live, regimes which are supported by the USA in most cases, and the struggle between Israel and Palestine has an important impact on the political situation. Besides, how can we speak of liberation for Palestinian women without speaking of their right to have a land on which to live? How can we speak about Arab women’s rights in Palestine and Israel without opposing the racial discrimination exercised against them by the Israeli regime?⁴

White/Western feminism's attempt at erasing the political context of Palestinian women's oppression was evident yet again around the 2017 Women's March on Washington, when liberal feminists objected to the leadership of Palestinian American organizer Linda Sarsour, and the newly-minted "Zionesses" complained of "antisemitism" because Palestinian women's circumstances were on the platform as part of a broader discussion of US president Donald Trump's Muslim ban and the overall Islamophobia he pandered to. Interestingly, the "Zioness Movement" itself sprouted on the US activist scene with the explicit intention to counter feminists who were successfully denouncing Zionism. It chose the slogan "Unabashedly progressive, unapologetically Zionist" in direct response to the growing if belated understanding among many Western feminists that Zionism is racism and has no place in progressive movements.³ This understanding had become obvious, for example, when the largest academic women's organization, the National Women's Studies Association, voted in favour of BDS at its November 2015 annual convention. Meanwhile, in street protests and at LGBTQ meetings, anti-Zionist activists in cities from Seattle, Washington, to Berlin, Germany, were also rallying in support of Palestinian rights, disrupting "pinkwashing" events, and leading major national marches.

Pinkwashing is Israel's smoke-and-mirrors attempt to distract from its egregious human rights record by foregrounding its own supposed gender liberalism while directing an accusing finger at Palestinian society. Anti-pinkwashing activists have successfully disrupted such propaganda by pointing out that Israeli society overall is quite conservative; Israel is only "gay-friendly" when it serves its political purposes and only when individual gay people are Israelis or the much-coveted Western tourists.⁴ Simply put, Israel does not make exceptions for queer Palestinian refugees when it comes to the denial of their right of return; an Israeli soldier does not inquire about a Palestinian individual's sexuality as they go through a checkpoint, letting queers through while detaining straight Palestinians; and house demolition crews do not spare the homes of gay Palestinians.⁵

It is in this context of the complete erasure of Palestinian women (and more generally, but not as consistently, Arab and Muslim women as well) that one must understand the statement made by former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright as she rallied for Hillary Clinton—a solid booster of the apartheid state—in the 2016 presidential campaign: "There is a special place in hell for women who do not help each other."⁶ Albright later apologized for that comment, just as she had earlier apologized for answering a question about the deaths of half a million Iraqi children as a result of US sanctions with, "We think the price is worth it."⁷

Meanwhile, in Palestine itself, women and queers have all along been actively resisting their own "special place in hell," battered by Western imperialism and Israel's unrelenting genocidal intent on the one hand and Palestinian culture's lingering patriarchal values on the other. In the masculinist, patriarchal dominant discourse, "struggle," especially "national struggle," is generally understood as armed resistance. Yet armed resistance is only one of many ways Palestinians have fought their oppression, and certainly not the most effective, as it has never achieved any lasting victories. Another, more comprehensive understanding of "resistance" would take into consideration all the ways we persevere against the odds—that is, our *sumoud* (steadfastness) when Zionists are intent on erasing our very existence. As the popular Palestinian saying goes, "Our mere existence is resistance."

Specifically, Palestinian women's resistance is as old as the national struggle itself, predating the 1948 Nakba, and has taken many forms, from the unarmed storming of British Mandate barracks, the sheltering of orphans, and the behind-the-scenes political organizing throughout the First Intifada to community building in the diaspora, fostering safe spaces for queers, providing Palestinian children access to playgrounds, and insisting on Palestinian rights to the US Congress. It is often observed that history is written by the victors. What is not sufficiently denounced, except in feminist narratives, is that history is also primarily a record of men's fighting, with rarely any mention of women's contributions unless these happen to have taken place in traditionally masculine fields. (Leila Khaled, for example, who hijacked planes, is much better known than Hind al-Husseini, discussed below, who sheltered orphans.) Nevertheless, knowing and understanding a society requires that we look to its alternative history, which only seldom makes it into textbooks. And while no list of Palestinian women's accomplishments in this alternative history can possibly be exhaustive, it is helpful to give a brief sampling of such achievements so as to best illustrate the multiple ways we, as Palestinian women, are navigating the murky waters.

Beginning almost a century ago, when Palestine was still under British Mandate, with a very strict martial law imposed on the Palestinian people, Palestinian women were already organizing against colonialism. In fact, throughout the 1920s, women were marching side by side with men in protests against Britain's plan to give part of their homeland to European Jewish settlers—a plan first made public in the Balfour Declaration of 1917, which Britain promptly set into action by facilitating the influx of Jewish immigrants, even as it forcefully repressed Palestinian opposition to their dispossession.¹⁰ The harshness of the British Mandate may pale in comparison to the horrors of Zionism, with its insatiable expansionist ambitions, yet its impact should not be overlooked as we survey Palestinian women's contributions to their society's resistance to imperialism and settler colonialism. For example, members of the Arab Women's Union in Jerusalem, established in 1929, were active participants in political protests; they provided shelter

and medical aid to fighters and played a pioneering role in raising social awareness about the importance of women's liberation to the overall well-being of their society. The General Union of Palestinian Women, an umbrella organization for various Palestinian women's groups, founded in 1965, remains active today in both the social and political spheres and links gender equality with national liberation. The Palestinian Women's Work Committees, formed in the late 1970s, focused on the mass recruitment of women; as a result, today many women's organizations have memberships in the thousands, addressing the many challenges facing Palestinian women, from education to employment to national liberation.¹¹

One of the early examples of Palestinian women's resistance to colonialism happened in the late 1930s,¹² when the British stormed the militant village of Baqa al-Gharbiya, near Haifa, burning down its houses and taking away all its men to a nearby camp—sadly, a common occurrence as the British were quashing Palestinian resistance to their imperial plans. That same night, the village women, “armed” only with rocks, descended upon the barracks and successfully secured the release of the men. Throughout the mandate, women continued to contribute directly to the resistance by selling their jewellery in order to purchase guns for fighters, even though there was a very strict British ban against Palestinians having any weapons, with hefty penalties for possession. Women also formed social clubs that acted as and evolved into fronts for political organizing. These groups maintained the social network essential for any functional society whose men had to go into hiding or were exiled for their participation in the revolt against the imperial plan to dispossess them.

The British Mandate gave way to Jewish Zionism's stranglehold on Palestine, and any serious overview of Palestinian women's contribution to the survival and well-being of our society must pay tribute to Jerusalemite Hind al-Husseini, who used her personal privilege to found Dar al-Tifl al-Arabi, an orphanage she established in 1948 and that continues to offer Palestinian children shelter, education, food, and fun to this day. In April 1948, after Zionist militia raided the village of Deir Yassin, killing, decapitating, and raping a majority of the adults in one of the many horrific massacres predating the bloody birth of Israel, the Jewish terrorists rounded up fifty-five orphaned children, most of whom were under nine years old, and paraded them in Palestine's capital city to be stoned and spat on, before abandoning them there, homeless, terrified, cold, and hungry.¹³ When Hind al-Husseini, a member of the prominent Jerusalemite family, saw the children, she took them all under her aegis, first housing them in two rooms in a nearby market, where she visited with them daily, comforting them and feeding them, then moving them to a convent before moving them again one last time to her own family home, a mansion built by her grandfather in the Sheikh Jarrah area of Jerusalem. Al-Husseini went on to purchase two additional buildings and continued to take care of these children, and thousands more over the years, until she passed away in 1994. Her legacy lives on to this day, as Dar al-Tifl, or “the children's home,” as it is better known, now has the capacity to board three hundred children, accepting only girls, either orphaned or from impoverished families, and offering them shelter, education, food, sports, arts, and extracurricular activities. Its goals, according to its website, are:

Taking care of female Palestinian orphan and needy children, providing them with a good decent life. Establishing schools to teach and educate girls in addition to training them to be self-independent. Sponsoring extracurricular activities, establishing literary, scientific, and art clubs with sport activities towards developing their talents. Preserving the Arab and the Palestinian heritage and culture.

In addition to Dar al-Tifl, Hind al-Husseini also established a school for social work and a women's college, which were later transferred to Al-Quds University, as well as a museum and a cultural centre.

Like many women of her generation, al-Husseini was also very active in a number of social organizations that evolved into more openly political¹⁴ work as Palestine was catapulted into survival mode after the Nakba—the catastrophe that befell Palestinians with the creation of Israel. These organizations remained active as Israel tightened its grip on Palestinian lives and land. This uninterrupted activism by women who had an experiential understanding that no nation can be “free” until all its members, men and women, are free and equal, is beautifully depicted in Julia Bacha's documentary *Naila and the Uprising*. Bacha had not intentionally set out to make a feminist film, focused on women and gender dynamics, when she first decided to make a documentary about the First Intifada. Instead, she was primarily concerned with recording an important moment in Palestinian history that is frequently misrepresented. Her vision evolved as she conducted field research and interviewed participants in the grassroots movement. As Bacha writes in her director's notes, what she discovered was that women were instrumental in coordinating the popular social upheaval and often exploited Israeli society's own patriarchal assumptions to coordinate the uprising. Indeed, as one of the women in the documentary explains, women were less likely to be arrested after curfew and less likely to be searched, so they could transport leaflets or cloth with which to stitch together Palestinian flags.¹⁵ As the film's website explains, “While most images of the First Intifada paint an incomplete picture of stone-throwing young men front and center, this film

tells the story that history overlooked—of an unbending, nonviolent women’s movement at the head of Palestine’s struggle for freedom.”¹⁶ The women in this uprising, still referred to as “the intifada of the stones,” mobilized hundreds of thousands of civilians, ran mobile health clinics, organized underground schools when Israel forcefully shut down Palestinian schools, and launched Indigenous self-sustainability initiatives so as to allow Palestinians to boycott Israeli products.

Bacha writes:

The First Intifada was not only a vibrant, strategic and sustained nonviolent civil resistance movement; for months, it was also led by a network of Palestinian women who were fighting a dual struggle for national liberation and gender equality. We knew we wanted to bring this story to light by producing a documentary that could provide insight and wisdom from the veteran women activists of the First Intifada to today’s rising leader ... From the First Intifada to the present moment, it’s clear: women’s leadership in civil society organizing is vital. But too often, their work is sidelined or ignored ... Women have consistently been a part of influential social movements coming out of the Middle East, but time and again, the cameras focus on armed men, leaving us with a narrative that not only erases women but also misrepresents the struggles themselves, as well as the demands behind those struggles.¹⁷

Just as the French colonizers had completely misunderstood Algerian women’s contribution to the Algerian revolution, assuming that those in “modern” (Western) dress could not possibly be anti-French, so too with the Israelis, who did not suspect that some of the “well-dressed” Palestinian women were also radical activists and organizers. Eventually, as more Palestinian men were arrested and/or deported, women took the helm of most social organizations, from prisoners’ committees to community sustainability. These Palestinian women, the backbone of the First Intifada, had an incisive analysis of social norms and were intentional about resisting and challenging both Israel’s violations of their human rights and their own society’s restrictive gender roles. Today, along with the denunciation of the disastrous outcome of the Oslo Accords, which put an end to the First Intifada, there is a growing realization that the accords also dealt a serious blow to women’s emancipation and the social gains they had achieved as they led the grassroots social uprising. Bacha comments on that unfortunate development in the director’s notes about *Naila and the Uprising*: “The film is also a cautionary tale for what happens when women are stripped of their leadership roles and excluded from ongoing struggles.”¹⁸

Western feminists have been and remain quick to denounce the oppression of Arab women as a result of Islamic fundamentalism but not as a result of Israeli occupation, and they seem oblivious to the fact that occupation and militarism have gendered manifestations that aggravate women’s circumstances in Palestine, as they would anywhere else. This is all the more surprising when these feminist scholars are eager to analyze the feminization of poverty in other war-ravaged countries, the disenfranchisement of women as military institutions hold sway over a society, the violence of sex work and sexual slavery in war zones, and the overall increase in sexual violence in communities that have experienced armed conflict. When it comes to Israel, however, many Western feminists’ critical analysis collapses into a reductionist binary that views Israel as “Western,” “modern,” “civilized” and Palestinians as “backwards” and thus fails to grasp the gendered aspects of Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people. The myopic lens looks only at the microenvironment, namely Arab society, and completely overlooks the macroenvironment, namely Israel’s occupation. Yet, as many Palestinian feminists have documented over the past decades, Israel’s violence is gendered, impacting women in multiple ways, from the denial of health and reproductive rights to sexual torture in prison. And, in what can only be viewed as an extreme stretch of the definition of “gay-friendly,” Israel has also pressured queers in Gaza and the West Bank into collaborating with the occupiers by threatening to out them to their conservative families unless they spy on members of their own communities. And, of course, as psychological and physical torture are rampant in Israeli jails, so is sexual violence, including rape.

The documentary *Women in Struggle*, by Buthina Canaan Khoury, follows four Palestinian women political prisoners after their release from Israeli jail as they narrate their experience in Israeli detention. One, Rasmae Odeh, was subjected to extreme torture and raped with a broomstick when her father, who was brought into the room with her and ordered to rape her, refused to do so. Forced to confess, Odeh was sentenced to life in prison for allegedly detonating a bomb in a café that resulted in the death of two Israeli students. Following her release after ten years, as part of a larger prisoners’ exchange, she emigrated to the US in 1995, obtained US citizenship in 2004, and became a cherished leader of the Arab American community in Chicago.

Catapulted into prominence by her struggle against a corrupt justice system that eventually stripped her of her citizenship and deported her on the basis of a confession made under torture, Odeh has become a symbol for millions of women who identify with aspects of her multifaceted experience.

Odeh represents today's organic, grassroots leader. Her credentials come from decades of community work, empowering immigrant women and building community. A criminalized, marginalized Palestinian immigrant survivor of settler colonialism, militarism, imprisonment, and physical, sexual, and psychological torture, she exposed Israel as a racist occupier and colonizer to communities of immigrants, feminists, and Black and brown people she had organized alongside for decades.

Meanwhile, back in Palestine, one group that has done important work in addressing the multiple jeopardy of Palestinian women and queers generally, under the capable leadership of Haneen Maikey, is AlQaws for Gender Diversity and Sexual Diversity in Palestinian Society (AlQaws is Arabic for "rainbow"). AlQaws's vision is grounded in the understanding that there is no separating the personal from the political—the same understanding expressed by Nawal El Saadawi at the 1985 International Conference on Women—as articulated in its statement on its political vision:

Our work strategies and programs emerge directly from our field experience and careful analysis of the concrete local reality that shapes current social and cultural attitudes around sexual and gender diversity. For Palestinian society, all grassroots work is affected by Israeli colonialism and occupation. And, alQaws has been demonstrating for over a decade that all political work intersects with issues that are sometimes dismissed as too personal, apolitical, or irrelevant to anti-occupation and de-colonial organizing, such as homosexuality and queer identity, non-normative gender, and so on. In all of our work, we aim to expand our impact on our society through an ever-increasing circle of partners and supporters who adopt our vision, while standing firm in our beliefs and values. Our commitment to supporting and strengthening Palestinian queer/LGBT communities cannot be separated from our vision for a self-determined Palestinian society free from all forms of oppression.¹⁹

The multiple forms of oppression became clear in the summer of 2019, when in response to AlQaws announcing that it would be running a number of workshops for queer youth in the West Bank, the group came under attack by none other than Palestinian Authority president Mahmoud Abbas, who would not be in (symbolic) power himself were it not for the US and Israel.²⁰

Earlier that summer, a young Palestinian had been severely stabbed in Tel Aviv by his own brother over suspicions about his sexuality. And shortly thereafter, the entire world heard the screams of the young Israa Ghraryyeb as she was beaten to death by her own family members, murdered for having gone to a café with her fiancé, not yet husband.²¹

These horrific incidents were loudly denounced by Palestinians within Palestine itself, who took to the streets in protests carrying signs proclaiming that "Patriarchy Kills" and "there is no honour in honour crimes." Hundreds also joined protests specifically against homophobia, with signs highlighting that Palestinian queers should not have to take refuge in their occupier's gay-friendly Tel Aviv to avoid their own society's homophobia. Indeed, the popular outrage at the stabbing of the gay teenager and the murder of Israa Ghraryyeb are indicative of the progress made within Palestinian society. The protests and the nascent Tal'at movement²² are indicative of a widespread understanding that patriarchy is oppressive, even murderous, rather than "part of our traditions" and that it must be overthrown if Palestinian society is to be a healthy, resilient one. Simply, we would not be where we are now—survivors, leaders, organizers—were it not for our Palestinians mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers, who have sustained Palestinian society for the better part of a century against tremendous odds from both within and without.

The memory of Razan Najjar is a reminder of this. On June 1, 2018, Razan was shot by an Israeli sniper while she tended to wounded protestors participating in the Great March of Return in Gaza. Razan was a paramedic, yet Israeli snipers targeted her despite her visible white coat. Weeks before she was murdered, she explained to a *New York Times* journalist what made her go out day after day, knowing snipers were shooting indiscriminately: "In our society women are often judged ... But society has to accept us. If they don't want to accept us by choice, they will be forced to accept us because we have more strength than any man."

Today, Palestinian women and queers cross geographic, social, and gender borders as they proudly stand front and centre in progressive causes everywhere, just as Palestine itself is finally understood as a progressive, decolonial, Indigenous, feminist, and queer issue. And while it is only right that this understanding of the multiple jeopardy facing Palestinian women and queers comes from within these communities themselves, in the homeland as well as the diaspora, it is time for allies globally to also grasp that our circumstances can only be addressed through an anticolonial approach, free of imperialist feminism and Islamophobia.

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Reborn

By Forugh Farrokhzad

Translated By Sholeh Wolpé

All my being is a dark verse
that repeats you to the dawn
of unfading flowering and growth.
I conjured you in my poem with a sigh
and grafted you to water, fire, and trees.

Perhaps life is a long avenue
a woman with a basket crosses every day;
perhaps life is a rope
with which a man hangs himself from a tree,
or is a child returning home from school.

Maybe life is the act of lighting a cigarette
in the listless pause between lovemaking,
or the vacant glance of a passerby who tips
his hat and says, *Good morning!*
with a meaningless smile.

Perhaps life is a choked moment where my gaze
annihilates itself inside in the pupils of your eyes—
I will mingle that sensation with my grasp
of the moon and comprehension of darkness.

In a room the size of loneliness,
my heart's the size of love.
It contemplates its simple pretexts for happiness:
the beauty of the flowers' wilting in a vase,

the sapling you planted in our garden,
and the canaries' song—the size of a window.

Alas, this is my lot.

This is my lot.

My lot is a sky that can be shut out
by the mere hanging of a curtain.
My lot is descending a lonely staircase
to something rotting and falling apart in its exile.
My lot is a gloomy stroll in a grove of memories,
and dying from longing for a voice

that says: *I love your hands.*

I plant my hands in the garden soil—
I will sprout,

I know, I know, I know.

And in the hollow of my ink-stained palms
swallows will make their nest.

I will adorn my ears with twin-cherry sprigs,
wear dahlia petals on my nails.

There is an alley where boys who once loved me still stand
with the same tousled hair, thin necks, and scrawny legs,
contemplating the innocent smiles of a young girl
swept away one night by the wind.

There is an alley my heart has stolen
from my childhood turf.

A body traveling along the line of time
impregnates time's barren cord,
and returns from the mirror's feast
intimate with its own image.

This is how one dies, and another remains.

No seeker will ever find pearls from a stream
that pours into a ditch.

I know a sad little fairy who lives in the sea
and plays the wooden flute of her heart tenderly,
tenderly. . .

A sad small fairy who dies at night with a kiss
and is reborn with a kiss at dawn.

Dissidence and Creativity

I started writing this paper on the first of January 1995. I wrote it in English though my language is Arabic and my country is Egypt. I was born and lived in Egypt and have lived there almost all my life, but for the last two years I have been teaching at Duke University as a visiting professor. I hope to be back in Egypt in 1996. All my books, whether fiction or nonfiction, are written in Arabic and are published and read in Egypt and other countries of the Arab world. When I am faced with censorship in Egypt I publish my work in Lebanon or another Arab country. This context is important for me when I try to understand what we mean by dissidence or the dissident word.

Today I will be speaking about the intrinsic dissidence of the creative word, and the languages of imperialism and oppression which authors have forged into instruments of liberation. But it is difficult for me to do that without speaking in Arabic, difficult for me to be creative both in mind and body when using a foreign tongue. What I am doing now is translating my Arabic into English. When I do that, a part of the meaning is lost or changed. But although my English is different from the English in use here and may have its defects, it expresses my thoughts better than if I had given my lecture to an English translator.

What is dissidence?

I have tried to find the Arab word for dissidence. In Arabic we say protest (*al-ihitijaj*) or opposition (*al-mu'arada*) or disputation (*al-mukhasama*) or rebellion or revolt (*yatamarradu* or *yathuru*). But each of these words has a different meaning according to the context in which the dissidence or struggle takes place. For me the word 'struggle' in Arabic (*al-nidal*) sheds most light on the meaning of dissidence. The dissident in Arabic (*al-munadil*) means the fighter who cooperates with others to struggle against oppression and exploitation whether personal or political.

I believe there is no dissidence without struggle. We cannot

understand dissidence except in a situation of struggle and in its location in place and time. Without this, dissidence becomes a word devoid of responsibility devoid of meaning.

Demystifying words

Can I be dissident without being creative? Can I have the passion and knowledge required to change the powerful oppressive system of family and government without being creative? What do we mean by creativity? Can we be creative if we obey others or follow the tradition of our ancestors? Can we be creative if we submit to the rules forced upon us under different names: father, god, husband, family, nation, security, stability, protection, peace, democracy, family planning, development, human rights, modernism or postmodernism?

These fifteen words are used globally and locally by both the oppressors and the oppressed. I chose them because we read or hear them all the time, whether we live in Egypt, the United States, Brazil or India. These fifteen words constitute a large part of the language of imperialism and oppression. But they are often used by the oppressed with a different meaning, as part of the fight against imperialism and oppression.

For example, the word 'protection' seems a very positive word. British colonialism in Egypt was inaugurated by a military occupation in 1882.¹ It hindered our economic and cultural development for more than seventy years. Instead of having the freedom to develop our agriculture to satisfy our needs, we were obliged to produce cotton for the needs of British industry. The result was increasing poverty in Egypt and increasing wealth in Britain. This was done in the name of protection, not of colonialism or exploitation. The British used military power and terrorism to achieve these ends. The rulers of Egypt, the Khedives,² submitted to British power. The royal family and the ruling class collaborated with the colonizers to protect their joint interests. Egyptians who challenged the government or the British were labelled dissidents, communists or nationalists, and were killed, imprisoned, dismissed from their work or forced to live in exile or starvation.

Today the neocolonizers do not use the word 'protection' any more. The colonized people in Egypt, Africa, India and elsewhere have seen through it. The word 'protection' was demystified through people's living experience; 'protection' to us in Egypt now means colonialism. Another word therefore had to be used by the neocolonizers. It had to be just as positive and innocent, but more progressive. So the word 'development' came into use in the early seventies. Many people in

Egypt and other so-called developing countries were deceived by this word, but the results of development proved to be even more pernicious than the results of protection.

Much more money travelled from the so-called developing countries (or Third World) to the First World than in the opposite direction. The gap between the rich and poor increased both locally and globally. Even the United Nations could not hide these facts. They appeared in statistics and in UN reports written by field workers in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In 1979 I was one of the UN field workers in Ethiopia. I worked with the UN for two years before I left. I discovered that development projects promoted by the UN and Western corporations and agencies hindered development in Egypt and Africa. They were a disguised form of economic genocide, more pernicious than military genocide because they killed more people but were not as visible as blood shed in war.

When the word 'development' was demystified the neocolonizers shifted their terms. The new term was 'structural adjustment', now being promoted by the World Bank. Few people understand this word. But when 'structural adjustment' is implemented in Africa and other parts of the so-called South, the effect is no different from that of protection or development. The result is even greater poverty in the poor South, and greater riches for the rich North. Just one example: from 1984 to 1990 structural adjustment policies (SAPs) led to the transfer of \$178 billion from the South to the commercial banks in the North.

Another neocolonial word is 'aid'. It is another myth that is becoming demystified. Many countries in the South have started to raise the slogan 'Fair Trade Not Aid'. Just one example from Egypt: between 1975 (when US aid to Egypt began) and 1986, Egypt imported commodities and services from the United States to a total of \$30 billion. During the same period Egypt exported to the United States commodities worth only \$5 billion.

Egyptians who stand up and challenge the global neocolonialist powers and their collaborators in local governments are labelled dissident, communist, nationalist or feminist. They are punished according to the effectiveness of their dissidence; this ranges from losing their job and censorship of their writings to imprisonment and even death.

In Egypt, under Sadat, we had to demystify some of the words and slogans he used. One of his slogans was the 'open door' policy. It proved to be no more than opening doors to a neocolonial assault on the economy of Egypt and its culture. American products (Coca-Cola, cigarettes, nylon clothes, McDonald's, makeup, TV series, films, etcetera)

invaded Egypt, destroying local production. Sadat inaugurated his rule with what he described as a 'Corrective Revolution'. The Corrective Revolution in fact was no more than a correction in the flow of money to ensure that it ended up in the pockets of the ruling groups that came to power after Nasser's death in 1970.

Mutual responsibility

Our struggles are becoming more and more difficult. They need more and more creativity. There are always new words emerging that we have to demystify, words such as: peace, democracy, human rights, privatization, globalization, multiculturalism, diversity, civil society, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), cultural difference, liberation theology, religious fundamentalism, postmodernism, and others. We need to discover new ways of exposing the paradoxes or double meanings in the many new and old words that are endlessly repeated. This needs greater knowledge and more understanding of modern and postmodern techniques of oppression and exploitation.

We cannot acquire this knowledge through books, through formal education or the mass media. All of them are controlled by the global and local powers of domination and exploitation, and they help to veil our brains with one myth after another. We have to acquire this knowledge by ourselves, from our own experience in the daily struggle against those powers globally, locally and in the family. This is creativity. It is inspired and stimulated by our living our own lives and not by copying theories of struggle from books.

Every struggle has its own unique theory inseparable from action. Creativity means uniqueness: innovation. Discovering new ways of thinking and acting, of creating a system based on more and more justice, freedom, love and compassion. If you are creative, you must be dissident. You discover what others have not yet discovered. You may be alone at the beginning, but somehow you feel responsible towards yourself and others: towards those who are not yet aware of this discovery, who share your struggle with the system. Towards those who have lost hope and have submitted.

Can there be any struggle or dissidence without responsibility towards oneself and others? Is there any human who does not struggle against oppression? We are all born dissidents to a greater or a lesser degree. But since I came to teach in the USA I have ceased to consider myself a dissident. I have been a dissident since childhood. My name was put on the Egyptian government's blacklist in 1962. I had to face censorship. I lost my job in 1972, and our health association and

magazine were banned soon after. In 1981, I was put in jail and in 1991 our women's association (the Arab Women's Solidarity Association, AWSA) and magazine, *Noon*, were banned. In 1992, my life was threatened and security guards were placed around my house.

Now I am a visiting professor at Duke University in the United States. I teach creativity and dissidence to students. But can you really teach these things? All you can do is to open up closed doors. Undo what education did. Encourage students to discover their own dissidence in their own lives.

Dissidence and distance

I watch what is happening in Egypt from a distance. In November 1994, floods in Upper Egypt left thousands of people homeless. I received a letter from a young woman student who lives in Cairo. Her family lives in a village in Luxor (one of the places hit by the floods). She said: 'I went to visit my family and my village when I heard about the floods. Thank god my father and mother survived but they were left with no home, no shelter. The authorities were busy with a big tourist show, busy preparing to mount the opera *Aida* in front of the Temple of Hatshepsut. Priority was given to satisfying the needs of American tourists and not the homeless thousands. Each tourist sat on a blanket to warm his seat while he was watching the show. My family received no blankets to sleep in the cold nights. They lost their cane sugar farm because the local authorities took it over together with other roads and bridges for tourists, so that they could reach Hatshepsut's Temple easily. Four hundred acres of cane sugar were taken by force from homeless people. Other farms were taken from people to secure a space around the open *Aida* stadium (a security belt to protect the tourists from the so-called fundamentalists). The average yield of each acre is 50 tons, the price of each ton is £90 – constituting a loss of about £2 million to the people. Two other bridges were built on the Asjun canal for tourists to cross on their way to the show, and more farms were taken from people. This will result in an acute drop in the local production of cane sugar. An American company called Orascom built the bridges and the stadium in collaboration with Onsy Saweeris who opened a McDonald's eating place as well. The waters of the flood were quickly pumped out of the graves and temples of the dead pharaohs. The local authorities were boasting to the tourists that the waters did not spend one night in Siti the First Temple in Korana, or, rather, that Siti the First did not sleep one night in the waters. But thousands of homeless people were left to the floods with no shelter.

In front of the Karnak temple there was another big tourist show. One thousand five hundred girls and boys danced for six weeks. Each one of them received £10. The police were everywhere to protect the tourists and the dancers. The fundamentalists are against music shows and dances. The tourists call them terrorists. But the tourists are terrorists too. They frightened everybody, even the local authorities, who were so afraid of the fundamentalists that they destroyed hundreds of cane sugar farms.

They said that the fundamentalists used these cane sugar farms as hiding places. My father and mother are among these people. I do not know how I can help them. I have to go to Cairo and let a friend of mine who is a journalist for *Roz El-Youssef* magazine write about it. Our government does not help anybody unless the journalists write about them, or the TV or CNN broadcasts something about their story. During the population conference in Cairo last September, CNN showed something about female circumcision. After that everybody in the government and in the media was speaking about female circumcision. Even Al-Mufti, the highest Islamic authority in Egypt, wrote in *Roz El-Youssef* opposing this operation. The Sheik of Al-Azhar also wrote in the same magazine, but he supported the operation and said that it is an Islamic duty. I will send you a copy of this issue. It was published on 17 October 1994. I hope that the government listens to Al-Mufti and prohibits the circumcision of girls, but the government is afraid of the fundamentalists, who force people to circumcise their girls and to veil them.

After the show of *Aida* people caught an old tourist with a girl dancer hiding in Karnak temple. The girl was veiled. The tourist was very drunk and he told the people that he is more excited by the veil than by belly dancing.

The fundamentalists are becoming more and more harsh on girls and women. They prevent them from going out even to school. They tell the girls that they are protecting them from being raped by tourists.

In the Cairo International Population Conference I met a young woman in the AWSA workshop. I was glad to know from her that you have started an AWSA branch in North America. Her name is Amina Ayad. She read the paper you prepared on AWSA. It made me aware of the fact that increasing poverty in Egypt is due to the development forced on us by the West rather than the high fertility of Egyptian women.

I used to come to the AWSA weekly seminars and to read *Noon* magazine. I met you many times. You may remember my face but you do not know my name. I was not a member of AWSA but I was very

sad when the government banned it in Egypt in 1991. I read in *al-Ahali* that you have taken the government to court. But the court is part of the government. I have no hope in this government. Nobody is helping my father and mother. I have to leave them and go back to my school in Cairo. I took your address in America from Amina Ayad. She told me that she met you in the University of Washington. You may know someone in CNN who can broadcast something about my family in Luxor. If this happens the government will hurry up and build them a home or a shelter or at least give them blankets. It is very cold at night in Luxor, more cold than Cairo. I am crying while writing to you.'

In Durham, I am ten thousand miles from Egypt and from women and men whose struggles I have shared: against British colonialism, Egyptian governments, neocolonialism, fanatical religious and political groups, the oppressive family code and other forms of oppression in our private and public lives. In Durham I look at my country from a distance. Sometimes I lose hope. But we cannot be dissidents without hope. We cannot be dissidents from a distance or if we are not in the struggle. When we struggle we do not lose hope. We feel responsible towards ourselves and others.

Intellectual terrorism

The relation between self and other becomes simple and clear when we struggle, but it becomes very complex, very vague, very difficult to understand when we read books or listen to lectures, especially by so-called postmodern philosophers. It becomes a puzzle or conundrum. We find ourselves lost in an avalanche of words which appear very dissident, and which multiply and reproduce themselves endlessly, breeding more and more complex words. We drown in these words, we are suffocated by them. It is a zero-sum game of words in which you lose your power to understand.

In the spring of 1994, a friend of mine, a South American scholar at a US university, attended a conference at Duke University to which Derrida had been invited to lecture. He was very attentive during Derrida's lecture but understood very little. He felt frustrated and did not have the courage to ask questions. When others asked a question the answer complicated matters. That night, he had a nightmare: Derrida's fingers were around his neck trying to suffocate him. The nightmare was of course unreal, but this does not mean that it was insignificant. It had symbolic truth for the person who suffered it. Another friend of mine, an American scholar, attended the same lecture. He considered it a dissident postmodern lecture. The South American

scholar discussed it with him and became even more frustrated. He felt the lecture was an act of intellectual terrorism.

In November 1994 I found myself sitting in a huge solemn hall, listening to men and women scholars, the women with big earrings, very red lips and thick makeup, the men wearing neckties, their fingernails manicured, smelling of aftershave and deodorants, their teeth and shoes shining in the electric light. Some of them are well known in the United States and Europe. They are not known to the majority of people who live in Africa, Asia or Latin America, or even to the people in their own countries who do not read books. But they call themselves global scholars or international philosophers.

Their language was so dry, so complicated, that the huge hall full of young students seeking knowledge was almost empty after the first session. These scholars drowned in abstract theories and words taken out of context. They sometimes used Marxist ideas about capitalism and imperialism. They criticized the separation of economies from culture. But this was only a philosophical judgement which was quickly forgotten in order to adopt other ideas from Foucault or Derrida and again distinguish between the cultural and the political or the social and the economic.

They spoke about the responsibility of the intellectual towards oppressed people in the Third World, whom they called the 'subaltern', the 'docile bodies' or the 'subject'. We, the people in the so-called Third World were reduced to bodies (docile or not), we were decapitated just as happened to women in the name of god in the three monotheistic religions. But then they forgot these ideas and solemnly announced the death of the intellectual, looking furtively around as though suspicious of whether they, the intellectuals, still existed and still had a function.

As usual, they quoted Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze's phrases: 'Those who act and struggle are no longer represented either by a group or union that appropriates their right to stand as their conscience.' Once more they used this paradoxical statement which could mean one of two contradictory things: (1) the end of the role of intellectuals who replace the language of struggling people with their own language, a positive interpretation since it is aimed at liberating the voice of the oppressed and thus empowering them; or (2) disempowering oppressed people by divorcing their struggle from the struggle of other groups or collectivities.

Here the word 'struggle' is itself ambiguous. It can be a genuinely dissident word if struggle means action and not just words to be replaced by other words which do not change the systems of oppression

and exploitation at any level. Struggle is both action–thinking and speaking out. There is no separation between the practice and the theory of struggle. But these simple ideas were totally absent in the conference.

Here also ‘responsibility’ towards the self and the other is transformed into a conundrum, since the struggling/dissident creative person, who has acquired new knowledge or demystified certain myths, can, it is said, no longer represent the struggle of his or her group. In the same way I might say that ‘groups or unions’ are formed out of a nonfragmented struggle and this, too, might be just empty words. On the other hand, it might equally refer to a progressive idea, that of liberating those who struggle from the power of the leading dissident: the so-called hero.

Dissidence and heroism

The creative dissident is not a hero or heroine. He or she should be the first to be killed in the battle. The concept of heroism or leadership differs from that of dissidence. In battles the leader is often the last to be killed, while unknown soldiers are shot at the front. The dissident is not a hero or leader. The hero is worshipped as a demi-god, but the dissident is punished and cursed like Satan (*Iblis* in Arabic). The devil is responsible for what is called evil. Since the evolution of monotheism, Satan has become the symbol of dissidence, or disruption of the existing order.

The devil is responsible for disasters, defeat and misery. But the devil has no power relative to god. Though god has all the power, he is not responsible for any disaster, defeat or misery. The split between power and responsibility has lain at the core of oppression and exploitation from the advent of slavery to this day. Dissidence is the antithesis of power divorced from responsibility for the misery of people. Responsibility does not mean aid or charity; it means trying to eradicate the causes of poverty and oppression. The concept of charity or aid is as pernicious to others as the concept of replacing the other’s language or mind.

For creative dissidence does not believe in the dichotomy ‘god–devil’ or ‘self–other’. Both are to be challenged and criticized equally. This means directing a critical gaze at the self as well as at the other.

If we wanted to translate these ideas into postmodern language, we might say that the deheroization of self and other is at the core of real dissidence: of radical ethics, an aesthetics of creativity or a critical ontology of self and other. Real dissidence avoids lapsing into the reverse essentialism of a cult of self or the other. It also avoids one-way

reflexive self-monitoring by including the other in this process. It is thus that the analytical links between ourselves and our social context are maintained.

Dissidence and fundamentalism

Radicalism is a part of creative dissidence. But postmodernists do not question the established canon of neocolonial economic-political-cultural imperialism. They do not question the hegemony of male philosophers in the so-called First World, of male gods and male prophets. They limit themselves to cultural imperialism: to the problems of power/knowledge and of self-knowledge and identity. This established philosophical canon began with the patriarchal slave or class system and is still prevalent today.

Fundamentalism, like radicalism, is a positive and original way of thinking necessary to any creative dissident work. But both of them have come to be labelled negatively, like communism, socialism and feminism.

Individual identity or individual responsibility is inseparable from social identity or social responsibility and the word 'identity' is a positive word, like democracy and freedom. But these words are all used by neocolonialists to obstruct the freedom or identity of the others, to favour the development of so called modern or postmodern democratic free societies.

So we find that concepts like radical ethics, religious freedom, liberation theology and cultural autonomy have not led to greater freedom or to fundamental cultural and economic changes that improve our lives. They have led to what is now called religious fundamentalism and fanatical spiritual movements using religion or culture to abolish the other (the devil). These fanatical religions and political movements are spreading all over the world. Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist or Hindu, they have become very prominent in many religions.

Postmodernism itself is a form of cultural fundamentalism. It is the other face of religious fundamentalism. Both are products of neocolonialism. Perhaps we would do better to name them pseudo-modernism and pseudo-fundamentalism since they both function and combine to maintain the global capitalist system.

The concepts that we have mentioned are new forms of imperialism, terrorism and tourism: they make use of indigenous culture or religion as a tool to serve their own economic and intellectual interests. Philosophical imperialism and its discourse are inseparable from cultural and economic imperialism.

Just one example from Egypt: in 1994, the US government threatened to cut off so-called US aid to Egypt if a law was not promulgated to protect US films and cultural products. The Egyptian Ministry of Culture was obliged to draft a new law under the title 'Protection of Intellectual Rights'. This law will apply only to US 'cultural' products. The Egyptian government was not able to resist US government pressure on this issue. Yet few in Egypt still believe in the mystique of US aid. The problem is not only one of demystifying or acquiring new knowledge. It is a question of economic, political, military and cultural power.

Knowledge is power. But the power of knowledge alone is not enough in a world where military power can intervene at any moment to protect the economic interests of neocolonialists, as it did in the Gulf War or Somalia under slogans like 'human rights', 'democracy', 'humanitarian aid'.

The US government is using the postmodern GATT agreement (signed in Uruguay in 1993) to impose cultural imperialism on people everywhere: in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Arab countries, Russia, Eastern and Western Europe. American cultural products (films, TV series, books and music) have become a profitable export industry in the so-called free market – almost as profitable as the trade in arms; almost as profitable as the trade in beauty products for women; big earrings, makeup and even oriental veils for women who want to be exotic or choose what they call their authentic Muslim identity.

But the free market is being demystified rapidly, being exposed as the freedom of the powerful to exploit the less powerful. In the year 1994, everybody in Egypt was talking about the bad meat scandal.³ The European Community threatened to obstruct the sale of Egyptian exports because the Egyptian government was not being flexible enough to disregard the most elementary health rules for imported meat. These prescribe that fat content should not exceed 20 per cent and that the expiry date should be respected. Large amounts of bad meat, in which the fat content reached 35 per cent or more, were imported into Egypt, threatening the health of thousands of people. Often the expiry date was almost due. This kind of meat is fed to pigs and other animals in European countries since it is no longer suitable for human consumption.

This kind of pressure is exerted in the name of freedom of the market. Non-flexible governments in the Third World are considered bad or 'dissident' governments. The global neocolonial powers are able to punish them in ways corresponding to their level of 'dissidence' or 'inflexibility'. Punishment includes the threat of economic or military

sanctions and of defamation: publicizing their human rights violations in the global media.

The United Nations and human rights organizations are often instruments of this neocolonial game. In the same way the so-called nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or movements in 'civil society' have become new instruments to outflank local governments that are still sufficiently powerful and organized to put up some resistance.

'Privatization', 'nongovernmental organizations' or 'civil society' are all considered positive words for men and women who are fighting against local dictators and oppressive governments. But, in the hands of neocolonialists, they are transformed into swords directed against local people. Swords and words are used to divide the people in the name of diversity, while the neocolonialists globalize in NATO or in transnational corporations.

This is a game in which 'god' has all the power of both word and sword and is always the winner while the 'devil' – ourselves – is the loser. The devil is dissident and the angels are docile, obedient, tolerant, moderate and flexible groups and individuals.

In 1991, our 'NGO' (the Arab Women's Solidarity Association in Egypt) was banned by the government. The AWSA was considered locally and globally a dissident group. Why? Because we did not distinguish between patriarchy and neocolonialism and we protested against the Gulf War. But how can women, who are half the population, be liberated in countries that are neither economically nor culturally liberated?

Our concepts in AWSA emerged from our experience as women struggling against all kinds of oppression exercised in the name of god, the father, the husband, the state, the United Nations or international law.

Dissident philosophers

The word 'philosophy' in Arabic is *al-falsafa*. There are important Arab philosophers but most of their work is in Arabic and the most important parts of their work have not been translated or studied in the West. Many Western scholars think that philosophy, like feminism, is a Western invention. People who read history think that philosophy started with the Greeks. This idea is related to nineteenth-century colonialism. Egyptian history is reduced to what is called Egyptology, to stones and ruins looked at by tourists.

Colonialism uses military terrorism and cultural tourism at the same time. Cameras in the hands of tourists are like guns in the hands of

colonialists, like pens in the hands of postmodernists. The upshot is words in books or images on the TV screen about 'clean' neocolonial wars, whether physical, economic or cultural.

Egyptology is an example of cultural genocide or terrorism, in which a whole nation and its civilization and philosophy are violently reduced to a few stones or ruins. Egyptian philosophers have disappeared from history. One of them was a woman philosopher called Hypatia. She was killed twice: the first time in AD 415 by foreign invaders who killed her physically and burned her books together with the whole library of Alexandria in Egypt;⁴ the second time was in the nineteenth century when she was assassinated culturally and historically by the Egyptologists.

Not all philosophers are, like Hypatia, killed because of what they write or think. That depends on the effectiveness of their dissidence or challenge to the political system that rules over them. If a philosopher produces many works that change nothing in the power system because they do not reach people and are not understood, he or she may remain safe and secure, even prosperous. The dissident word must be effective in real life, otherwise it loses its meaning and is no longer dissident. Thinking that is isolated from real life is not part of the struggle. The dissident word is an expression of a struggling woman or man whose body and mind and spirit are inseparable. Can you have a dissident mind and a docile body or a cold heart with no passion? A dissident writer is both a philosopher and an activist.

A philosopher who is not an activist in a struggle ends up as an empty shell: as a shelf of books in academia. S/he struggles in closed rooms, using words to fence with other users of words. S/he has a love-hate relationship with poor oppressed women and men who are struggling to live. S/he worships them, calls them the 'subaltern', glorifies their authentic identity or culture, but at the same time looks down on them, considers them as docile or struggling bodies unable to produce philosophy or as local activists but not global thinkers. S/he abolishes subaltern philosophies and replaces them on the global intellectual scene; s/he becomes the philosopher of the subaltern who knows more about them than they know about themselves.

Tourism and postmodernism

There are important similarities between tourists and postmodernists. Both appear to be physically present in nature, but in fact they are empty shells: ghosts haunting what are called cultural differences. Both consume cultural differences, diversity, multiculturalism, authenticity,

creativity, and even dissidence. For them indigenous people do not exist. They have become a piece of stone, a collection of images, words and symbols, an abstraction of nature-culture.

Both postmodernists and tourists consume the other or use the other as a tool for consumption. To them everything (including the subaltern) becomes a commodity to be used materially, culturally or intellectually. Multiculturalism, diversity, cultural difference, religious difference, ethnic difference, authenticity, specificity are the new commodities. The postmodernists even go back to glorifying blood relations, feudal patriarchal family ties and tribal societies. Like pagans they worship the gods or statues which they have created out of stone or words or images.

I have seen tourists in Egypt kiss the stone of the pyramid in Giza like pagans or pilgrims kissing the black stone in Mecca. In my village in the delta of the Nile, an American woman scholar kissed a veiled girl and praised her veil as a sign of her authentic identity. Another American woman scholar produced a film about subaltern or Egyptian women who are going back to the veil, back to their authentic culture. She praised the veil in her film and said: 'Nowadays Egyptian women have their own revolution and are not imitating Western women.' The title of her film was *A Veiled Revolution!* She is considered an expert on Middle Eastern culture, and has the money and equipment needed to produce such films. We Egyptian women are considered ignorant of our culture. We have to be guided by American experts. They mediate our experience for us and then sell back to us their image of ourselves.

The veil is forced on Egyptian women by religio-political groups. It is no different culturally from the postmodern veil made of cosmetics and hair dyes that is forced on Western women by the media and beauty commercials. In an international women's conference, a French woman scholar said the veil was linked to Islam. I mentioned that veiling preceded Islam, and existed in both Christianity and Judaism, that it in fact arose with the slave system. She said: 'I am Christian but I am not veiled.' While she was speaking I noticed that she had a thick coating of makeup on her face. She was not aware that she herself was also wearing a veil. This postmodern veil is seen by the global neo-colonial media as beautiful, feminine, a sign of progress, though it is as pernicious to the humanity and authentic identity of the woman who wears it as the so-called religious veil.

The dissident god

At a conference an Arab scholar tried to glorify his culture, his religion, his 'Islam', by proving that women in Islamic societies could be heads

of government, as in Pakistan and Turkey, and as Shajar al-Durr was in Egypt in the past. He meant that the veiling of women does not prevent them from being heads of state or going out to work. The veil, he said, was just to protect Muslim women from Western values, which permit sexual freedom for females and homosexuality for men, both of which lead to AIDS. For him Islam is the 'good' religion or the 'absolute truth'; it represents virtue for women and men, which prevents adultery and disease.

Islamic positional superiority is established by avoiding criticism of the self relative to the other. The other here is the 'unbeliever', *al-Kafir* (the devil). This attitude is viewed positively by postmodernists as reflecting cultural difference, and they separate freedom of belief from critical thinking about freedom or cultural difference. They worship freedom and difference even if they lead to cultural and economic exploitation.

The same can apply to Christian and Jewish scholars and to so-called liberation theology movements, in which Christian scholars say that Christianity is based on love and compassion but Islam is based on justice, and justice is an abstract word that leads to violence or war. They forget that love and compassion are abstract words too and may serve in even bigger wars. Inter-cultural or inter-religious dialogue takes place on the conference platforms at a distance from real life and its struggles. Cultural or religious comparisons are used as a proof of superiority and thus as a new instrument of domination.

Postmodern liberation theologians are widely honoured in the global and local media. They are products of neocolonialism but they serve as the intellectual face of the fanatical religio-political movements called religious fundamentalists. Fundamentalist religious movements do not oppose or expose neocolonial economic exploitation. They are religious movements fighting against Western values, protecting women or the nation of Islam against Western materialism. They put more energy into veiling women and fighting against 'abortion' than into fighting against the sale of bad meat or the shipment of nuclear waste into our country. They encourage Western banks by putting their Muslim money into them. The US government calls them moderate (nonterrorist) Islamic fundamentalists and has started negotiating with them so that they can replace insufficiently flexible governments which no longer deliver what the global powers need.

Western Christian or Jewish scholars on the other hand consider 'Christianity' or 'Judaism' the 'good' religions because they did not block the way to modernism or postmodernism or prevent the liberation of Western women. To them Muslim women are victims of the

veil, virginity, sexual inhibition, polygamy or Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. They forget that Christian fundamentalists in the United States terrorize doctors in abortion clinics and even kill them as part of the so-called pro-life movement. This is not theological liberation but theological competition, in which each group tries to defame the other.

In 1993, in one of these conferences, a young Muslim scholar from the Sudan was wearing a veil. She said that she was proud to be a Muslim veiled woman, proud that she was not Westernized or elitist; the veil was part of her authentic identity and culture, and she was a part of a women's revolution struggling against Western cultural imperialism. (I noticed that her veil was made of silk and probably imported from Harrods in London.) For her, identity and culture had once again become an issue separate from the economic and the political. She ignored or was ignorant of the fact that women are oppressed in the three monotheistic religions (as in other religions), that class, gender and racial discrimination are universal phenomena which originated in the slave system and have been kept alive by colonial and neocolonial powers.

Postmodernists and religious fundamentalists present themselves as new groups rejecting cultural imperialism. Today culture and religion have become the issues around which our struggles seem to centre. For postmodernists 'culture' is the new god. This new god takes on the aspect and form of a new dissidence, to be set against the old gods of the socialists, which were 'the economy', 'anti-capitalism' and 'anti-imperialism'. But if god becomes a dissident himself, we have to declare the innocence of the devil. The word 'god' has to be demystified like any other word. Since the advent of 'the Word' in holy books, it has been used to invade other people's land (justified because this was a 'promised land'), economy and culture.

Since the beginning of human history men and women everywhere have struggled against foreign invaders and economic and cultural oppressors. They make no distinction between their minds and bodies. And they seek after song and dance just as they seek after bread and vegetables. Dissidence is a natural phenomenon in human life. We are all born dissident and creative. But we lose our creativity and dissidence partially or wholly through education and the fear that we shall be punished here or in the hereafter. We live in fear and we die in fear. Dissident people liberate themselves from fear, and they pay a price for this process of liberation. The price may be high or low but there is always a price to be paid.

Non-dissident people pay a price too: the process of subordination.

So if we have to pay a price anyway, why not pay the price and be liberated?

Pseudo-dissidence

The word 'dissidence' itself needs to be demystified: like the word 'philosophy', like the words 'East' and 'West', 'North' and 'South', 'Occident' and 'Orient'.

I met an orientalist philosopher who lives in San Francisco and writes his books in English. He is a scholar in a Californian university and is considered a dissident writer on the so-called Orient, that is, a scholar for people who do not live in the West or Occident. (I have tried to find an occidental philosopher or scholar, but it seems that occidentalism does not yet exist.)

In the postmodern era we meet a lot of orientalists both white and coloured. Most of them are postmodern. Some of them live in the United States and others live in Europe. None live in Egypt or Morocco or Palestine or Algeria or in other Third World countries. They may go to Egypt or other countries for a short touristic visit or to make a film about Egypt or to write a book on ancient or contemporary Egypt. Then they go back home to the West, to Europe or the United States. Some of these orientalists were born in Egypt or Morocco or Palestine or Algeria, but they have lived most of their lives in the United States or Europe. They have not participated in any real struggle in their country of birth, or even in their country of residence.

The orientalist whom I met was invited to give a lecture in the summer of 1991 in Egypt. He was deeply imbued with orientalist arrogance and exclusivism. He wanted to be our philosopher and replace us, we who live and struggle in Egypt. He wanted to remain both in the Orient and the Occident. He insisted on the privilege of 'hybridity' as his birthright. He quoted occidental postmodernists from Foucault to Derrida. He criticized US cultural imperialism severely. He was smoking US cigarettes. Some members of our association (which was banned a few days before his lecture) tried to meet him but he was too busy. He met the Minister of Culture and other ministers. He was a star on Egyptian TV as a dissident orientalist or anti-orientalist.

The neocolonialist star system works very successfully, rather like the transnational corporations. The difference between the current postmodern orientalist and the old colonial orientalist is often his/her country of birth or skin colour. The similarities between white and coloured postmodernists in the West are great. Both quote Foucault and Derrida. Both use ultra-elite complex discourse, and maintain tradi-

tional exclusionism: Orient or Occident. Both compete in the market of publishing, scholarship, the media and CNN. Both have become a commodity; both are addicted to the production and consumption of dissident words kept at a safe distance from real struggle.

Most of them are also addicted to the production and consumption of culture and cultural products. The products they consume are mostly American, especially Hollywood films and other US mass culture. Even when they leave their homes for a trip to the Third World they see only American films or TV series. Local films and cultural productions have been overwhelmed by American products and will cease to exist as a result of the new GATT agreements. These pundits often smoke American cigarettes, in spite of the increasing anti-smoking campaign in the West. In Egypt smoking advertisements are increasing. The US government gives grants to tobacco firms to promote smoking overseas. The sale of American cigarettes in Egypt has become as pernicious as the sale of bad meat from Europe, as pernicious as 'sex crime' films from Hollywood.

If you visit Cairo or any other city in the Third World today your eye cannot miss the advertisements everywhere, the huge posters with half-naked women carrying a cigarette or a bottle of Coca-Cola in one hand and a gun in the other as they dance under the dazzling neon lights.

Conclusion

It is not so difficult for us to see through and unveil the techniques and discourses of oppression and exploitation both locally and globally. Then it is important for us to identify the new victims and the new victimizers in the neocolonial era – for we do not live in a postcolonial era as the postmodernists claim. We must struggle together both locally and globally. The local struggle must be combined with global or international struggle and solidarity. We must fight on all fronts. We must not separate the political from the sexual, economic, religious or cultural. We must carry on a continuous resistance, a continuous dissidence, which will forge the way to a better future for *all* the peoples of the world.

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Notes

1. Egypt was declared a 'Protectorate' in 1914, when Britain went to war with Turkey; it had been under English 'administration' since the 1882 invasion, the pretext for which had been anti-European demonstrations [Ed.].
2. The title Khedive was that of Viceroy under Ottoman suzerainty [Ed.].
3. *Roz El-Youssef*, 21 November 1994, p. 18.
4. Hypatia was 'torn to pieces' in AD 451 'by a mob of Christians at the instigation of their bishop (later Saint) Cyril' (*The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N.G. Hammond and H.H. Scullard). She was an influential teacher of the pagan Neoplatonist philosophy, who revised her father Theon's *Commentary on the Almagest*. In Chapter 47 of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Gibbon specifies Cyril's motive as jealousy of her influence: 'On a fatal day, in the holy season of Lent, Hypatia was torn from her chariot, stripped naked, dragged to the church, and inhumanly butchered by the hands of Peter the reader and a troop of savage and merciless fanatics; her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp oyster-shells, and her quivering limbs were delivered to the flames' (Everyman edition V. 14–15).

Phobia

I'll be banished from the city
Before night falls: They'll claim
I neglected to pay for the air
I'll be banished from the city
Before the advent of evening: They'll claim
I paid no rent for the sun
Nor any fees for the clouds
I'll be banished from the city
Before the sun rises: They'll say
I gave night grief
And failed to lift my praises to the stars
I'll be banished from the city
Before I've even left the womb
Because all I did for seven months
Was write poems and wait to be
I'll be banished from being
Because I'm partial to the void
I'll be banished from the void
For my suspect ties to being
I'll be banished from both being and the void
Because I was born of becoming
I'll be banished

Najwan Darwish

Trans: Kareem Abou Zeid

On Permanent Translation (We Are Being Translated)
Rada Iveković
Translated by John Doherty

So what is this great drama that always brings childhood to a close, if not a forced departure for a frightening world whose language we are commanded to learn?

Jean-Christophe Rufin, *Brazil Red*

Must the translatability or untranslatability of two terms inevitably be regarded as diametrically opposed? Is there no middle, or queer way to approach this dichotomy¹? The former option, no less than the latter, has to do with this insurmountable dyad (tandem). But let us think for a moment about translation as a primal condition, or rather a condition *as such* – not that of a place, but that of a primordial move; not foundational, nor inescapable, but preceding us like the language into which we were born without having chosen it. I do not believe that two languages, or two cultures, are mutually untranslatable. But neither would I insist upon the existence of any dichotomy between the two. Nonetheless the problems of translation, and its shortcomings, are clear. Does it not share the insufficiency of language – of every language – and the inadequacy of the human being to itself, along with every institution's inadequacy to its purpose? Translation, in this sense, is a vital form of resistance (through the *differential* critical expression of differences) to the hegemonic lines of imposition of *the* meaning (of a meaning), as well as a possible vehicle of power (but also its opposite). It is a whole field of degrees, nuances, divergences; a range of (im)possibilities of traversals of meaning. This is why every translation is imperfect and incomplete – but could the same thing not be said of every “original”? In other words, there always remains something untranslated. It is the price and the reserve of comprehension and translation, which is possible in theory but always more or less ruled out in practice. What appears to me to be problematic is to claim that there is such

a thing as a principled untranslatability, like a fatality, or indeed translatability. The limits of the sayable can be changed. And the fact of co-conceiving the translatable and the untranslatable, and indeed being unable to imagine either without the other, provides access to the “middle way” that I mentioned above, and also the possibility of getting beyond seeing dichotomy as an ultimate horizon or blockage. Between two terms, two languages or two cultures, there is always the possibility of a relatively successful translation – one that is insufficient but still offers the hope of something better by half-opening the door to a meaning. Translation is no more than an opening-up of meaning, and never a promise of exhaustiveness. And yet one cannot speak of identity between the two terms, languages or cultures in question, even in the case of successful translation. But perhaps this is the price of its success, imperfect (and thus still necessary) as it may be.

Apart from that, translation is complicated by all sorts of circumstances, and in particular by the context, and also the relationship of the two things to be translated, which is necessarily a relationship of inequality in the sense that one of them is translated into the idiom of the other, thus creating a typical situation of *différend*². There remains something *unsaid* in this situation, or again there is a residue of what has no language; which is more or less the same thing as saying that there is something *unheard*. This basic inequality, which is already political (before there is any such thing as politics), can still be aggravated by historical circumstances that have made one of the two dominant. Since Foucault, at least, but also as a result of work done by anthropologists and psychoanalysts, we know that in the last analysis it is a *question of the body*. And there are other disciplinary, and undisciplined, approaches, such as feminist theory, post-colonial studies etc., which tell us that what cannot be articulated or understood in conventional language also comes from the other, from the subaltern, from the immediate experience of repression, the limit of which is also very much the body.

All of this comes down to the idea that translation involves bodies; and this is the sense, both extended and restricted, in which I am using it here. An instance of organ-transplantation/ intrusion-of-another-body would in this respect be no more than an extremely dramatic individual case in point. And it is in this “primary” sense that I will now take up the theme of the *politics of translation*, through our position as (female) mediators, both translators and translated, though without being able to tackle the fundamental question of the more general political circumstances of translation/intrusion. I will also take the opportunity to project another exercise in intermediacy, above and beyond what has just been put forward, namely that which could take shape between Jean-Luc Nancy and certain concepts to be found in Indian philosophies. What is to be translated is not texts, but contexts. And what encourages me to do so is the crisis, including, in the examples given below (J.-L. Nancy), the critical situation in which the body finds itself; because the body, finding itself called into question, heads towards translation, or transformation, as the only way out. It is apparently (above all) the *crisis* that puts us in a condition of translation and opens us up to a new meaning. On another level, Veena Das, talking about analogous situations, used the term “critical events”³.

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Neither of the two extreme positions, i.e. to say that languages or cultures can be translated, or that they cannot, seems viable. Experience teaches us that translation always takes place, and is always unsatisfactory. The feeling of imperfection or incompleteness that results from every attempt at translation is not confined to this experience alone. More profoundly, it characterises the human condition, the existential paradox of being at once mortal and destined for immortality. No language, no translation, no “inter-pretation” can express this completely. Our condition, our origin, our final state is situated neither in the term to be translated nor in the result of the translation, but

rather in this unbearable, intolerable *inter-, between*-two that we nonetheless tolerate. It is the paradox of having a body and not being reducible to it, but not being able to live or think without it either. It is true that this condition could change when we (but who is “we”?) get to the point of thinking without bodies⁴, and it may be that we (?) are approaching that point. But I will not speculate on this ideal identity between the self and (one)self, whose will and effects of violence I have discussed elsewhere⁵. Translation (life?) takes place in this unconditionality, this imperative of the *animated body*⁶. As such it is no more than a *relationship*, being nothing in itself; nothingness. It is never “only” a question of the body, but also of the way in which the condition of the being is enfolded by it (without, but also with, organs; anatomy or not), and reciprocally, but not symmetrically, in the way that the prism of the psychical, social and historical refracts the body. In this sense, we will always have been a graft of ourselves as other. And grafts can add onto others, thus complicating things, as Jean-Luc Nancy shows in *L’Intrus*. Not only is *animated corporality* the condition of translation, but it makes translation necessary: there is no situation other than translation; there is no pure state that is still untranslated. Even total incomprehension demonstrates this. To imagine a state (of language, or civilisation) *before* all translation would be like imagining a body without a soul, a pure nature, or biological sex clearly distinct from gender, outside of all mediation. This would mean falling into the nature-culture, sex-gender, female-male, subject-object, interior-exterior dichotomy. It would also mean imagining that, in the dyad, the two terms could be equal, symmetrical, and without any implicit hierarchy. Culture is first and foremost a matter of translation, even within a given language.

Translation is preceded by many experiences of mediation, and many *intimidating* obstacles. Is the most difficult thing not to translate from the interior to the exterior, in other words to expose oneself to others – to go from the *intimate* dimension to the public dimension? And is it not characteristic of a hegemonistic force to want to keep for itself the codes of

exclusive translation, and of all interpretation? One might give as an example the Western will to power (more and more, that of the United States), but also every other attempt to impose a single meaning by force (all totalitarianism, all fundamentalism); which would mean *putting a stop* to translation and displacement, and compressing time: and this is already violence.

Furthermore, *opening* meaning(s) through translation doubtless comes down to resisting such stoppages. It also brings about an enlargement of temporality, and its decompression. Time is necessary to translation, as it is to life. Instantaneity, like cuts in time, brings about either a gentle leap forward in meaning or, quite simply, a form of violence and a reconfiguration of the same. The time of translation is its quality as *relationship* – as nothing – which Buddhism calls “*avidyâ*”, in other words a lack of knowledge regarding it, which is unavoidably the case since we are within this relationship, and it is the limit of language. In the “act” of translation, on the other hand, as in any other relationship, one begins by knowing directly and without an object⁷. It is in this spirit that a unique time, halted time, curtails the possibilities and choices of events, as well as eliminating alternative histories (along with alternative readings and translations), reducing them to received history.

To take in other meanings through translation may involve, as in love, desire and sexuality, putting oneself in translation (and in question); coupling, and transforming oneself. If this is the case, one might say of translation what Jean-Luc Nancy says of the (sexual) relationship: “Decidedly, therefore, there is no relationship, in the sense of there being an account, or accounting, of the excess: not because there is any interminable outpouring in the excess as such (which would tend to come down to an oceanic, fusional form of entropy), but because excess is simply, strictly and exactly access to oneself as difference, and to difference as such; in other words, precisely, access to what cannot be challenged or instantiated *as such* unless its ‘as such’ is exposed as what is never *such* (which would be implied by the idea of an evaluation, a measurement

or a consummation of the relationship). Of relationships as relationships, there is nothing.”⁸

Translation is thus in itself a *copulation*, i.e. the apposition, the hooking-up and the bond between two (of which each is plural) that will be transformed within the relationship. The result of a translation cannot but *differ* from the “original”, and will *cor-respond* to it only in part: it will respond-in-return-with-it. Translation is this coming and going of meanings, with the impossibility, and sometimes the *inter*-diction, of acceding to meaning, and yet with a meaning or meanings that are at least derived, even if they remain on the boundaries of the incomprehensible; because even the interdict does not completely prevent – it does not make anything impossible, but makes things otherwise-accessible. And, as for the “sexual relationship”⁹, the “translatory relationship” brings in nothing that can be capitalised on, but chronically, and also acutely, presents oversupply and shortage. Translation is never a calculation with a clear-cut result. It takes account of a difference that it resolves imperfectly and sometimes falsifies (more or less) satisfactorily. It is the act of differing, without there being a definite origin or a definitive culmination. No translation is anything other than a segment of intermediacy in an infinite process. It is creation in the same way that the “original” is creation, and is just as good, or bad, but independently so. The dissimilarity of the thing itself to itself and the impossibility of the identical refer back to the exception that underlies every identity, or at least all that would not already exist if it did not take upon itself an *exception* or a *translation*. And thus it is that the fantasised sovereignty of the original is right away split apart as persistently different, made up of implicit inclusions despite explicit exclusions. What is there on this side of translation, which, in any case, goes beyond the concrete act of translating, and its product? It is the text, translating to and through us, the interpreters, from its author, and translating us by *inscribing* us also *in* the new version. Transforming us. The identities of the authors/translators become blurred. It is not merely by chance that the relationship

of telescoping or confusion between me and the other in mystical love (in Sanskrit, *maithuna*) implies a going-beyond that is trans-subjectal (and, of course, trans-objectal), but also a different type of knowledge, in which “to know” means “to become the other” in a trans-ego and trans-identity jubilation that reveals the weakness of language and the failings of all representation. What the non-perfectibility of translation shows, like the dynamic, which is impossible to pacify, of the sexual relationship (as well as the social relationship between the sexes), is the general inaptitude of the conceptual disposition of the subject-object relation, which is a summing function (*fonction totalisante*). “One should actually say that sex, essentially, is interpreted: I mean that it plays out and takes place by sexualizing itself. It plays like a musical score: it plays its own score, the dividing-up into the several sexes that it actually is.”¹⁰

The horizon of (the) translation – of each succeeding, or different, translation – recedes like a *kosa*: an orbit or pocket of meaning going from the interior to the exterior (and vice versa)¹¹. The “impossible” nature of translation would then correspond to the impossibility of enjoyment that Nancy talks about, whose solution is to be found each time at another level: “If there is something impossible in enjoyment, it is because there is something of the intimate, in other words the one (or she, or he), that endlessly backs off beyond any possible attribution. The impossibility of enjoyment [*and of translation? R.I.*] signifies that it manages, only, not to lay itself down in a state (as in legal terminology, which talks about the “enjoyment” of a good), and that its fulfilment is its act as such. But in this way, it does so: in fact it does nothing else.”¹²

One hesitates to “intrude”. There might be something obscene about taking up and commenting on an account of life under a shadow; for example a dramatic, intimate, moving text. Faced with particular facts about life, and the courage to talk about them, decency also demands that silence be maintained. But at the same time, the desired exposure of intimacy is first of all polylogical, and conduces to intervention. At times there is an

invitation to irruption. Invasions¹³, intrusions, hybrids¹⁴, mêlées¹⁵ and other forms of muddle, and sometimes even a certain violence¹⁶, have also been a source of life, culture and reflection, beyond their destructive effects. How is the internal, intimate dimension to be translated into an exterior, public dimension?¹⁷

This is a painful deflection of the process of learning what one should already know. It is a harsh form of erudition by which one unlearns – so as to know. “By the time you’ve learned to live, it’s already too late...” And so it is also a question of time; because apparently it is only when time becomes short that one learns, or has the clairvoyance of a cinematographic, retrospective view of life. But was there not too little time to begin with? This meeting with time, which comes only to certain people, can do no more than appear like unexpected lightning, like an intrusion – the kind that accompanies moments of ontological disturbance.

It is true that the thresholds of ontological questioning – the sensitivities – can be different, and that they depend on the individual. They can certainly range from mystical enlightenment to poetic transparency and the recursive specularisation of life; or to the encounter with death. But it would seem that this step is always ensured without it being known where exactly it is situated when the body is called into question. This is not necessarily the case with other upheavals¹⁸. On the other hand, ontological disturbances of a spiritual or mystical order can also, according to reports, lead to the smooth extinction of the body. All the “therapies” – yoga, or techniques of contemplation, of which there is an abundance in the Indian philosophical schools (all of which are concerned, first and foremost, with practical applications) – talk about this. Nowhere in life can one put one’s finger on the distinction between “body and soul” or “body and mind”. Neither exists without the other. *The reconstruction of this separation is generally among the strategies of power.* It is also the limit of representation, and that of language. The most common forms of this ontological disturbance (*ébranlement*), when it has to do with the body, are: for women, certainly, the

fact of giving birth (that of producing the other from oneself, and of multiplying oneself); and, for everyone in general, the fact of losing a loved one, or simply that of meeting death in one form or another; that of experiencing violence, for example war; losing one's footing as a result of the collapse of the world that sustained us. But everything points to the notion that the existential challenging of the body, and of life, go beyond this, and only highlight the existential and ontological chasm – the realisation that there is no foundation. Some cultures have always attempted to live with such an awareness.

In this sense, Jean-Luc Nancy tells us nothing that we have not already intuited, while still needing to learn it: that we have all had heart transplants, so to speak. This is an extreme experience that he himself went through in order to be dispossessed of it (liberated from it?), precisely through the account that he gives of it: "*The intruder exposes me excessively. It extrudes me, exports me, expropriates me.*"¹⁹ Bringing unrepresentable experience under control, in spite of the resistance of language, through his account of it he shares it with us, and something nonetheless comes across; which may not be of the order of the antibody, or of the virus, though in the end it may be almost that – a verbal virus, virtual at the start (who knows?): that of the communicability of the incommunicable, the translatability of the untranslatable. Salman Rushdie has said that though one does of course lose something in translation, one gains something else.

And if none of us is anything other than an intruder, and if we all come into the world as someone's guest, our language, to begin with, is nothing other than translation. We are transliterated. This sudden appearance into someone disturbs, above all, and transforms that person. The newborn child does not retain the conscious memory of the wrenching experience, no doubt so as to be able to live. This exile from the other will have to be the object of a reintegration during a painful apprenticeship called life. And this certainly does not take place in the same way for men and women²⁰.

“I (Who is this ‘I’? That is precisely the question, the old question: what is this subject of the utterance, always a stranger to the subject of that which has been uttered, in which (s)he is necessarily an intruder, but of which (s)he is also necessarily the motor, the transmission mechanism and the heart) – I received the heart of another person, almost ten years ago.” (Nancy, p. 13.)

“I am not that. It is not mine. It is not my ‘self’”, replies the Buddha. This feeling, this experience, this lived existence, this certainty of my “ego” (*aham*) is not my “self”, it is not my “essence” (*âtman*). And in any case there is no essence; not because my ego or my own being are something else, but because they are actually nothing as such, or in any case nothing fixed or identifiable; because there is no own-being, because there is no identity other than the one that is constructed, provisional and emergent, as in the five aggregates (*skandha*) which configure the living: the body-form (*rûpa*), the feelings and sense-perceptions (*vedanâ*), the unconscious imprints of consciousness (*samskârâs*), the intuitive and conjunctive consciousness (*samjñâ*), and the discursive consciousness (*vijñâna*). This means that we are not the same person from birth to death, but a succession, an apparent, fortuitous continuity comprising much discontinuity²¹. This fluctuating, evanescent reality, this anti-genealogy, is inculcated into a person while they are still children, so that they can unlearn and deconstruct the ego before it becomes entrenched, and thus avoid yet greater pain and disappointment – that of the discovery of the inadequacy of the self to the self. And this is in fact the first lesson. It is not polite to say, “me, I”. It would seem that the ego, along with the subsequent perspective of its spatial and temporal centrality, and the consequent metaphysics of the dominant subject, with the projection of a single god and the accompanying forms of servitude and domination, sprang out of a vital interest. Although it is no more than a potentiality at birth, the ego develops its culture, its imperialism, its temporality,

its political and social system; and finally it constructs itself in keeping with the state and the ruling power, if there is no cultural “inflection” to dilute it to the maximum possible extent. “It must simply be said that humanity was never ready for any modality of this question, and that its lack of preparation for death is nothing other than death itself: the blow and the injustice.” (Nancy, p. 24.) And yet entire cultures have practised the unlearning of the ego, i.e. those which instill into children their status as intruders, not waiting for their meeting with death. In order to do this, they look to the same choices, the same existential experiences as ours; and there is no need to imagine any insurmountable cultural otherness, or the existence of non-communicating universes. But it should no doubt be said that Western humanity was never ready for this, given that other humanities anticipated the replies so as not to have to ask the question: their idea was to deconstruct the question *in advance*.

This paradoxical, introspective viewpoint may appear to Western eyes not to be highly political or committed, and thus not one to be taken very seriously. It starts out from the identification of an injustice or an inequality which is generally seen as “the” political. There is a yawning gap; there is that of which no account can be given. It makes little sense, however, to talk in concrete terms about the “injustice done” as inevitable, fundamental or natural, since this would discourage not only all political activity but also all the theoretical research to which the political actually *extends an invitation*, along with all yoga, and every “therapeutic” or contemplative undertaking. There is nothing ineluctable about the forms of injustice. The political is what leads to theory, and to politics, but also, in contexts other than the Western, to practical meditative research. It is rather the “lack” associated with such research, and its supposed renunciation of politics, that creates a problem, at any rate in the eyes of Western philosophy²².

There is thus, in the human condition, something pre-existing of which no account can be given; or, more precisely, *karma*, i.e. the reciprocal solidarity of all the forms of life. From

this point of view, humanism is but a very biased “speciesism”. If, in the present context, it is not always humans that are being discussed, what is such a subject, and what are the rights of “subjects under certain conditions”, or “partial subjects” such as children, sick people, cyborgs and various intruders? The Deleuzian concept of the “pli” (fold) remains, perhaps, the most useful for arriving at an understanding of a non-petrified subject.

There have been ways of thinking that were better than Western philosophies at focussing on the problem of renunciation of/by the possible subject: that of the dispossession of self (and among others, a priori, by a choice of civilisation). Paradoxically, in the assertion of the subject by its own will, there is also the possibility of its culturally-valued abdication. Buddhist culture has succeeded in giving it value in the social sphere; as has a certain culture of women.

What is brought out by this cultural choice is the *existential paradox*. And a rapid digression must be made at this point on the concept of the subject such as it is understood in Western philosophy: the subject is a process, a hierarchy, a judgement, a volition, an activity, an effort to master the world (its object). The *term* “subject” does not exist as such in Indian philosophy, though there are other terms that embrace it and overlap it²³. This does not mean that the concept is unthinkable, as we may have been led to believe²⁴. This is highly paradoxical for philosophy, of course, because it is thereby, in a certain sense, hoist with its own petard. But the paradox applies beyond philosophy to all of Indian society, which, as Richard Lannoy suggests (with a certain amount of exaggeration), treats this intimate wound with a “strategy of despair” that works in a homeopathic way, i.e. it soothes the pain with a related “remedy” raising that same ailment, by the same token, up, above and beyond the individual, into a socially-recognised ideal, so that it ends up permeating society as a whole²⁵. The paradox resides in the simple fact that the dispossession of the self must be approached with a minimum of individual, subjective will, and thus an assertion of the self, in an intimately political act. It is as

though evading the tyranny of the social order were possible only by a sidestep, by “ducking” outside the system. In this respect, and in order to represent the concept of a *kosa* (an envelope of subjectivation), let us quote Deleuze and Guattari (who do not discuss the concept as such): “One might just as well say that the fascicled system does not really break with dualism, i.e. with the complementarity of a subject and an object, a natural reality and a spiritual reality: unity is continuously held in check and impeded in the object, while a new type of unity triumphs in the subject. The world has lost its pivotal point, and the subject cannot even produce any further dichotomy, but attains a higher unity of ambivalence or overdetermination in a dimension that is always additional to that of its object. [...] No typographical, lexical or even syntactical skill can allow it to be heard. The multiple *has to be made*, not by always adding a higher dimension but, on the contrary, in the simplest way, with restraint, respecting the dimensions at one’s disposal, always $n - 1$ (it is only thus that the one becomes a part of the many, by always being subtracted). To subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted, to write $n - 1$ ”²⁶: is this not also how birth takes place – by subtraction that multiplies and adds on instead of taking away? The *kosa*, like the Deleuzian rhizome, is anti-genealogy. And intrusion is indeed a matter of divesting oneself of genealogy – that which leads to domination. Liberation can only introduce another, unexpected logic and resistance. There is no metaphysical mobilisation here, but rather a preventive demobilisation of the deathly acceleration of the “capitalistic” psychopathology of “credit”, including ideological credit as the case may be, or that of the auto-capitalisation of the subject.

But then what about “that which launches thought” (Lyotard) while not allowing one to think – and which thus remains invisible? In Buddhist conditioned becoming, it is said that only two of the twelve links in the chain of general causality are *radical*, namely *avidyā*, or the ignorance that might also be called the unconscious, and *tršna*, in other words thirst or desire. On their own, these two elements of existence are enough to

give us roots in life, to attach us to it, to make it difficult to tear ourselves away from it and divest ourselves of our selves.

These roots go deep into another dimension of what represents the philosophical ideal (*nirvâna*), which consists of deconstructing the ego, then “extinguishing” oneself. *Avidyâ*, as both ignorance and the unconscious, is philosophically very promising. This loss of memory means that we have neither memories nor conscious imprints of previous lives and conditionings, and that we do not know the causes of the effects with which we are confronted, nor the karma of which we are made. *Avidyâ* hides something on this side of the threshold (*cache un en-deçà*) of life which is not just temporal (and thus represented in the “wheel of becoming”) or structural, but which is also, and in a more complex way, fundamental and structuring. “As far as this business goes, everything will come to me from elsewhere and outside – in the same way that my heart and my body came to me from elsewhere, and are an elsewhere ‘in’ me.” (Nancy, p. 22.) In this sense *avidyâ*, with the determinants (*samskârâs*) of consciousness (*vijñâna*), is the clouded-over karma of previous existences (or even of the present one), in other words the accumulated debt that has to be discharged in order to be dispossessed of oneself. *Avidyâ* means that we were born in forgetfulness of our status as intruders. To get rid of this involves recognising the obvious fact that we come from elsewhere, and giving up the genealogy of filiation for that of affiliation. It is as if ignorance consisted of an accumulation of subjectivity that needed to be got rid of²⁷.

For Buddhists, as for Wittgenstein, or indeed for any self-respecting poet, language cannot say everything. It cannot do so because it is only a part of the whole. If this is the case, it is because language is preceded and conditioned by life, of which it is just one of the possibilities; which means that it cannot give any explanation of what is its ground, i.e. life itself. And this is where *avidyâ* is situated. Prior to any human institution or activity, there is birth (life), which occurs through the union of the sexes, the great unthought/unthinkable, but which is the very locus of

our vital interest, and also what launches thought²⁸. Philosophy and language are thus *rooted* in a particular interest, and act on the basis of it, starting with the ego. This is the existential paradox. It is thus necessary to avoid getting a toehold if one wants to avoid the suffering that comes from the articulation and integration of the ego-subject. This is in paradoxical contradiction, but also in creative tension, with the will, *as such*, to obliterate oneself. It is a challenge which the Buddhists have taken up in constructing their image of the world, and their culture.

Depending on the code of interpretation, the priority that one ascribes to oneself remains more or less veiled. Its invisibility comes from beyond the screen known as *avidya*, i.e. that of the ignorance of the origin that is embedded in language taken as the unconscious. This ignorance is also the unthinkability of the difference between the sexes. What is unthinkable about it is perhaps not difference as such but above all the fact that it is our origin, or that it is outside us. To have one's origin in the other, to owe one's life to the other, is intolerable when existence is fashioned according to the identity principle and the centring of the self²⁹. The ideal, impossible genealogy (suicidal in the last analysis) is that of being born, and existing, only through oneself (*svayambhû*), this being linked to the power and history of domination.

"I come from elsewhere, or else I come no more." (Nancy, p. 17.) It is the weaknesses of the heart that reveal this. But was I not coming from elsewhere even before that? And even before coming, or no longer coming? From an elsewhere without which, elsewhere, there would be neither coming nor not coming. Having come from this other which I am no longer, but which I was, or rather was me, and which produced me by radically transforming itself. Made by casting myself out like a stranger: but through a salutary, amicable banishment – the one that created the in-between (*l'entre-deux*) so as to allow of the acknowledgement of unity. By subtraction. Production of the other without sacrifice or claim. The intruder "extruded", but not pushed aside; sent away but kept close by, tolerated and

still welcome – from whom one will never more have to liberate oneself; who remains at hand to create the community that has been given since/by one's arrival in the world, and not just in the face of death. The production of the other who produced me as other of myself in order to be what I am. A whole plan of resistance to monotheism and, once more, its genealogy³⁰. Patriarchal, obviously.

“Thus, the multiple stranger who intrudes into my life (my thin, out-of-breath life, sometimes sliding into uneasiness on the edge of abandonment, simply astonished) is none other than death, or rather life/death: a suspension of the continuum of being, a scansion with which ‘I’ has/have little to do. Revolt and acceptance are equally alien to the situation.” (Nancy, p. 25.) To Jean-Luc Nancy's credit, he points out that it is neither of the order of revolt nor that of acceptance. And if it does not spark off a revolt, neither does it signify acceptance. The register is that of “life/death”, which always go hand in hand. And death is not the great other, even if it is the unknown of life. It is not transcendence; it is not the solution. It is of the same family as life. This may be difficult to conceive of, but it is clear to any type of thinking that is not as culturally moulded as ours is by dualisms. In such cases the dividing line between day and night, female and male, life and death, the rational and the irrational, good and evil, is much less incisive, much more uncertain.

“Life ‘as such’, which is not in any organ, and yet without them is nothing.” Where is life to be found? Firstly, in life. Already translated and betrayed. But also in conditions external to it: “Life which not only survives, but always lives clean, under triple alien command: that of the decision, that of the organ, that of the aftermath of the graft.” (Nancy, pp. 27-8.) Might it be the case, then, that the “alien” is not as alien as all that?

Gods and demons are of the same origin: they are the “people”, given that they are all descendants of Prajâpati, the father of the generations³¹. There are several episodes in the Upanishads where the point is to reassure oneself as to which of the supposedly vital functions really is so: which is “brahman”,

supreme, without which life could not be maintained³². A competition is organised, for example, in which it is observed that one can live without language, as a dumb person, or without sight, as a blind person, or without hearing, as a deaf person, or without reason, as an infantile person, or without arms or legs, as a crippled person. But then one observes that it is breath (*prāna*) and the “intelligent self” (*prajñâtman*) that animate the body and cause it to live. When they depart, there is no more life³³. And whereas the “intelligent self” is not localised, the manas (the “mental”), along with thoughts and their corresponding organ, are located, in general, in the heart – in the “cave of the heart”, that microcosm of the inner depths of being, which also allows one, in yoga exercises, to pull back, to withdraw into oneself so as to connect up with the universe. Situated in the heart, thought is vital; it is life itself. But it also constitutes a crossroad with the external circuits, and a crossover point between dimensions. The heart/thought is like a navel that never healed, but remains open and connected to the world. It is also “the possibility of a network in which life/death is shared/divided up (*partagée*), in which life is connected to death, in which the incommunicable communicates.” (Nancy, p. 30.) “I am open closed”, non-identical to the self, not having been able to maintain the principle of identity, which was impossible to safeguard, and yet is held onto in a never-ending attempt at preservation which is sometimes also that of sparing life – and thus contradictory in itself, marking this unsustainable paradox which signifies that we are both mortal and transcendent: mortal in the individual, transcendent in common. “There is in this an opening through which passes an unceasing flow of strangeness [...] all existence placed in a new register, swept through and through.” (Nancy, p. 35.) But the part that I left out of what Jean-Luc Nancy actually wrote, in this quotation-displacement, is far from being insignificant: “*immunosuppressive drugs*”; the quality of life turned upside down, ruined; placed in a new register, in effect. Another existential dimension. We attain another dimension by overturning the previous one. But we are not, for all that, any less

caught up in the previous kosa, since we retain all the karmic imprints that give us continuity, even if it is in discontinuity with our own identity, and even if this identity is only provisional, evanescent, etc. It is the suffering that comes with life, and which is part of it. “One arrives at a certain continuity in the intrusions, and at a permanent condition of intrusion.” (Nancy, p. 40.)

The remedy?

Medicines, as we have seen, come afterwards; they are part of the new configuration, and are its unendurable but indispensable part, ambiguous as any *pharmakon*. There are no good remedies a posteriori. One can try, as certain systems will, to construct a universe configured in such a way as to do the least harm. The best place for this kind of action is the “self”, the ego, the subject, the point of attachment of the individual to the world: “I can clearly sense that it is much stronger than a feeling: the strangeness of my own identity, vivid though it has always been, never before touched me with such keenness. ‘I’ has clearly become the formal index of an unverifiable, impalpable concatenation. Between me and me, there has always been space-time; but at present there is the opening of an incision, and the irreconcilability of frustrated immunity.” (Nancy, p. 36.) The concatenation in question is elsewhere called *pratītya-samutpāda*, i.e. conditioned becoming, or causality. In the original form of Buddhism, “This being the case, that takes place”: all things are in constant becoming, causalities are complex and uncontrollable, and everything depends on everything else. It is just for this reason that our karma is never known to us; it can only be exemplified by what we are or do at each moment, being recalculated instant by instant on the basis of the entire past – and not only “our” own, since, in the passage from one life to another, there is no transmission of individual identity. Thus karma is retribution for our actions; it is the complex causality that encompasses all those with whom we are in interaction. It is the general “law” of empathy. In the end, treating it in an almost anecdotal way, it is as if another person’s karma could rub off on us. Karma is also what informs the different degrees

of kosa (pockets of subjectivation in the process of dissolving). Subjectivation is not tolerated in Indian philosophy (Buddhist or Brahmanic) other than as a provisional, unstable, flexible, or even fluid form of becoming, a coincidence of elements which will in turn be left behind, such as, for example, the five *skandha*, the psycho-physical constituents of the subjectivating identity of Buddhism, which are to be corrected and dissolved. What is sure, in the concatenation of causality, which takes into account the fact that life is shared out, is that its point of departure is ignorance (*avidyâ*): unconsciousness, precisely, of this conditioning, of the karma, of the origin and the provisional nature of all identity; and ignorance of our own intrusion, which has to be found out about painfully, in that it is a question of self-dispossession. The self, fictional³⁴ and ephemeral as it is, takes its roots in its desire (*tr̥ṣṇa*) and self-interest. It bends the world to its perspective. It tries to remain identical to itself as far as possible. When it does not succeed in this, it no longer recognises itself; it loses itself: “One comes out of the adventure bewildered. One no longer recognises oneself: but ‘recognition’ no longer has any meaning. Very quickly, one is no more than a fluttering, a suspension of strangeness between ill-identified states, between pains, between powerlessnesses, between breakdowns. To refer to oneself becomes a problem, a difficulty or an opacity: it comes about through pain, or indeed fear; it is no longer anything immediate – and the mediations are tiring.” (Nancy, p. 39.) This is of course an extreme and arduous form of non-recognition. And yet the non-recognition of self is known to all; starting with the mirror, old photos, or the perception of others. Traditionally, in the Brahmanic aesthetic, (re)cognition has a special status, but it is not autonomous: to get there, an external sign is necessary. More importantly, all cognition is a re-cognition. Beyond the instability of the substrata (which is not a question for Brahmanism alone, it is true), re-cognition is something that has to do with communion. It does not take place in isolation, in an identity with the self; it takes place thanks to something else. In Kâlidâsa’s classical play, *Abhijñânasakuntalâ*,

the king recognises Sakuntalâ by the ring he had once given her, and then forgotten about. For Abhinavagupta, a Kashmiri philosopher of aesthetics who lived around the 10th-11th centuries, it is re-cognition that allows identity, or commensurability to self, to be recovered; but this takes place in another register, relatively speaking.

“The empty identity of an ‘I’ can no longer lie simply in its mere commensurability (in its ‘I = I’), when it enunciates itself: ‘I suffer’ implies two ‘I’s, each of them alien to the other (though they touch each other). [...] but in ‘I suffer’, one ‘I’ rejects the other, whereas in ‘I rejoice’, one ‘I’ exceeds the other. They resemble each other exactly, no doubt: neither more nor less.” (Nancy, p. 39.)

Everything is predicated upon this condition, which occupies the entire horizon. Is it the only one? Surely not; but it is the most insupportable of them. If not, there are other inalienable conditions which are given. And this is indeed what impels some people to withdraw from the world. But there is an uncrossable threshold and a difference in quality when the condition in question is physical; when it is that of a disease. When the body is the focus, “The intruder exposes me excessively. He extrudes me, exports me, expropriates me.” (Nancy, p. 42.)

“The intruder is not another than myself and the man himself; not another than the same one who never stops changing, at once sharpened and exhausted, denuded and over-equipped, an intruder in the world as well as in oneself, a worrying upsurge of strangeness, connatus with excrescent infinity.” (Nancy, p. 45.) It is not by chance that this passage comes at the end of Jean-Luc Nancy’s disturbing little book: it signifies the end of a learning process: the painful recognition of one’s own origin in the other, the impossibility of maintaining the principle of identity (except by using violence), and the abandoning of genealogy.

Just as one cannot locate life exactly, except to say where the conditions for it are no longer satisfied, one cannot locate identity, though one can perceive its limits. It is as if the space of identities remained vague and indefinable, except for the interface (the bar) which shows them without being able to define them, and which is nothing in itself but which, through them, can be provisionally traced out: life/death, identity/non-identity: “At the very least, what happens is this: identity comes down to immunity; the one is identifiable with the other.” Does immunity intervene into the question of identity? “The old viruses that have always been there, lurking...” (Nancy, p. 33.) They do not necessarily come from outside. They gather momentum from the karma: nothing is repeated the same, nothing is maintained identically. Everything is recycled at each instant by the new circumstances; including the viruses.

Jean-Luc Nancy’s exposition shows how much translation – that of the intimate dimension of a downward-plunging reverberation before the risk involved in its external unveiling – is itself dependent on the body. It is an attempt to overcome the limits of the latter, in other words those of the datum (whether grafted or “natural”). But everything comes to us from elsewhere: it is this elsewhere in us, constitutive of and traversing our animated body; it is our own otherness that controls the translation and represents its limits. No transcendent recourse is possible any longer, and the “foundations” of reason and unreason are the same. Translation, like comprehension, is thus impossible if one starts from a transcendental position (such as “American *values*” in place of “interests”, in Veena Das’s example), and the universalisation of the model itself (overarching hegemony). It becomes possible as a participant in a “project” where the issue is also that of the translator, and which is not an object relationship of a subject that masters its object (a text). On the contrary, translation is possible only if the “original” and the translator find themselves transformed by it, and if the result (the translated) coexists with its “original”, deferred and transformed in meaning, in a relation of

interminable translation or “translative” tension that is constant and constructive of universes.

How then is one to connect a political-public dimension up to, rather than translate it into, an intimate, meditative dimension which would set about changing the world, starting with oneself? How is one to transform it while freeing it of the self and decentering it-/one-self?

In the eyes of the stereotype Westerner infatuated with politics linked to power, there is no possible bridge, since the self, the ego, the subject can never be called in question, other than by dispossessing the citizen and depriving him of political, civil and social influence. Is the political thinkable without a metaphysic of the subject? Can one not imagine a citizenship based on a different configuration of subjectivation? It is true that this has been tried many times, and attempts are still being made to conceive of the subject as diluted and more fairly pieced out, predicated on a communal configuration (Marcos for the Chiapas; various forms of communalism) or vaunted, even, as multi-culturalism (and an *apartheid* of co-existing cultures) – by *recognition*. But in the same way that uneasiness springs up when the intimate is exposed, a certain inadequacy, or even incredulity, is strongly felt when the political dimension of an individual act of self-dispossession is articulated. Yet the adventure that could be described as the translation of one context towards another, one culture to another, has been attempted on occasion to different degrees and in widely varying ways both by individuals (W. Benjamin, M.K. Gandhi and L. Wittgenstein, among others) and movements (liberation theology) whereby the question of secularism, strictly speaking, is rendered obsolete, and that of temporality necessarily revised, since intervention in the political space by intimate meditation also presupposes non-fatal multiple responsibilities and composite time made up of criss-crossing alternative histories: the karmic temporality of non-determination, contrary to what has been attributed in terms of “destiny” to the concept of karma and its conceptual context. It is along this last, vital horizon, as a space

of life quite simply, that the ultimate form of expression and the last language – translation – are played out. As regards language, there can be very few that are not already (in) translation, since there is no primal original, unless one were to reinvent a Revelation, which has in any case been useful only in holding back the successive waves of translation that accompany the kind of primal exile of the self that every culture represents³⁵. The reference to tradition has also been used in this way – to recognise that there is always continuity-within-discontinuity within oneself.

It is one thing to claim that all culture is translatable (a democratic point of view), or that all culture is intrinsically untranslatable (clash of civilisation): the two positions are assimilable to a single fundamental dichotomy. It is another to see all language, all culture, as being inherently an attempt at translation, i.e. exteriorisation. It is this form and this dynamic of *permanent translation* alone that can “open up a common, reciprocal future in language”³⁶. A “common future in language” also means the mutual interdependence of all forms of life; it means not placing oneself at the centre; and it also means a shared relationship with death. It will be implemented by the construction of citizenship, and by the type of ego, self and subject to be cultivated.

There is an apparent, though false, resemblance between the thesis of general untranslatability and that of permanent translation. Permanent translation presupposes the exasperating difficulty and non-completion in principle of any attempt at translation. It is the state of being in translation oneself. And this is the cost of translation remaining faithful to life and retaining its gesture: it constantly avoids putting itself in a state of grace; that is to say, exception; that is to say, finitude. Death, for its part, exists in both, though not in the same way. According to the hypothesis of the untranslatability of cultures and languages, which is also that of inevitable violence, death is not an integral part of the vital cycle, but comes into it as a culmination-result, the only certain outcome of the choice of the untranslatable: the great dualism of good and evil, and an inability to put oneself in

someone else's place. According to the hypothesis of permanent translation, which can never be taken for granted – one needs to give it a hand, to work at opening up meaning (one or more new meanings), to allow oneself the necessary time, to accept self-decentring, and to see the other person's point of view³⁷ – death is a part of the cycle, and in general is not inflicted by an inconceivable excess of violence. Between the two (the translatability variant not being logically autonomous), there is an entire gamut; but there is also choice. There are degrees of translation and translatability. Presumably there is no one, no nation that can be inseparably bonded to either, in the same way that no one is immune to (using) violence. Permanent translation also means that no history has been brought to a halt.

But let us be clear about this: *each individual* is a translator forever translated. Translators of the world: just one more effort!

SQUEEZING THE SAD BLADDER

of the boxed wine I wonder if I might have done things differently if
yes I had no shame but if perhaps I should have operated with some
sense of shame or begin to operate with some sense of shame now that
my ovaries are removed now that my breasts are removed now that
I have a scar from os coxae to os coxae and my umbilicus cum craft-
project cross-stitch is slightly cock-eyed o lord twisted shit abounds
many women say or at least write on the facebook support page that the
medicine makes sex feel like broken glass and I thumb it I do not heart
I concur and also there are the eyeballs which while naked cannot see
the borealis but when aided by the phone can see it all do we want to
see it all the adipocytes collecting subcutaneously my mother says that
sixty-seven is the worst age but I think she said the same of forty-seven
too tho at forty-seven I had my brief glamorous cancer phase when I
got so thin people told me I looked beautiful eclipsed by post-cancer
when then they said I looked strong was I strong am I and then post-
post cancer which consists mostly of eating cheese and fearing my lungs
are filling with tumors or are already filled I loved that one summer the
summer the cancer was growing in me but I did not yet know to call it
synchronous bilateral malignancy so I just called it loneliness or aging
and one very sunny afternoon tho not hot I asked my neighbor if she
would mind if each time I passed her windchime I rang it with the tip of
my finger and she said she didn't care and I said thank you I will be the
wind and she said ok sure be the wind

(Nicole Callihan)

27/ Hands and Feet of the Goddess

The hands and feet of the Goddess have appeared over the millennia painted on cave, shrine, and megalithic tomb walls and on vases, and carved in stone. Even today, stones with miraculous footprints of the Virgin, Jesus, or the saints are held in deep reverence in the Catholic countries of Europe. They have the power to heal, give strength to feeble children, and protect against evil. Water collected in such footprints can heal and fertilize; hands painted on doors have apotropaic powers. Irish Brigit upon her visits to country hearths leaves her footprints in the ashes. They are a promise of prosperity and abundance (Sjoestedt 1949: 25). Such beliefs hark back to a much more ancient religion; as *pars pro toto*, hands and feet symbolize the touch of the Goddess; they impart her energy.

Red and black silhouettes of hands appear on Upper Paleolithic cave walls continuously from around 20,000 to 10,000 B.C., i.e., from the end of the Gravettian and throughout the Magdalenian epochs (Leroi-Gourhan 1967: illus. 60, 64, 129, 138, 147, 160). The majority of hands painted in positive and negative in the caves are the hands of women. Hands are portrayed singly, in rows, and in groups. Some, as at Pech-Merle, are found in association with a mare's pregnant belly and the bi-line, symbol of pregnancy. Some hands are placed near "quadrangular" and cross signs, as in the cave of El Castillo, Santander; others are near a "tent" or "shrine" which may be an abstract sign of the Goddess, as in Les Combarelles, Dordogne. At La Pileta and El Castillo, Spain, hands appear in association with bovids. (FIGURE 484)

FIGURE 484



FIGURE 484 The hands of the Goddess, symbols of her energizing touch, appear on the walls of Upper Paleolithic caves. In the cave at La Pileta, near Gibraltar, Spain, hands are painted above a bovide with crescent-shaped horns and in association with groups of parallel lines, most of which are double and triple lines. The types of animals below the ox are uncertain (13,000–11,000 B.C.). H. 179 cm.

FIGURE 485



FIGURE 485 The hands of the Goddess also appear on the walls of Neolithic shrines. At Çatal Hüyük, hands of red (the color of life) and black (fertility) are joined by a honeycomb or net. A horizontal panel. (Shrine in Level VII, 8, central Anatolia; mid-7th mill. B.C.)

Red and black panels of hands are found in many Çatal Hüyük shrines. Their association with bull heads, honeycombs, whirls, chrysalises, bees, and butterflies places them among symbols promoting the process of becoming. Further, the colors used—red (of life) and black (of fertility)—must have been chosen for their symbolic significance. Hands are shown with four or five fingers in positive and negative impressions, placed vertically and horizontally.

Of utmost symbolic importance are hand panels in Shrines VII, 8, and E VI, 8. (FIGURE 485) The wall painting in the former is composed of two horizontal rows pointing to the right. Seven red and black hands alternate in the top row and seven red hands line the bottom. All have an open area on the palm which is filled with one or more dots. Between the two rows is a honeycomb or net design.

In Shrine E VI, 8 the two-hand-motif panels are below three bull heads, each marked with a honeycomb pattern. (FIGURE 486) The top register of the upper frieze contains egg- or fish-shaped ovals enclosing two hands joined at the fingertips in positive and negative design. The central portion is covered with circle, whirl, crescent, and caterpillar or insect symbols. The bottom register is made up of vertical and horizontal hands, positive alternating with negative. The lower panel consists of randomly placed hands in negative design on a red background. The second painting, from an earlier phase, portrays a field of flowers or whirls with chrysalises swaying from boughs (the wavy lines at the top) and insects or butterflies (Mellaart 1963: 80).

Portrayals of hands are not found in European shrines but appear on Neolithic and Copper Age vases (see Gimbutas 1974: pl. 158 for a huge hand in relief as the sole design on a vase from Baniata, Karanovo culture). Figurines occasionally have enormous hands seemingly imparting divine energy or spell.

FIGURE 486 In another shrine at Çatal Hüyük (E VI, 8), the wall is covered with two panels of hands placed under bulls' heads. The upper panel consists of opposed hands in positive and negative design within oval forms; circle, whirl, and insect motifs inside honeycomb-like cells, and a line of alternately vertical and horizontal hands. The lower panel is of hands (right and left) shown in negative design on a red background (end-7th mill. B.C.).

FIGURE 486

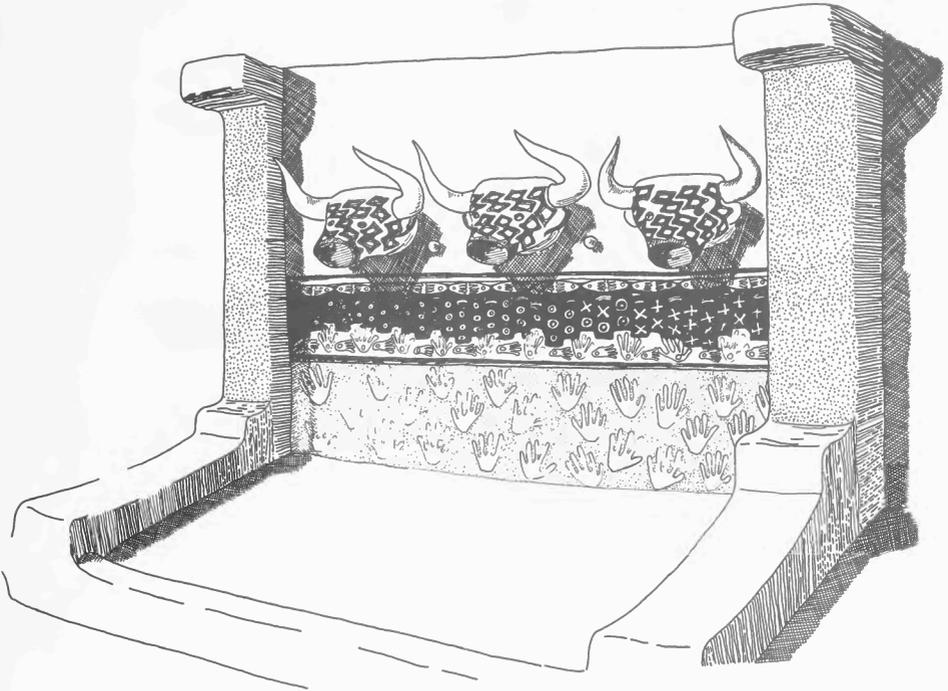


FIGURE 487

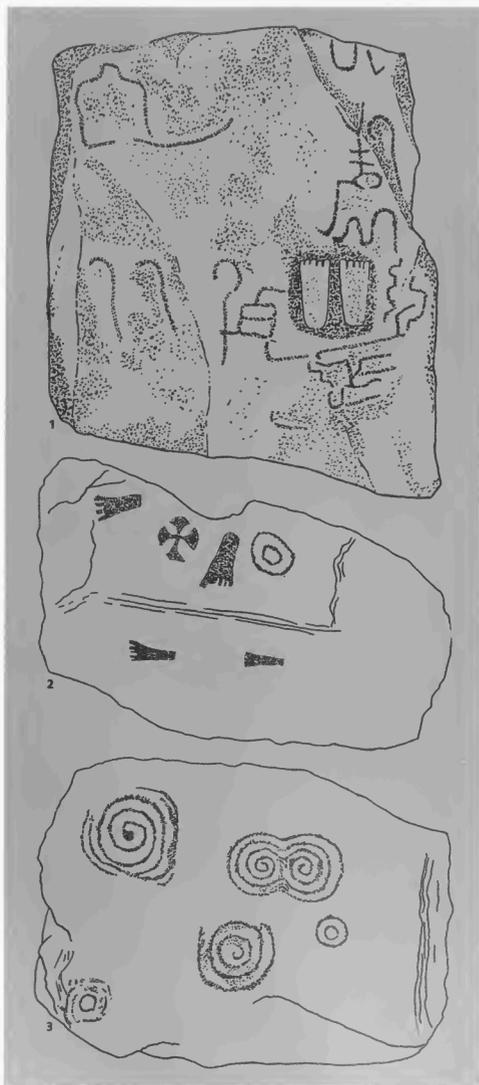


FIGURE 487 Feet also appear in megalithic graves. These footprints are from (1) an orthostat in a gallery grave, and (2) probably a passage grave. They appear with life-stimulating symbols—whirls, hooks, and snakes—and images and symbols of the Goddess. ((1) Petit Mont, Arzon, France; c. 3000 B.C. or earlier; (2) and (3) Calderstones, Liverpool, England.) (1) H. 114 cm. (2) H. 91.5 cm, (3) 103 cm.

FIGURE 488



FIGURE 488 These extremely interesting seals leave a foot-shaped pattern of chevrons, linking the foot with the Bird Goddess. (1) Early Sesklo (Sesklo tell, Thessaly; c. 6500–6300 B.C.). (2) Starčevo (Gura Valii, Western Romania; c. 5500 B.C.). (3) Karanovo VI (Djadovo, near Nova Zagora, central Bulgaria; c. 4500 B.C.). (1) H. 3 cm; (2) H. 3.3 cm; (3) H. 2.2 cm.

The Goddess's footprints occur on orthostats in French gallery graves. (FIGURE 487) It is significant that her feet appear not in isolation but in association with life stimulating symbols, hooks, crosses, concentric circles, oculi motifs, and snakes.

Vases and seals in the form of human feet appear from early Neolithic phases to beyond the Copper Age. (FIGURE 488) The illustrated foot-shaped seals bear chevron and zig-zag signs linking them with the Bird Goddess.

Exquisite vases from the 5th millennium B.C. sometimes have handles shaped like human feet. It seems a bit peculiar to find feet and not hands as handles, but this is indeed the case. Interesting symbolic associations can be discerned on a black-burnished vase with four feet on four sides uncovered at Střelice, an early Lengyel site (c. 5000 B.C.). (FIGURES 489, 490) The symbols used are: four dogs sculpted around the mouth; four human figures with V-shaped arms associated with life columns; caterpillars, snakes, crescents, and plants, all symbols of becoming. This indicates that feet and upraised arms have a related symbolic meaning, that of promotion. The feet, dogs, snakes, and lozenges are meant to promote life. If hands and feet represent the divine touch, then this motif surely imparts the powerful energy of the Goddess.

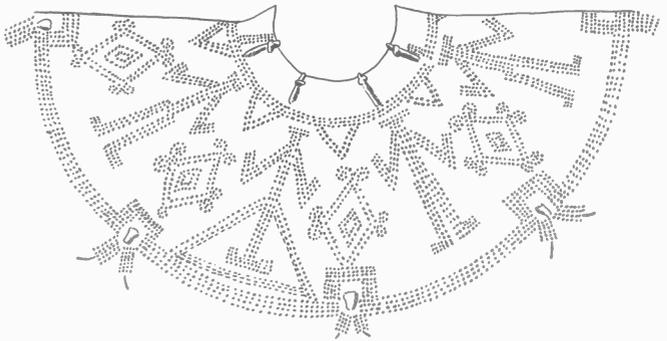
FIGURE 489



FIGURE 489 Four feet are attached to the middle of this black-burnished vase. Four dogs surround the mouth, and the body is decorated with white-encrusted punctate lines in the shape of four human figures and four lozenges with double spirals. Lengyel (Střelice, near Znojmo, Moravia, c. 5000 B.C.). H. 38 cm.

FIGURE 490 Outstretched design of the Lengyel vase illustrated in fig. 489.

FIGURE 490





"Ring dance" vase support of six nude figures connected at shoulders and feet, from Cucuteni. See figure 492, page 312

28/ *Standing Stones and Circles*

The standing stone (menhir) gives off a mysterious psychic vibration. To this day humans and animals are drawn to menhirs by their magic power. People touch them or go three times around them in order to be cured of illness; sick livestock are brought to rub against them. The menhir is the Goddess.

That a menhir is the epiphany of the Owl Goddess we know from prehistoric stelae in southern France, Spain, and Portugal (figs. 294–97). The Goddess's intimacy with stone is also witnessed in historical times. Greek Artemis was called "the stony one" and Mesopotamian Ninursaga, "Lady of the stony ground." In folk memories, the menhir is the abode of Irish Brigit and Baltic Laima (Fate) as late as the 20th century. In Lithuania, upright stones surrounded by ditches, which stood along the rivers, were believed to be goddesses and were called *deives* as late as 1836 (Gimbutas 1958: 95). Such stones, usually six feet high, were erected at places sacred to the goddesses who spent their time at the stones spinning the fates of humans.

Menhirs turn around, move, dance, and even speak. Legends say that at midnight stones walk, dip their head into a well, and quietly go back home. In southern England and Wales 39 instances of restless stones were recorded in this century (Grinsell 1976: 59–67). Twenty of them are recorded as going to the nearest body of water to drink or bathe; others are said to turn, move, or dance, and some 27 to go into action at midnight. "Something" comes up the stone avenues on certain days and walks down heralded by the cuckoo's call (recorded in the 19th century Hebrides: Burl 1976: 152). A

cuckoo's call is the Goddess's call. Britons believe that when the cuckoo is first heard a menhir turns thrice (Armstrong 1958: 205).

Prehistoric circles, some with a menhir in the middle, had avenues of stones that led downhill to water. At Callanish in the outer Hebrides, a small stone circle with a menhir in the center had avenues and rows leading downhill towards the bay (Burl 1976: 177); the stones of Carnac, Brittany, go down to the sea (Evans 1895: 25). Sometimes a well, not a stone pillar, is found in the middle of a stone circle, and dances around the well were performed. At Callanish the cuckoo sang its May song of spring from the circle (Burl 1979: 224).

Dances around wells are known from 19th century Scotland and Ireland. One such story took place in Scotland on the first Sunday in May in the 1860s, when two men travelling in the moors near Aberdeen noticed a ceremony around a well. They saw a circle of women with garments tucked up under their arms join hands and dance around the well. An old woman was sprinkling them with the well water as they danced (McPherson 1929: 50–51).

Clearly, the association of standing stones with the sea, rivers, brooks, and wells is richly evidenced in European folklore. The link between the menhir and well is paralleled by the link between the Goddess and water of life. Even the Goddess's names give a clue to this association. Take, for instance, the Slavic Goddess Mokosh-Paraskeva Pyatnitsa (the latter half of her name meaning "Friday"), the dispenser of the water of life and the spinner of the thread of life. The name *Mokosh* is connected with moisture, *mok-* or *mokr-* meaning "wet, moist," and her ritual was called *mokrida*. On the other hand, the root *mok-* appears

as a name for stones. In Lithuanian, *mokas* is a "standing stone," always appearing in legends associated with lakes or rivers.

Folk memories of relationships between the menhir, well, and stone ring suggest the interchangeability of the Goddess, ring, and well. Stone rings and ring dances seem to be an extension of the centrally concentrated Goddess energy. Circles with a depression in the middle inscribed on flat stones perhaps convey a related meaning: the Goddess's power is in the deep, in stone and water, surrounded by magic circles. (FIGURE 491)

Fairies, the maidens of the Goddess, are of wells, springs, and rivers, or they originate like flowers with the morning dew. Dancing in a circle, they create a power capable of tearing any man to pieces who happens to enter the sacred ring. Rings of standing stones or rings in green grass meadows are called "fairy rings," *cercles des fées* in French. Swift maidens, naked or in white robes, appear there dancing with linked arms at midnight. The great speed of the dancing sets up a free flow of energies.

Fairy dances are related to the ecstatic mountaintop dancing of the Bacchantes and Maenads in Greek legend. Southern Slavic fairies, *vile* (pl. of *vila*) also dance on mountain tops near lakes and springs. They take offence when a person interrupts their *kolo*, or "ring." They blind him with a mere glance or pull him in and dance him to death (Djordjević 1953: 61).

The circle—be it fairy dance or ring of standing stones—transmits the energy increased by the combination of the powers of stone, water, mound, and circling motion.

FIGURE 491



FIGURE 491 Circles and concentric circles with a cupmark in the middle are engraved on a megalith. Such engravings are semantic relatives of stone circles and ring dances around a well, which is the concentrated life source of the Goddess. Irish Neolithic (found near Loughcrew, Ballinvalley I, Co. Meath; probably end of the 4th mill. B.C.)

The practice of the sacred ring dance can be as old as the Upper Paleolithic and surely continues throughout the Neolithic, prehistory, and history. Ring dances of naked women are portrayed in Cucuteni ceramics of the second half of the 5th millennium B.C. A series of vase supports from the classical Cucuteni culture are shaped like naked women in a ring with joined arms. Romanians call them "Hora vases," from the *hora* or "ring dance" still alive today. (FIGURE 492)

Minoan seals and vase paintings are also witness to the practice of ring dances.

The abundance of folklore regarding the prehistoric henges and rings of western Europe must reflect their importance in prehistoric rituals. They are believed to be inhabited by fairies or witches; music and laughter are heard there and dances are seen in the moonlight. The association of henges and

FIGURE 492



FIGURE 492 This "ring dance" vase support is made up of six nude figures connected at shoulders and feet. Cucuteni A₂ (Frumușica near Peatra Neamț; 45th–44th cents. B.C.)

rings with megalithic tombs and standing stones speak of their link with death and regeneration rituals.

Prehistoric stone circles and henges are largely a phenomenon of the British Isles dating to the period between 3300 and 1500 B.C. More than nine hundred circles still exist in the British Isles. They are found in river valleys or near water in low-lying areas (Burl 1976: 4–21). Their use as places of rituals is borne out by the lack of habitation artifacts. In pits at Maumbury Rings, outside Dorchester, antler picks, a huge chalk phallus, and sherds of grooved ware were found. The phallus rested alongside an antlered stag's skull (Burl 1981: 44).

The henge and rings of Stennes and Brogar in the Orkney Islands are good examples of such impressive sacred sites. Stennes henge is 61 m in diameter and has one entrance to the north. A circle of twelve stones with a diameter of about 30 m is set inside the henge. In the center is a rectangle of four flat stones, 2 x 2 m in which cremated animal bones and flint flakes were found. The Brodgar ring of 60 stones has a diameter of 103.7 m and is surrounded by a rock-cut ditch with two entrances in the northwest and southeast (Renfrew ed. 1985: Appendix, 263–74). They are contemporary with megalithic tombs (Maes Howe) and dated c. 3100 B.C.

To the same period belongs Stonehenge I, the best known monument of England. Its henge is 320 feet in diameter with 56 shallow pits, called Aubrey Holes, located around its inner circumference. Larger and smaller henges, such as Durrington Walls and Woodhenge two miles away, contained timber buildings inside their enclosures made of concentric circles of wooden posts supporting a cone-shaped roof (Wainwright 1968: 1970). A circular building may also have stood at the center of Stonehenge I (Atkinson 1956; 1979). Since Aubrey Holes yielded cremation deposits, the central building most likely was a temple associated with the funerary or regeneration rituals. The pits in which only small amounts of

cremated remains were found as token representations, were laid out around the solar axis of the site. The solar and lunar Station Stones were symmetrically placed among the pits. From this arrangement the general nature of the ritual, as proposed recently by Ray, was an attempt to coordinate the solar and (possibly) lunar cycles with the spirits of the dead represented by the token cremations (Ray 1987: 270). The period of Stonehenge II and III, of considerably later date, may have seen a shift away from the dead toward sky-oriented religion since the monument is focussed upon the midsummer sunrise (Atkinson 1979: 173) due to the influence of the Indo-European religion.

According to Thom and Thom (1978: 122–37), stone rings were lunar and solar observatories. Alexander Thom, who measured hundreds of circles and alignments, believes that the geometry of the stone circles is derived from the extreme positions of the moon and sun as they cross the horizon. Large stones acted as markers (Thom 1971). From astronomical associations we can deduce that the builders of tombs, rings, henges, and avenues developed a considerable body of astronomical knowledge for what were, ultimately, ritual purposes. There was an undeniable interest in the winter solstice, and in particular in marking the position of the moon at that point. This suggests the practice of winter rituals when the sun is at its weakest and seen as dying. Rituals that apparently are inseparable from the lunar Old Hag and the burial of the Old Year's bones are still practiced today (cf. McNeill 1961: 113–25). The purpose of such rituals essentially is the regeneration of life powers, made possible through energetic ring dances combined with the powers of stones standing in a circle. The stone circles are not fully activated unless the calendrical events are accompanied by human rituals and dance. To this day, New Year's celebrations in villages have much to do with magic life-giving water, going round the houses, dancing ring dances, and making noise to protect against the evil winter/death powers.

Avebury's stone circle on the Wiltshire Downs in southwestern England is the largest yet found in that country. Originally it had 98 stones, some up to 5.5 m high, enclosing an area of 28½ acres. Two smaller circles stand within the outer one. The earthworks surrounding the horseshoe or circular space is bounded by a ditch with a bank beyond. Two serpentine stone avenues lead into the circle. They are one and a half miles long, 50 feet wide, and are defined by 100 pairs of stones set at intervals of 80 feet (Burl 1979).

In artist Dames' vision (Dames 1977) Avebury, together with Silbury Hill and the West Kenneth Long Barrow located nearby, was a religious center, perhaps the most important in Britain during the first half of the 3rd millennium B.C. The monuments were created to stage a religious drama that took place over a year's time. The seasonal rites reenacted the cycle of the life and death of nature. Each structure was regarded as a living character, as a superhuman body of the Goddess in spring, summer, fall, and winter. Dames visualizes that puberty rites were reenacted in early February in a wooden temple which once stood at the head of the river Kennet, the wedding of the Goddess with her male consort was celebrated on May 1 at the Avebury Henge, and the Pregnant Goddess was Silbury Hill who gave birth on the August Quarter Day (Lammas). Her delivery of the new crop was celebrated as First Fruits Festival (Big Sunday in Ireland) on a hilltop with dances and games. Finally, Summer's End or Winter's Eve (All Souls Day), the most perilous time, was marked by solemn festivals at the burial grounds. At this time the Tomb Lady took over from the Harvest Goddess inviting her people to follow her retreat into the underground, to West Kenneth Long Barrow, an enormous 340-foot-long earthen mound.

The Place and Function of the Goddess

The reason for the great number and variety of Old European images lies in the fact that this symbolism is lunar and chthonic, built around the understanding that life on earth is in eternal transformation, in constant and rhythmic change between creation and destruction, birth and death. The moon's three phases—new, waxing, and old—are repeated in trinities or triple-functional deities that recall these moon phases: maiden, nymph, and crone; life-giving, death-giving, and transformational; rising, dying, and self-renewing. Life-givers are also death-wielders. Immortality is secured through the innate forces of regeneration within Nature itself. The concept of regeneration and renewal is perhaps the most outstanding and dramatic theme that we perceive in this symbolism.

It seems more appropriate to view all of these Goddess images as aspects of the one Great Goddess with her core functions—life-giving, death-wielding, regeneration and renewal. The obvious analogy would be to Nature itself; through the multiplicity of phenomena and continuing cycles of which it is made, one recognizes the fundamental and underlying unity of Nature. The Goddess is immanent rather than transcendent and therefore physically manifest.

Let us note here that fertility is only one among the Goddess's many functions. It is inaccurate to call Paleolithic and Neolithic images "fertility goddesses," as is still done in archeological literature. Earth fertility became a prominent concern only in the food-producing era; hence it is not a primary

function of the Goddess and has nothing to do with sexuality. The goddesses were mainly life creators, not Venuses or beauties, and most definitely not wives of male gods. The other prevalent general term for the prehistoric divinity is the "Mother Goddess," which is also a misconception. It is true that there are mother images and protectors of young life, and there was a Mother Earth and Mother of the Dead, but the rest of the female images cannot be generalized under the term Mother Goddess. The Bird and Snake Goddesses, for example, are not always mothers, nor are many other images of regeneration such as the Frog, Fish, or Hedgehog Goddess, who are incarnate of transformative powers. They impersonate Life, Death, and Regeneration; they are more than fertility and motherhood.

Eric Neumann, the eminent Jungian psychologist and author of the much-appreciated *The Great Mother* (1955), uses the term Great Mother in the sense of a psychic reality. According to him, the image of the Great Mother developed from the Archetypal Feminine, which ultimately is derived from the uroboros, symbol of the beginning. The Great Round, an unconscious and undifferentiated stage. The uroboric totality is also a symbol of the united primordial parents, from whom the figures of the Great Father and the Great Mother later separated out. The Great Mother eventually split into a Good and a Terrible Mother, according to the positive and negative elements of her character. Neumann also speaks of her transformative character, i.e., developing into the Lady of the Plants and the Lady of the Beasts. This psychological approach has opened new avenues in the interpretation of some aspects of the prehistoric Goddess. And yet I feel the term *mother* devalues her

importance and does not allow appreciation of her total character. Further, much of Neumann's archetype is based on post-Indo-European religious ideology, after the image of the Goddess had suffered a profound and largely debasing transformation. Hence, for the prehistoric period, I prefer the term "Great Goddess" as best describing her absolute rule, her creative, destructive, and regenerative powers.

My archeological research does not confirm the hypothetical existence of the primordial parents and their division into the Great Father and Great Mother figures or the further division of the Great Mother figure into a Good and a Terrible Mother. There is no trace of a father figure in any of the Paleolithic periods. The life-creating power seems to have been of the Great Goddess alone. A complete division into a "good" and a "terrible" Mother never occurred: the Life Giver and the Death Wielder are one deity. Her manifestations are manifold: she may be anthropomorphic or zoomorphic; she may appear in a triple aspect; she may be a waterfowl or a bird of prey, a harmless or a poisonous snake; but ultimately she is one indivisible Goddess. If "good" is life, birth, health, and increase of wealth, she can be called the good Fate. The term "Terrible Mother" needs explanation. The "vulture" or killer aspect of the Goddess is frightening indeed, but if we look at the symbols associated with the aspect of death it becomes clear that these symbols don't exist alone: they are interwoven with those promoting regeneration. The Vulture/Owl/Crow Goddess is both a foreboder of death and a Goddess with breasts and life-creating labyrinths in her abdomen, or she is a triangle (vulva)

or an hourglass-shape (double triangle) with vulture's feet, or she is a bee or a butterfly. In her death aspect she is the same Fate who gives life, determines its length, and then takes it away when time comes. She does this because she controls the length of the life cycle. The Death Wielder does not punish men for evil doing or anything of the kind; she only fulfills her necessary duty. The regeneration starts at the moment of death. It begins within the body of the Goddess, in her moist uterus which is expressed in an animal form as a fish, frog, turtle, hedgehog, hare, or the head of the bull.

There was no division into the Lady of Plants and the Lady of Beasts; no deity ruled over the plants or animals separately. The power of the Life Creatrix and Regeneratrix was in animals, plants, water, mountains, and stones. The Goddess may be a bird, a deer, a bear, a vase, an upright stone, or a tree. The anthropomorphic Birth Giver was interchangeable with bear, deer, elk. The protectress of young life, the Nurse, or the Madonna, appeared both as human and as bird, snake, bear.

The unity with nature is particularly clear in the symbolism of the snake; its life energy ramifies into surrounding living creatures: the family members of the house which the snake guards, domestic animals, and trees. Of singular interest is the belief in the immortality of the snake because of its renewal through sloughing off the skin and because of its awakening in the spring after the hibernation period. Because the snake is immortal it is a link between the dead and the living; snakes embody the energy of the ancestors. So do the

birds. Perhaps because of the snake-shaped neck of the swan, crane, stork, and goose and their periodic renewal each spring after they have spent the winter months in the south, the symbolism of the bird is interwoven with that of the snake. Both are incarnate of life energy and are the seats of the souls of the dead. The Snake and the Bird Goddesses are guardians (genii, penates) of the family, clan, and later in history, of the city (as Athena of Athens, whose symbols are bird and snake). They oversee the continuity of life energy, the well-being and health of the family, and the increase of the food supply.

The association of the giving and increasing Fate with waterfowl and the ram is that waterfowl was the main food supply from the Paleolithic, and sheep became the most important meat supply from the earliest Neolithic. Why the ram and not the ewe became the sacred animal of the Bird Goddess is difficult to know, but it can be surmised that because the ram's horns are coiled like a snake, it is more powerful as it is imbued with snake's vital energy.

The other functions of the Great Goddess concern fertility, multiplication, and renewal. The process of seasonal awakening, growing, fattening, and dying was seen as connecting humans, animals, and plants: the pregnancy of a woman, the fattening of a sow, the ripening of fruits and crops were interrelated, influencing each other. Again it can be noted that the rising and growing powers of earth dwell in all living things. The pregnancy or the fatness of a woman or an animal was considered to be as holy as the pregnancy of the earth before her flowering in the spring. Each protuberance in nature, be it a mound, a hill, on a menhir or on a female body—belly, buttocks, breasts, knees—was sacred.

The number two and doubleness—two seeds, fruits, buttocks—meant a blessed multiplication. Since it was more than one it had more strength and more influence on fertility. As was said before, fertility was not sexuality; it was multiplication, growing, flourishing. To this class of symbols belong the male deities of rising, flourishing, and dying vegetation: the young, strong, flourishing god and the old, sorrowful, dying god. Within the category of the Mother Earth, there is a division into the contrasting images of young and old, or into mother and daughter images, symbolic of seasonal rising and dying.

A summary of functions and images of the Neolithic Great Goddess and of the male Gods is given in the table on pages 328–329.

Continuity and Transformation of the Goddess in the Indo-European and Christian Eras

The outcome of the clash of Old European with alien Indo-European religious forms is visible in the dethronement of Old European goddesses, the disappearance of temples, cult paraphernalia, and sacred signs, and the drastic reduction of religious images in the visual arts. This impoverishment started in east-central Europe and gradually affected all of central Europe. The Aegean islands, Crete, and the central and western Mediterranean regions continued Old European traditions for several millennia more, but the core of the civilization was lost.

This transformation, however, was not a replacement of one culture by another but a gradual hybridization of two different symbolic systems. Because the androcentric ideology of the Indo-Europeans was that of the new ruling class, it has come down to us as the "official" belief system of ancient Europe. But the Old European sacred images and symbols were never totally uprooted; these most persistent features in human history were too deeply implanted in the psyche. They could have disappeared only with the total extermination of the female population.

The Goddess's religion went underground. Some of the old traditions, particularly those connected with birth, death, and earth fertility rituals, have continued to this day without much change in some regions; in others, they were assimilated into Indo-European ideology.

In ancient Greece, this created some strange, even absurd, images in the Indo-European pantheon of gods. Most strikingly visible is the conversion of Athena, the Old European Bird Goddess, into a militarized figure carrying a shield and wearing a helmet. The belief in her birth from the head of Zeus, the ruling god of the Indo-Europeans in Greece, shows how far the transformation went—from a parthenogenetic goddess to her birth from a male god! And yet this is not entirely surprising: Zeus was a bull (in Indo-European symbolism the Thunder God is a bull), and Athena's birth from the head of a bull was nothing else but a memory of birth from a bucranium, which was a simulacrum of the uterus in Old European symbolism.

The Death Wieler, the Goddess as a Bird of Prey, was militarized. Portrayals of the Owl Goddess on stone stelae acquired a sword or dagger during the Bronze Age in Sardinia, Corsica, Liguria, southern France, and Spain. The Greek Athena and Irish Morrigan and Badb are known to appear in battle scenes as vultures, crows, cranes, or ravens. The transformation of this Goddess into a mare also occurred during the Bronze Age.

Parthenogenetic goddesses creating from themselves without the help of male insemination gradually changed into brides, wives, and daughters and were eroticized, linked with the principle of sexual love, as a response to a patriarchal and patrilinear system. For example, Greek Hera became the wife of Zeus. Furthermore, Zeus had to "seduce" (with a nod toward historical accuracy, we might prefer the term "rape") hundreds of other goddesses and nymphs to establish himself. Everywhere in Europe, the Earth Mother lost her ability to give

birth to plant life without intercourse with the Thunder God or god of the Shining Sky in his spring aspect.

In contrast, the Birth and Life Giver, the Fate or Three Fates, remained remarkably independent in the beliefs of many areas of Europe. Greek Artemis, Irish Brigit, and Baltic Laima, for instance, did not acquire any of the features of an Indo-European god, nor were they married to a god. The Baltic Laima appears in mythological songs together with Dievas, the Indo-European god of the light of the sky, to bless the fields and human life—not as his wife but as an equally powerful goddess.

A remnant in the historical era of the goddesses' ruling power is indicated by the usage of the term *queen* for those who were not married to Indo-European deities but who continued to be powerful in their own right. Herodotus wrote of "Queen Artemis" and Hesychius called Aphrodite "the queen." Diana, the Roman counterpart of the virgin Artemis, was invoked as *regina*.

The worship of the Goddess in Rome and Greece continued strong into the early centuries of our era. This is the time of the expansion of Christianity and of the Egyptian cults over the Roman world. The most inspired account in all ancient literature is contained in Lucius Apuleius' 2nd century A.D. *Golden Ass*, the earliest Latin novel, where Lucius invokes Isis from the depths of his misery. Then she appears and utters: "*I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all the elements, the initial progeny of worlds, chief of the powers divine, queen of all that are in Hell, the principal of them all*"

that dwell in Heaven, manifested alone and under one form of all the gods and goddesses. At my will the planets of the sky, the wholesome winds of the seas, and the lamentable silences of hell be disposed; my name, my divinity is adored throughout the world, in divers manners, in variable customs, and by many names" (italics added by author). The text is an illumination with very precious details on the worship of the Goddess nearly 2,000 years ago.

Lucius' invocation is a testimony to the fact that goddesses meant more than gods to people in the first centuries of our era. In the Graeco-Roman world individuals obviously were not satisfied with what the official Indo-European religion offered. Secret cults—Mystery Religions (Dionysiac, Eleusinian), clearly continuous from Old Europe—were practiced. They provided a way to feel religious experiences in old ways.

In later Christian times, the Birth Giver and Earth Mother fused with the Virgin Mary. Thus it is not surprising that in Catholic countries the worship of the Virgin surpasses that of Jesus. She is still connected with life-water and miraculously healing springs, with trees, blossoms, and flowers, with fruits and harvests. She is pure, strong, and just. In folk sculptures of the Mother of God, she is huge and powerful, holding a tiny Christ on her lap.

Old European goddesses appear in European folktales, beliefs, and mythological songs. The Bird Goddess and anthropomorphic Life-giving Goddess continue as a Fate or Fairy and also as a luck- and wealth-bringing duck, swan, and ram. As a prophetess she is a cuckoo. As a Primeval Mother she is

known as a supernatural deer (Irish mythology) or bear (Greek, Baltic, and Slavic).

Worship of the nonpoisonous snake as a symbol of life energy, cyclic renewal, and immortality continued until the twentieth century. The hibernating and awakening snake as a metaphor of dying and reawakening nature and as an essential symbol of the immortality of life energy was forgotten neither in Ireland nor in Lithuania of our century. The crown of a large snake (Queen) remains the symbol of wisdom.

The presence of the White Lady, "Death," who is also a bird of prey and a poisonous snake, was felt in many corners of Europe to this century. The shudder-inducing images—a tall slim woman dressed in white, an owl screeching, wailing like a bird of prey, crawling like a poisonous snake—are straight from the Neolithic. The White Lady was not transformed into an Indo-European black god of death. The use of bone and the colors white and yellow as symbols of death remained in European beliefs side by side with black as the color of death of the Indo-European and Christian religions.

The Killer-Regeneratrix, the overseer of cyclic life energy, the personification of winter, and Mother of the Dead, was turned into a witch of night and magic. In the period of the Great Inquisition, she was considered to be a disciple of Satan. The dethronement of this truly formidable goddess whose legacy was carried on by wise women, prophetesses, and healers who were the best and bravest minds of the time, is marked by blood and is the greatest shame of the Christian Church. The witch hunt of the 15th–18th centuries is a most satanic event in European history in the name of Christ. The murder of women

accused as witches escalated to more than eight million. The burned or hanged victims were mostly simple country women who learned the lore and the secrets of the Goddess from their mothers or grandmothers. In 1484, Pope Innocent VIII in a Papal Bull denounced witchcraft as an organized conspiracy of the Devil's army against the Holy Christian Empire. In 1486, a handbook of the witch hunters, called *Malleus Maleficarum*, "Hammer of Witches," appeared and became an indispensable authority for terror and murder. The use of any means of physical and psychological torture to force confessions out of the accused was allowed. The period can boast of greatest creativity in the discovery of tools and methods of torture. This was the beginning of the dangerous convulsions of androcratic rule which 460 years later reached the peak in Stalin's East Europe with the torture and murder of fifty million women, children, and men.

In spite of the horrible war against women and their lore and the demonization of the Goddess, the memories of her live on in fairy tales, rituals, customs, and in language. Collections such as Grimm's German tales are rich in prehistoric motifs describing the functions of this Winter Goddess, Frau Holla (Holle, Hell, Holda, Perchta, etc.). She is the ugly Old Hag with a long nose, large teeth, and disheveled hair. Her strength lingers in her teeth and hair. She is a snow- and weather-making woman. At the same time she regenerates nature. She is a woman who brings out the sun. Once a year she appears as a dove, a blessing ensuring fertility. As a frog, Holla brings the red apple, symbol of life, back to earth from the well into

which it fell at harvest. Her realm is the inner depth of mountains and caves (*Holla*, the name of the Goddess, and *Höhle*, the name for "cave" are certainly related. *Hell* in its present meaning is a doing of Christian missionaries). To *Holla*, as the Mother of the Dead, sacrifices were made in the form of baking a bread called *Hollenzopf*, "Holla's braid," at Christmas time. *Holler*, *Holunder*, "elder tree," was the sacred tree of the Goddess having healing powers. Under this tree lived the dead. The same goddess still plays a prominent role in beliefs of other Europeans as the Baltic Ragana, Russian Baba Yaga, Polish Jędza, Serbian Mora, Morava, Basque Mari, Irish Morrigan. This powerful goddess was not wiped out from the mythical world. Today she is an inspiration for the revival of herbology and other healing crafts and more than any other images of goddesses strengthens the confidence in women.

There is no question that Old European sacred images and symbols remain a vital part of the cultural heritage of Europe. Most of us were surrounded in childhood by the fairy world, which contained many images transmitted from Old Europe. In some nooks of Europe, as in my own motherland, Lithuania, there still flow sacred and miraculous rivers and springs, there flourish holy forests and groves, reservoirs of blossoming life, there grow gnarled trees brimming with vitality and holding the power to heal; along waters there still stand menhirs, called "Goddesses," full of mysterious power.

The Old European culture was the matrix of much later beliefs and practices. Memories of a long-lasting gynocentric past could not be erased, and it is not surprising that the feminine principle plays a formidable role in the subconscious dream and fantasy world. It remains (in Jungian terminology) "the repository of human experience" and a "depth structure." To an archeologist it is an extensively documented historical reality.

From “Couplets”
By Maggie Millner

I tried to stay away. Could not. I’d turn to J
or T and say: Today’s the day

it stops. Nothing right should feel
this dirty, nothing real

this quicksilver and fanged. I kept thinking
of that show *My Strange Addiction*,

which was enjoying a comeback among my peers
in those months, despite its cancellation years

before, conceptual depravity,
and total exploitation of its cast. Reality

TV seemed newly relevant, I guess,
as life itself grew ever more fictitious,

perpendicular to time. Obsession was a subject
that obsessed me, regardless of its object,

but I hated to watch strangers being hurt
by theirs: doll-collecting, surgery, ingesting dirt

and glass. There was no joy depicted—
just decrepitude, abjection, musty rooms. If I directed

one, my show would air the pleasures
of compulsion, and be named *Screw It, I’m Going to Text Her*,

or *Nothing’s Wrong, You’re Just in Love Again*,
or *True Life: Turning Twenty-Eight in Brooklyn*.

pt. i, symbols: early spring 2017

I have this urge to text Lily and tell her that I have a crush on her. I have this urge to text Lily and tell her that even if she doesn't want to ever hang out with me, is it OK if I write her love letters? I have this urge to send her these love letters where I describe what my imaginative life with her is like, late night drives, sharing coconut La Croix with half a tab of acid in it and walking through the city at dawn, making out on the steps of a stranger's house, lots of eye contact during sex, a mutual insistence on a low-key relationship that feels unusually intense when we're together but then spans days or even weeks with silence and confusion, mutual obsession and moments of forgetting, making out with other people and thinking about the other, laughing about how i'm a late 20s trans girl and she's an early 20s business school student, buckets of alcohol, hours of oral sex, me talking to her about my transition.

Once I start hormones I don't know if my penis will ever get hard again. People have said things to me like "you just don't know" and "you can do it, it's just more work" but people also say things like "your penis and testicles will atrophy substantially" and "it just depends on how important erections are for your sex." I'm really not sure how important are erections for my sex. Most people who've had sex with me thought I was a man. Last week I had sex with someone, Jeannie, who I met on the internet. She wanted me to dom her and neither of us could host (i live in a basement and there's no door between my room and rest of my house) so we met in a hotel room. Before we met up I asked her via text how much small talk she wanted to have before hand, and told her it was a fantasy of mine to meet someone and just fuck them immediately, no introduction. Jeannie assented to this via text, and pressed her mouth into my mouth as soon as she walked into the hotel room. A few minutes later she was lying on her back on the bed with her head over the edge, and I was standing, fucking her throat (something she told me was her number one turn-on when we were texting) and fingering her. This isn't a way of having sex that has a particular appeal to me, but in this moment, my erection seemed pretty important. People say transgirls can take boner pills. Jeannie thought I was a man, and when I went to fuck her in the hotel room, I knew, in a way, that she was the last person I was ever going to fuck who had this deep misperception of me.

I want Lily to desire me even if my body becomes less and less like a man's body. I recently read an *Everyday Feminism* article that seemed to be criticizing the phenomenon whereby people have “genital preferences” for their sexual partners. Specifically the article was saying that it was transphobic if you were a cis lesbian who didn't want to fuck a trans girl.** It was by a trans woman who doesn't actually say outright, “cis lesbians not wanting to sleep with chicks with dicks is transphobic” but instead was instead cataloging *why* different responses (perhaps culled from YouTube comments?) to her critiques of “genital preferences” (code for ‘not wanting to sleep with traps’) were “problematic” (which is code for *very wrong*). Sorry if that last sentence is confusing; the whole thing was confusing for me.

I don't want to mock this person, but I did not like her article. Her general concern seemed to be that some people don't want to have sex with trans people, and her solution to that was to fashion a critique of that preference. Cyrus, who identified as a lesbian for a long time, used to say he would go on T but he was nervous about getting hairier or having his voice get deeper, but noted that he'd love to have a giant clit. So maybe I will think of my dick as a giant, floppy clit.

I don't want Lily to think it's problematic not to want to sleep with me. I don't want to feel rejected that a hot cis person doesn't want me and then make a critique of it to make myself feel better. I just want to lick Lily's vagina and asshole and put my hands inside her, and have her lick my vagina / asshole and put her hands inside me. I assume Lily is straight (I seriously barely know her) and I wonder if she'd still have texted me those different times at 10 PM asking what I was doing if she knew my dick was going to be like old chewed up gum soon, if she knew I was going to have a big floppy clit.

I lived in New York for a few years after college and then got kind of emotionally sick and had to leave. When I lived there I went on a rant once to Elizabeth about symbols. One day, fairly early on in our early romantic thing, we were in bed late at night and I was talking about not wanting to be a symbol to her. I knew from having other rich friends in New York who were invested in sub-culture and coolness that we would often describe people by describing them in symbolic categories, for example what their job was or where they went to college, rather than how they actually are in the world. Like imagine

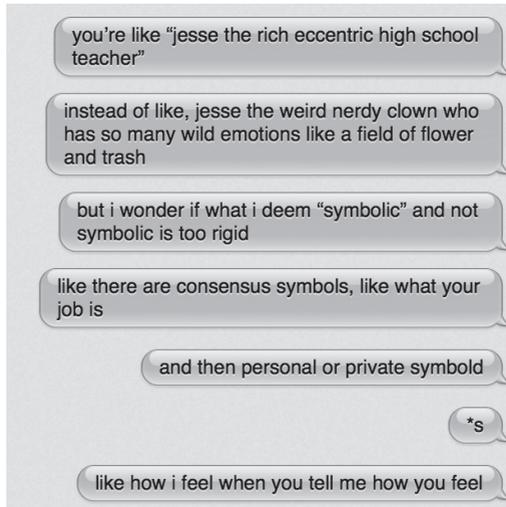
a starter pack meme, seeing the whole world like that. I had some spiritual social justice mentorship around believing that seeing people in this way was wrong, and so I believed it was wrong too. I said to Elizabeth, "I don't think of you as a hipstery art girl who lives in Bushwick, I think about what you're actually like." And I did, or I tried to anyways, I thought about her relationships with her friends and her parents, what she thought was funny and how she communicated, and how she liked to have sex, and what was off-putting to her and what she really wanted.

I also think in that moment I was being a little bit like the *Everyday Feminism* article author and feeling like it was Bad and Hurtful and Part of Capitalism for people to be invested in the symbolism of another person. I had a critique of one way people do things but the critique was actually partly coming from my pain. So with this relationship, I think I struggled, because I did recognize and make meaning out of the symbols represented by Elizabeth, that her family was rich and she had extra money to spend on clothes, and she recognized that I had fancy clothes too, and that she liked my clothes and I liked hers and we would take them off of each other and have sex with each others' pale bodies. These were part of how I experienced her and part of why we felt close to each other. Then I would also get stressed about us being too fancy, and not wanting to have that life, and I would put my stress about it on her in different ways. The critique was coming from my pain, as well as my beliefs.

I really wanted to resist seeing everything as a starter pack meme, a bundle of symbols, and I still do, to some extent. Like if someone tells me I should meet their friend, and then says that their friend is a kind of instagram-famous DJ from Greece who loves ketamine, I have trained myself to instinctively respond, even if just to myself "this is not really meaningful information about the person, except in a shallow capitalist way. I do not know if I would like them because I do not know if they are generous. I do not know if they are douche-y. I do not know if they are a grounded-and-actually-chill kind of person who ends up partying all the time. I do not know if they are addicted to visibility in a narcissistic way and if so whether I would be able to muster enough compassion around whatever their pain was in order to see them as a sympathetic character even though they might just be also really just adolescent and narcissistic and not that much fun on some deep level," etc.

I was texting Jesse recently about the difference between public and private symbols, telling him about my friend Renee.





So maybe there is an arc, between when you meet someone and all you have is publicly shared symbols, like their nationality and job (e.g. "sexy boy from Greece, is a DJ") and then as you get to know them, you can deepen and enrich your understanding of who they are. Then you get the private symbols ("you were really mean to that boy after you made out with him and I wondered if it was because you feel shame around your desire") which then turn back and inflect the original shared symbols with new meaning ("part of what you're working on when you continue having a life where you're constantly traveling and constantly partying is..) etc. Or if you are a witch you get some of the private symbols first, fast data in the first impression, like, about someone's emotions or deeper qualities.

I think most of the reasons I want to sleep with Lily are from public symbols. She's young and dresses funny, she goes to business school and loves musical theater and is british and blonde and femme and she has kind of weird taste (like wearing a necklace that's just a blue glass bead, almost stoner-y, with a preppy outfit). I can't tell if what seems odd to me about her could be

chalked up to her britishness. I don't know any of the things about Lily that would really let me know if she was a good friend or lover for me (like, when we texted about hanging out and she talked about going to an old-timey bar that has musical theater songs randomly performed, I had the strange feeling of knowing that I did not like things like that usually, but that I *liked her* for liking that, partly because I found it bizarre, i.e. I was invested in the symbol). I don't know how deeply she thinks about things. I don't know if she likes to have someone lick her vagina or her asshole as part of sex, or even have sex with the light on. (I had sex with another kind of normal preppy UPenn person like six or seven months ago who had some anxiety about all those things).

I don't know how Lily treats her friends, or how loyal she is, or whether she believes in healing and transformation in a deep way, I don't know if she thought I looked weird one of the first times she saw me behind the counter of the coffee shop—with a little burnt stubble on my chin from getting laser hair removal, and eyeliner and mascara on but no foundation or concealer, my shoulder-length hair in little pigtails, wearing a chunky, seethrough white sweater vest stained with coffee and a grey Calvin Klein sports bra underneath—I don't know if she would put her whole hand in my asshole. I don't even know if she thinks putting her hand in my asshole would be a normal or novel thing to do, or something she would think 'I'm the kind of person who gets all the way up to my mid-forearm in Hannah's asshole,' or if it wouldn't be part of her self-image at all. But in spite of not knowing these things, I desire her anyways. I also assume she is a cis woman, which for all I know is not the case (though I really actually think that it is the case, even though we've only run into each other in a coffee shop twice and texted for a week or something; trans people especially are not supposed to make assumptions about these things, so I'm sorry to my people, but like, she's cis).

The *Everyday Feminism* person, and I think a lot of trans liberation people, are saying "don't see penises as a symbol for man-ness, don't see vaginas as a symbol for woman-ness," and I want to do that work to not see those things as such. When my penis gets tiny and limp, like a distended belly button, it probably won't remind anyone of man-ness, maybe it will remind them of baby-ness, like a baby's dick, and maybe that will be part of my trans liberation. Maybe thinking someone's capitalist public identities are meaningful (like thinking someone is smart if they went to Wharton) is like thinking that

someone's genitals are a meaningful symbol.

But I think me leaning on Lily's public symbols also has to do with what I want from her around my own trans liberation. I want a blonde british Wharton student—who believes that corporate social responsibility (rather than militant insurrection) is the best means to solve the world's most pressing problems—to also believe that my limp clit-dick-silly-putty-thing is extremely sexy. I want her to desire me even though she stands for the structures and spaces that generally don't desire trans bodies, gender non-conforming bodies. I don't care what she thinks of my insurrectionary anarchist political analysis, as long as she thinks I'm hot.

And years ago, when I lived in New York and ranted about not validating people based on symbols, I would have said that it's Bad and Wrong and False Consciousness or something, to want to be sexually and emotionally validated by a normatively hot person. But now I know it's just part of trying to make sense of my own body in oppression, and it's OK that I want Lily to desire me, and for her desire to keep me safe, in a way that's different than when hairy social justice queers desire me, because I expect it from them—because SJW queers fetishize trans women too, newsflash—and what I am actually hungry for is some kind of counter-narrative, some notion that the oppressor would deign to touch my body, sweat with my body, commune with my body, etc.

And maybe Lily desiring me won't actually liberate me all the way, maybe it will just ease the pain of this moment. Maybe wanting a normie to want to fuck you is internalized oppression, but it's also just the river I'm swimming in or the museum I'm wandering around in. Being trans, and especially a trans person who doesn't pass as a cis person (e.g. people think I'm a *really* fucked up man, or can't tell what the fuck I am) is like a symbolic 'fuck you' to people around me, for which they occasionally punish me. Symbols are part of the currency of power and we can play with them I think, but we can't simply do away with them because they are bigger than us and because they exist in and describe all of our relationships to each other and to our world.

I saw a meme recently that said it's bad to say that trans women were socialized as men, that it's transphobic. I agree with parts of this and not others. I always wanted to be a woman. There are pictures of me as a kid dressed in

tutus and dresses, as a toddler I loved barbies, as a pre-teen loved makeup, and have at every life phase, even in my most repressed moments, found opportunities several times a year, usually in the guise of play, to do some version of “drag.” So saying I was a man before transition might be inaccurate, but saying I was “socialized” as a man—which to me means that the gender and role that other people *told me* I had/was for most of my life in most spaces was maleness (albeit effete rarified Jewish intellectual maleness)—I think is accurate, and moreover I think that this telling-of-my-gender-to-me-by-others had an impact on me. I understand the desire to refute the claim that trans women were once men (I feel shitty when people invoke my past without my consent, and people do it all the fucking time) but in some ways, my feelings about this are an appeal to queer time and private symbols, over public symbols. In public symbolism I was perceived as and treated as a man. In my private symbology, I experienced this treatment (which people call masculine socialization) and believed I *had* to be a man, I was supposed to be a man. For other trans girls, in their public and private symbolism, maybe they were never men and I respect that too. Part of the reason it’s hard to generalize about these things is that—despite what cis medical students get taught at the supposedly woke SJW weekend long workshop before they misgender you at the trans clinic—trans-ness isn’t one single or definitive experience.

In college when I dated Jenny and was closeted she told me that dating me was less like having a regular boyfriend and more like her relationships with her “crazy” best girl friends in high school, the ones who supported her around her eating disorder and were kind of obsessed with her and wanted to stay up all night talking. I took this as a compliment. This felt like an example of a time when someone saw me in my real gender. I *am* a “crazy” girl, and I love intense hangs with other femmes, and I love to be super-connected, and sometimes friendships with cis men feel unsatisfying—even though I **do** have special cis men friends who will stay up late with me—sometimes cis guys’ capacity to really just be real and hang out and talk about emotions and experiences for hours and give each other good attention seems limited somehow. But I also don’t believe that loving emotions or interconnection is an intrinsic quality of femininity (even though people do say when you start estrogen your emotions go “crazy”).

Writing now, before I start hormones, I feel the feeling of “I can’t wait to go

“crazy,” I can’t wait for my mental health to become more gelatinous and my emotions to drip down my face and tits when I start estrogen,” even though I have no idea what it will be like. I also feel scared of being “crazy,” of the emotions being too big. Starting hormones is a symbol of transness and it’s also a private experience, and it’s also an expression of a will to have your private symbolism become public, like how hormones are supposed to make me grow little boobies. I want to do it, I want my little boobies to tell the world “here is a girl, that’s how she feels to herself, that’s the symbol she wants you to convey to her.”

This discrepancy between public consensus symbols and private symbols or personal meanings is at the heart of a lot of arguments about trans shit and I don’t really want to take positions on all of it because I don’t know or understand everything, and I’m really so early in my process. But I do think it’s weird to call out cis lesbians who don’t want to have sex with trans girls on *Everyday Feminism*; it just feels off to me, like it makes me have a slimy wiggly feeling in my body, maybe because I also believe that literally no one should have to have sex with anyone they don’t want to. And also I think that if there’s one thing I want to critique here it’s having critiques of things instead of just saying your underlying emotions, because abstract critique is part of patriarchy (and I know this because being socialized as a man for me, especially at fancy colleges, was being trained, over and over again, to hold power by criticizing things from a place of objectivity, instead of just saying my emotional intuition and not making up a reason for why it felt that way). I think because of this I sometimes feel bored when I have to deal with or engage someone’s abstract critique, and it’s easier and more fun for me to engage with their emotionality. In fact, sometimes abstract critiques make me angry which is why I developed an abstract critique of them.

pt. iii, trans girl suicide museum 1: cartesian dysphoria (can't remember when I wrote this)

I told Claudia the name of this manuscript. Claudia said there was a thing on tumblr that was like 'define your gender in five words' and she said my five could be trans girl suicide museum, even though it's only four. Claudia also told me a very helpful analysis of what suicide is, which I will share here, in part because I wrote any of this shit down hoping myself not to die by my own hand, and for no other trans girls (and no trans guys, and no non binary people, agender people, or anyone else who has deviant gender and does suicide) to feel that they have to die in order to get through it, and I think Claudia's analysis helped me. She said suicide is what happens when one's internal and external life context overwhelms one's resources to keep living. It helped me to think of suicide like this as a kind of tipping mechanism, a result of overwhelm. In a healing/transformation framework, suicide can be prevented by changing a person's life context or by fortifying their inner resources to tolerate the horror of being alive.

When my friend called me a month ago saying that they were thinking about ending it, I imagined us together squatting on the low end of the seesaw, feet in leather stirrups fastened to the floor with big metal bolts, making sure we stayed down. I was behind her with my arms around her waist like a motorcycle passenger, while hundreds of things fell on the upper side of the seesaw, pouring down, trying to tip it: their parents, their dead ancestors, the surgeon that performed gender affirming surgery on them, hundreds of pounds of trash, especially *bad* trash, like dirty diapers, hypodermic needles for hormones, hypodermic needles for dope, dog shit bags that ripped open, mice traps with dead mice in them (can mice be trans) and of course hundreds of gallons of menstrual fluid, semen, crude oil, spit, diarrhea, malta goya, iced coffee, the restaurant grease traps that trans people clean because they can't get other jobs—really just anything that goes down a drain—raining down trying to tip the seesaw. I don't know why there's malta goya except my friend who tried to get me to kiss his penis when I was five years old loved malta goya. I'm scared to include this last sentence because I know some people believe that transpeople are only trans because of childhood sexual experiences that they could heal from and then be cis. Hazel started making a film collage of all tropes about transwomen from mainstream American movies,

and found that a recurrent trope, especially from thrillers and horror movies, was that we are crazy traps because bad stuff happened to us when we were kids, and that is what made us psychos or murderers in the movies, which is ironic because we are more likely to be murdered than other people, especially if we are black or brown, and we are more likely to murder ourselves. We are more likely to cling to the floor while the trash pile streams down on the high end of the seesaw, we are more likely to be flung into space, sucked up into the trash chute, and gone.

The trans girl suicide museum isn't necessarily a place you go in order to kill yourself, much in the way that people don't necessarily go into an art museum in order to do art. There is definitely a room in the museum with the seesaw in it, or at least there is in my museum. Imagine the most normal white sterile high-ceilinged art gallery room you can picture, and then imagine a yellow metal seesaw in the middle of the room, with a giant opening over the high end of it, a mechanical cisgendered vagina ready to dump transphobia on you and lift you, from your seat on the low-end, up into quiet. But it's not just that. It's as much spending the hours between 3 and 5am scrolling-through-old-pictures-on-your-external-hard-drive-looking-at-your-bone-structure-from-when-you-were-a-kid-and-teenager as it is suicidal ideation.

In the horror movie *Oculus* there's a haunted mirror that two siblings are trying to destroy, because the mirror makes people do bad things. One sibling builds a giant metal spike on a pendulum, hitched to the ceiling, prepared to swing down and smash the mirror. But in the final moment when the pendulum comes down, the girl sibling who built the whole device is somehow standing in the way— the mirror protects itself, and she is murdered, penetrated by her own pendulum spike, guts spilling out onto the floor in front of the haunted mirror. Part of gazing at one's self in transphobia (and perhaps in hyper-capitalist individualism consumerism in general) is the myth that looking at yourself heals you, when it might in fact be haunting you, poisoning you, tricking you into disemboweling yourself.

ARE TRAPS TRAPPED IN THE MUSEUM? idk. the texture varies so much based on money. the trans people I know who have some level of class privilege get to stay in the museum in a particular way, like I know someone who has EBT and a parent co-signed credit card, someone who works minimum

wage only two-days a week, lots of people depending on random monetary kickbacks from family members or other kinds leaked down accumulated capital (getting gifted a car, getting to stay in a second home, getting little gigs from one's parents or their friends, not having debt from school etc.) Girls I know who don't have family money do sex work, work weed, sell drugs, have sugar daddies, are transient, are strategizing. Some girls with loaded families lose access when they transition. Most girls I know, regardless of class, can't work normal office jobs and wouldn't want to if we could. Some girls I know have learned to code because you can work remotely and never have to go into an institutional building with normal people. The things you can do to scrape by, the sources from which you draw strength, the things cisheteropatriarchy permits you to do, the limits of what you can tolerate.** Your imagination inside the walls wondering if the walls themselves can move.

I feel trapped in the museum right now and part of what that means for me is that I have very little attention for anything not related to transness, my own or other people's, but almost unlimited attention for transness, like maybe the way evangelical christians feel about Jesus or like how a drowning person feels about air.

One thing I also don't know is if traps actually ever leave the museum. I think I've kind of been in it since an acid trip in the winter of early 2017 when I pounded the floor of my room and wept at 8am thinking about how oppression is fundamentally about being close to death (in part because I had been reading this writing about AIDS and Act Up by Pippi Kessler and how activists are close to death)** after spending many hours at the DJ set of some chicago house person (where I took the acid) and dancing until my friend got too stressed about how it was hard to dance because people kept walking through the dancefloor, and also he was tripping, so we went back to his house with his partner (we were all tripping hard) and listened to Tinariwen and he asked me about if my family had money or not (his family had money). At 7am that morning I took a lyft the three quarters of a mile back to the basement room where I lived then and at 8:30 or so I texted the person I was dating at the time, M, and asked them to come over before work because I couldn't sleep or stop crying, and they did come over for a minute and were nice to me; in the basement room I had pinned a bath towel over the garden-level window in my attempt to sleep at 8 in the morning, and the low winter sun was blasting

through the window; the way the towel fell, there was a tiny aperture in the folds of fabric through which a piercing shard of light came through, causing a blinding cadmium diamond to land directly on—and fully illuminate—my pillow. I thought it was extremely funny because I really wanted to sleep, but was too hot to keep my head under the covers (because I was still tripping and couldn't stop sweating) and yet when I took my head out to look around, I was blinded by this razor sharp spotlight and couldn't possibly fall asleep. M thought it was funny too and offered to adjust the towel for me and they were giving me care in this specific way that I have now learned I really wanted in that part of the museum, and anyways that is the morning I think I entered the museum, because when I was crying, I was crying about how I couldn't be an activist right now, about how I just have to be doing something extremely fierce and internal, and I didn't know when it would end. I met Lily shortly after this. If this was a more literary or more pretentious piece of writing I would probably try to connect this particular experience at this particular time to the 2016 election, but I don't feel like it X_x

So, as I said before, one thing I also don't know is if traps actually ever leave the museum, like if I will be a weepy introspective bitch when I'm 50, taking my straight friends' kids out to the movies and silently crying about cis-normative messaging in the film, or about which bathroom to use, or the way the teenage movie theater cashier looks at my gigantic tits that maybe I will have when I'm 50 because literally who the fuck knows. I met this girl recently and we were talking about the museum (I think I described it as being really focused on myself and my transness in this phase of my transition) and I was saying I felt like it was going on and on in this phase, and she said totally she knew exactly what I was talking about and I asked how long she felt like she had been in it, and she said like five years and I realized that it might go on forever for me too, even as I write this, that acid trip day was like 11 months ago, and i'm not sure if that is a short time or a long time.

I don't usually describe my experience as being trapped in a boy's body because my body has always felt like a faggot bitch body, from my bony hips and skinny waist to my long muscular legs and tight asshole. My roommate in boarding school once saw me lying in bed in a pair of tight briefs and said I had a girl butt. No matter what I tried in my cis guy life, real guys always thought i was a little bitch. it makes more sense to describe it as being trapped

in a museum because my body belongs to me and i love it, but the thing I'm trapped in someone else built and i can't find the door.

Before I started trying hard to pass, I felt OK about how I looked. It wasn't until I realized that my protruding brow bone or big hands were a giveaway that I started to feel that they were disgusting. I think I was so happy when I started to look more femme that it took me a minute to figure out I still was being read as a man, an unhappy reality I was made aware of by stares from strangers, but that I fully felt, randomly one day, early into my public transition when I was staring at a picture of myself on instagram, one of the first outwardly gender variant-looking pictures I'd posted. It was a tired early-morning make-up smeared selfie, just my face, standing outside some DC pizza restaurant that had been in the news during the fall of 2016 (ok ok it was comet ping pong, google it), having come from M's parent's house shortly after dawn. When I posted it I felt almost giddy—I thought I looked so femme. But after some more time passed, maybe another six months, I saw the picture and saw what probably most others saw: a boy with a girlish haircut, girlish eyebrows, and no facial hair, with mascara smudges under his eyes.

Even after this revelation though, this lens shift, I still don't like hating my body. I'm on hormones now so my breasts are coming in and they're beautiful and I love them, but I didn't dislike my pecs before. Now sometimes I wish my breasts were bigger, or that my chest looked like some conventional/normative idea of a girl chest and not a boy chest, but I also never disliked my pecs. It's funny to write this because I wanted to be a girl for so long and I think repressed it in part because I was afraid of being a freak or getting in trouble or getting beat up (or other things that were palpable threats when I was a young girl). I think part of the medicalized cis narrative of transness is about there being a *problem* with a given body, necessitating an intervention that medical professionals can deem appropriate and administer. Even though I know I repressed my transness, I'm not sure I repressed hating my body, I might have actually just felt loving towards my body.

And while dysphoria is a real experience for a lot of people, it's also focused on pathology and negation, on getting rid of assigned gender. It's nice for me to think about transness not as just a getting-rid-of, but as a manifesting, an imagining, an inception, an integration. Dysphoria, as a pathology, being the

requisite marker of transness, connects to the idea that trans people should want to be cis people. Trans people can want to be whatever they want, but sometimes when trans girls really want to be cis girls, it reminds me of my Jewish ancestors, really wanting to be white Americans, but not being able to get rid of their slavic accents or semitic bone structure. I want to be a cis woman, but I'll never be a cis woman, I'll always be a trap, no matter how many surgical vaginas I get sewed into my body. If you think this invocation of my Jewish ancestors is somehow anti-surgery, just know that I'm so excited to get FFS I can't fucking wait. When Hazel said she was scared of getting FFS because they would want to rhinoplasty her Jewish nose to make it look goyish, I told her she was joining a long legacy of Jewish women who had gotten plastic surgery on their noses. I was re-reading this last sentence, almost comatose from k, just getting out of a lyft and stumbling into my bed, thinking about the idea of being part of a long legacy of jews, a long legacy of traps, a long legacy of crazy people. I can't decide if I should take off my baby blue Issey Miyake pants that Elizabeth bought me on my birthday in 2015 or sleep in them like they are pajama pants. I feel ashamed to wear them out in West Philadelphia because they are too fancy. I write a note on my iPhone: i am part of a long legacy of transgender jewish women living in west Philadelphia and coming home high on k wondering if i should take off my issey pants before bed.

Another weird thing about dysphoria is that it's treated as a problem between the mentally ill trans' person's brain and their supposedly healthy body. This is why my second wave feminist cis mother is scared that I want to get facial feminization surgery: because my body is healthy and doesn't need to get chopped up. Only a sick-mind would want to chop up a healthy-body. I think of this understanding of dysphoria—a taut relationship between an isolated individual's brain and an isolated individual's body—as a kind of cartesian dysphoria, by which I mean a dysphoria that deeply depends on the difference between the body and the mind, and treats individuals as isolated and self-governing, mental illness and all.

Regular trans affirmation then is cartesian both because it depends on a body/mind split, and because it is linear, it maps onto a cartesian plane, with time on the X axis and true transness on the Y axis. At some point you cross a threshold of transition, and you finally **are** trans, maybe when you get your genitals cut up, or maybe when you finally pass all the time, or when a hot-cis-

person-who's-not-woke-about-gender (like Lily) wants to fuck you and thinks your gender is real and normal and hot. If this last one is the marker, maybe no one ever gets to be really trans.

My experience of dysphoria—and really my experience of gender altogether—is best described by something Cyrus first talked about with me, namely the idea that your gender is not something you experience only in isolation, but something that is reflected back to you by other people, that gender is what leaks out in the eyes of cis people clocking us in public bathrooms or our family members making assumptions about us, and the ways the leakage bounces back and ricochets and echoes—in dressing rooms and the lines at nightclubs, and at airport security and in the line at Walgreens when you look like a girl and you're buying condoms and enemas—and then also that is held up or shone upon us by other queer people, by our trans sisters and siblings, by other gender variant friends and familiars.

Gender flickers, hiccups, and spins. It creeps and it slithers, it infects and it disappears. Not being trapped in a body, being trapped in a museum. If, as Cyrus said, one's gender is something partially constituted by the gender that people reflect back to you, then part of being trans for me is *deciding* to make a claim on the gender I want reflected back to me, instead of just letting people reflect it back to me as they wanted. I'm thinking about one of the people who taught me a lot about social justice when I was younger telling me it was wrong for me, supposedly a "man," to want to be a woman, and I at the time, accepted what was being reflected back. The dissonance of other people reflecting back to me a gender that's different than the one I am claiming—the one I'm giving myself permission to experience, the one I'm melting into—is one definition of transphobia, this dissonance and all the violence that comes with it. The first and most important ongoing part of my transition has been being in community with other queer and trans people, and so if you are thinking you might want to reclaim or re-narrate the gender that people reflect back to you, my advice is to try and hang out with other queers. And also if someone tries to talk to you about your transness by asking what gender you would have on a desert island, you can tell them you wouldn't have a gender in the same way because gender is inextricably relational, not merely individual.

Me and Cyrus and our other friends didn't invent the idea that gender is unsta-

ble, and I imagine that people felt it in some way even before it was 'invented' as an idea, though such imagining gets a little tricky. This doctor and historian Jonathan Metzler says that it doesn't make sense to talk about schizophrenia in, say, the 15th century, because the cultural category did not exist yet.** Even if people were doing a comparable set of behaviors that today we would identify as schizophrenic, the legal, social, and biological frameworks implicit in the category of schizophrenia and so the thing we talk about today, in all of our current versions, did not exist. Like, if you live in a communal culture where everyone believes in God and thinks everything is connected to God and the community, then hearing voices is a fundamentally different thing than in an individualist scientific-secular culture like the one I grew up in (people have studied this difference too). Our categories don't move across history and culture cleanly, Metzler is saying. So it's responsible, if we're looking at a medical category (including transness) to look at its history and culture. Probably there are people studying this, but because I'm just a party girl and not a scholar I actually don't know what the most up-to-date people are saying. Maybe some day when I do less drugs or have sex with fewer people I will wake up early and go running and then make a helpful reading list for you of trans people writing about the social-historical construction of transness.

There's this other thing Foucault says, which I think is related, he says that homosexuality was invented in the nineteenth century.** This idea is important to me in trying to understand my experience. What he's talking about, I think, is that there were men who fucked other men and women who fucked other women all through history, but it wasn't until the 19th century that we called these people "homosexual" and put them in that category, which has a specific set of legal, social, and biological implications, including that their behavior was now pulled into the spider's web of shared cultural recognition, even if just as a deviant identity. There's all kinds of examples of this, but how an average person experiences living after the invention of homosexuality could be demonstrated by stereotypes of gayness. Cultural familiarity with gay stereotypes (cis men, promiscuity, circuit parties, and HIV) are not because that's what gayness is or what gay experience is, but because that's how the category was constructed in order to uphold myths about straightness, purity, and monogamy. In other words (and this also from Foucault) homosexuality wasn't invented in order to give gay people better healthcare or more respectful employers, it was invented (perhaps analogously to the

way Columbus “discovered” the American continent) in order to increase the reach of power, to map out, identify, taxonomize, and regulate what exists, what is known, what can be.

This idea, that these categories are historically and culturally dependent, is important to me.

One reason it's important to me is because we are in the century-long process of the categorical invention of the trans woman. Hannah Arendt wrote (I actually can't remember where or I would cite it, maybe somewhere in *Between Past and Future*) that it was fundamentally different to be a Jewish person before the foundation of the state of Israel. She didn't mean better or worse, more fucked up or more liberated, but just that there was a shift in consciousness for people with this identity around this historical event. And I wonder about this with transness, what was it like to be a transgirl in the 50s, or the 1850s, and how did girls then feel and act, how did they relate to their bodies, how did they think about ideas we have now like passing or dysphoria. Did they feel like girls, or like women, or like ghosts, or like some other thing I wouldn't think of off the top of my head because I live in a particular historical time, such that my parents rented the *Crying Game* on VHS and watched it with me when I was 10, and so I already knew before I knew the word “trans” that if I fooled a man into thinking I was a girl and tried to have sex with him he would think I was disgusting. I bet 1950s or 1850s girls like me didn't think of dysphoria as Cartesian, as a bad map drawn by a sick mind on a healthy body...but they might have.

And does it even make sense to call them trans girls if that category didn't exist yet. Another reason I'm stuck on this Foucault/Metzl idea about our categories being socially and culturally constructed is because I do feel trans-historical connection—like invisible ketamine vapor threads across time and space—to my sisters and to gender variant people, and I wonder what it means. Do I have to believe in some kind of non-verbal extracultural essence of transness? Would girls from other cultures and times relate to me too? Would girls in the 40s and 50s have thought that the most visible trans-femme celebrities of this year were symbols of liberation, or symbols of our identity being “discovered” and “invented” and colonized and controlled? Or both? or neither? And I guess, when I imagine hanging out with my sisters from other historical times,

I always wonder, would they have loved k?

One thing I feel writing this part is that I am mad and sad that people in academia write critical theory about the stuff I'm talking about here and then compete with each other in a capitalist marketplace for who has the smartest ideas at conferences and in journals. After I got depressed about this competition dynamic in my mid 20s I avoided writing about my ideas in public, because I didn't want to cheapen my own emotional experience or intellectual life by competing with it, commodifying it, saying that I had the best or right analysis, and then being validated by people on panels or at cocktail parties or in bars downtown. One of my teachers really helped me understand how this was wrong; she said, instead of writing think pieces, people should just write about how they are feeling, that would be more helpful.

Part of me writing this, of trying to make a map of the museum, is just because I was and am trying to not kill myself. Part of what helped me not do that so far was to write about some of these ideas. Cyrus, when reading this, asked why writing in particular helped and I don't know exactly but one possible reason is because it's like excavating my own mind (private symbols) and twirling something out of it that not everyone could see before (public symbols), and transition can also be like that—an excavation—so they compliment each other as processes. I did this twirling and decided to publish it mostly because my friend Clare asked me if I wanted to, and also because I thought maybe it could help some other girl not kill herself. Even if it's humiliating or self-commodifying for me to put this in the world, maybe it's worth it if just one girl reads this and doesn't kill herself. So that was the calculation I made. But I still think the academia/gender/theory/marketplace is mostly a garbage pile and a distraction from real social movement work. I also never want to contribute to a reality where someone feels inadequate or less-than because they haven't read Foucault or whatever. So if you felt that reading this, I want to say: the thing most people who read Foucault have in common, above all else, is expensive educations. Not wisdom, or insight, or superiority. Just to be really clear. And while I wrote this to talk to other trans people, and contribute to world where the stories of gender variant people are accessible to other gender variant people, I bet some day a cis person is going to want to argue with me about this section. And if you are that cis person, maybe instead of writing an argument, you should write about your feelings.

Anyways, when I have been sleeping with this person Aarti, and when we have sex, she doesn't like to touch my appendage. Hazel and I heard Mountain call their dick an appendage recently and it made both of us so happy so I have been saying it all the time. I love hanging out with Mountain and hearing what they think about and believe. Mountain said that gender is just a set of rules that you can adhere to more or less closely, with different advantages and disadvantages to your adherence, depending on a given situation. In this way, they said, it's like fan fic. But seriously, is it transphobia if a cis lesbian doesn't want to touch my appendage? Lately I have been seeing if something is transphobic by seeing if it makes me cry. I didn't want to cry about Aarti but maybe it's because we're not that close. I can't remember the *Everyday Feminism* article now, I don't care about that shit.

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