Radical Sense
Isolation Reader Volume 5

SEX   AS   CARE

sex as care

in times of crisis

among friends
among enemies

polyamory

see the mosquito resting on the net.

Make way for Winged Eros:
A Letter to Working Youth

Love as a socio-psychological factor

You ask me, my young friend, what place proletarian ideology gives to love? You are concerned by the fact that at the present time young workers are occupied more with love and related questions than with the tremendous tasks of construction which face the workers' republic. It is difficult for me to judge events from a distance, but let us try to find an explanation for this situation, and then it will be easier to answer the first question about the place of love in proletarian ideology.

There can be no doubt that Soviet Russia has entered a new phase of the civil war. The main theatre of struggle is now the front where the two ideologies, the two cultures – the bourgeois and the proletarian – do battle. The incompatibility of these two ideologies is becoming increasingly obvious, and the contradictions between these two fundamentally different cultures are growing more acute. Alongside the victory of communist principles and ideals in the sphere of politics and economics, a revolution in the outlook, emotions and the inner world of working people is inevitably taking place. A new attitude to life, society, work, art and to the rules of living (i.e. morality) can already be observed. The arrangement of sexual relationships is one aspect of these rules of living. Over the five years of the existence of our labour republic, the revolution on this non-military front has been accomplishing a great shift in the way men and women think. The fiercer the battle between the two ideologies, the greater the significance it assumes and the more inevitably it raises new "riddles of life" and new problems to which only the ideology of the working class can give a satisfactory answer.

The "riddle of love" that interests us here is one such problem. This question of the relationships between the sexes is a mystery as old as human society itself. At different levels of historical development mankind has approached the solution of this problem in different ways. The problem remains the same; the keys to its solution change. The keys are fashioned by the different epochs, by the classes in power and by the "spirit" of a particular age (in other words by its culture).

In Russia over the recent years of intense civil war and general dislocation there has been little interest in the nature of the riddle. The

men and women of the working classes were in the grip of other emotions, passions and experiences. In those years everyone walked in the shadow of death, and it was being decided whether victory would belong to the revolution and progress or to counter-revolution and reaction. In face of the revolutionary threat, tender-winged Eros fled from the surface of life. There was neither time nor a surplus of inner strength for love's "joys and pains". Such is the law of the preservation of humanity's social and psychological energy. As a whole, this energy is always directed to the most urgent aims of the historical moment. And in Russia, for a time, the biological instinct of reproduction, the natural voice of nature dominated the situation. Men and women came together and men and women parted much more easily and much more simply than before. They came together without great commitment and parted without tears or regret.

Prostitution disappeared, and the number of sexual relationships where the partners were under no obligation to each other and which were based on the instinct of reproduction unadorned by any emotions of love increased. This fact frightened some. But such a development was, in those years, inevitable. Either pre-existing relationships continued to exist and unite men and women through comradeship and long-standing friendship, which was rendered more precious by the seriousness of the moment, or new relationships were begun for the satisfaction of purely biological needs, both partners treating the affair as incidental and avoiding any commitment that might hinder their work for the revolution.

The unadorned sexual drive is easily aroused but is soon spent; thus "wingless Eros" consumes less inner strength than "winged Eros", whose love is woven of delicate strands of every kind of emotion. "Wingless Eros" does not make one suffer from sleepless nights, does not sap one's will, and does not entangle the rational workings of the mind. The fighting class could not have fallen under the power of "winged Eros" at a time when the clarion call of revolution was sounding. It would not have been expedient at such a time to waste the inner strength of the members of the collective on experiences that did not directly serve the revolution. Individual sex love, which lies at the heart of the pair marriage, demands a great expenditure of inner energy. The working class was interested not only in economising in terms of material wealth but also in preserving the intellectual and emotional energy of each person. For this reason, at a time of heightened revolutionary struggle, the undemanding instinct of reproduction spontaneously replaced the all-embracing "winged Eros".

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But now the picture changes. The Soviet republic and the whole of toiling humanity are entering a period of temporary and comparative calm. The complex task of understanding and assimilating the achievements and gains that have been made is beginning. The proletariat, the creator of new forms of life, must be able to learn from all social and psychological phenomena, grasp the significance of these phenomena and fashion weapons from them for the self-defence of the class. Only when the proletariat has appropriated the laws not only of the creation of material wealth but also of inner, psychological life is it able to advance fully armed to fight the decaying bourgeois world. Only then will toiling humanity prove itself to be the victor, not only on the military and labour front but also on the psychological-cultural front.

Now that the revolution has proved victorious and is in a stronger position, and now that the atmosphere of revolutionary élan has ceased to absorb men and women completely, tender-winged Eros has emerged from the shadows and begun to demand his rightful place. "Wingless Eros" has ceased to satisfy psychological needs. Emotional energy has accumulated and men and women, even of the working class, have not yet learned to use it for the inner life of the collective. This extra energy seeks an outlet in the love-experience. The many-stringed lyre of the god of love drowns the monotonous voice of "wingless Eros". Men and women are now not only united by the momentary satisfaction of the sex instinct but are beginning to experience "love affairs" again, and to know all the sufferings and all the exaltations of love's happiness.

In the life of the Soviet republic an undoubted growth of intellectual and emotional needs, a desire for knowledge, an interest in scientific questions and in art and the theatre can be observed. This movement towards transformation inevitably embraces the sphere of love experiences too. Interest is aroused in the question of the psychology of sex, the mystery of love. Everyone to some extent is having to face up to questions of personal life. One notes with surprise that party workers who in previous years had time only for Pravda editorials and minutes and reports are reading fiction books in which winged Eros is lauded.

What does this mean? Is this a reactionary step? A symptom of the beginning of the decline of revolutionary creativity? Nothing of the sort! It is time we separated ourselves from the hypocrisy of bourgeois thought. It is time to recognise openly that love is not only a powerful natural factor, a biological force, but also a social factor. Essentially love is a profoundly social emotion. At all stages of human development

love has (in different forms, it is true) been an integral part of culture. Even the bourgeoisie, who saw love as a "private matter", was able to channel the expression of love in its class interests. The ideology of the working class must pay even greater attention to the significance of love as a factor which can, like any other psychological or social phenomenon, be channelled to the advantage of the collective. Love is not in the least a "private" matter concerning only the two loving persons: love possesses a uniting element which is valuable to the collective. This is clear from the fact that at all stages of historical development society has established norms defining when and under what conditions love is "legal" (i.e. corresponds to the interests of the given social collective), and when and under what conditions love is sinful and criminal (i.e. contradicts the tasks of the given society).

Historical notes

From the very early stages of its social being, humanity has sought to regulate not only sexual relations but love itself.

In the kinship community, love for one's blood relations was considered the highest virtue. The kinship group would not have approved of a woman sacrificing herself for the sake of a beloved husband; fraternal or sisterly attachment were the most highly regarded feelings. Antigone, who according to the Greek legend risked her life to bury the body of her dead brother, was a heroine in the eyes of her contemporaries. Modern bourgeois society would consider such an action on the part of a sister as highly curious. In the times of tribal rule, when the state was still in its embryonic stage, the love held in greatest respect was the love between two members of the same tribe. In an era when the social collective had only just evolved from the stage of kinship community and was still not firmly established in its new form, it was vitally important that its members were linked by mental and emotional ties. Love-friendship was the most suitable type of tie, since at that time the interests of the collective required the growth and accumulation of contacts not between the marriage pair but between fellow-members of the tribe, between the organisers and defenders of the tribe and state (that is to say, between the men of the tribe, of course; women at that time had no role to play in social life, and there was no talk of friendship among women). "Friendship" was praised and considered far more important than love between man and wife. Castor and Pollux were famous for their loyalty to each other and their unshakeable friendship, rather than for the feats they performed for their country. For the sake of friendship or its semblance a man might offer

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his wife to an acquaintance or a guest.

The ancient world considered friendship and "loyalty until the grave" to be civic virtues. Love in the modern sense of the word had no place, and hardly attracted the attention either of poets or of writers. The dominant ideology of that time relegated love to the sphere of narrow, personal experiences with which society was not concerned; marriage was based on convenience, not on love. Love was just one among other amusements; it was a luxury which only the citizen who had fulfilled all his obligations to the state could afford. While bourgeois ideology values the "ability to love" provided it confines itself to the limits set down by bourgeois morality, the ancient world did not consider such emotions in its categories of virtues and positive human qualities. The person who accomplished great deeds and risked his life for his friend was considered a hero and his action "most virtuous", while a man risking himself for the sake of a woman he loved would have been reproached or even despised.

The morality of the ancient world, then, did not even recognise the love that inspired men to great deeds – the love so highly regarded in the feudal period – as worthy of consideration. The ancient world recognised only those emotions which drew its fellow-members close together and rendered the emerging social organism more stable. In subsequent stages of cultural development, however, friendship ceases to be considered a moral virtue. Bourgeois society was built on the principles of individualism and competition, and has no place for friendship as a moral factor. Friendship does not help in any way, and may hinder the achievement of class aims; it is viewed as an unnecessary manifestation of "sentimentality" and weakness. Friendship becomes an object of derision. Castor and Pollux in the New York or London of today would only evoke a condescending smile. This was not so in feudal society, where love-friendship was seen as a quality to be taught and encouraged.

The feudal system defended the interests of the noble family. Virtues were defined with reference not so much to relations between the members of that society as to the obligations of the individual to his or her family and its traditions. Marriage was contracted according to the interests of the family, and any young man (the girl had no rights whatever) who chose himself a wife against these interests was severely criticised. In the feudal era the individual was not supposed to place personal feelings and inclinations above the interests of family, and he who did so "sinned". Morality did not demand that love and marriage go hand in hand.

Nevertheless, love between the sexes was not neglected; in fact,

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for the first time in the history of humanity it received a certain recognition. It may seem strange that love was first accepted in this age of strict asceticism, of crude and cruel morals, an age of violence and rule by violence; but the reasons for acceptance become clear when we take a closer look. In certain situations and in certain circumstances, love can act as a lever propelling the man to perform actions of which he would otherwise have been incapable. The knighthood demanded of each member fearlessness, bravery, endurance and great feats of individual valour on the battlefield. Victory in war was in those days decided not so much by the organisation of troops as by the individual qualities of the participants. The knight in love with the inaccessible "lady of his heart" found it easier to perform miracles of bravery, easier to win tournaments, easier to sacrifice his life. The knight in love was motivated by the desire to "shine" and thus to win the attention of his beloved.

The ideology of chivalry recognised love as a psychological state that could be used to the advantage of the feudal class, but nevertheless it sought to organise emotions in a definite framework. Love between man and wife was not valued, for the family that lived in the knightly castle and in the Russian boyar's *terem* was not held together by emotional ties. The social factor of chivalrous love operated where the knight loved a woman outside the family and was inspired to military and other heroic feats by this emotion. The more inaccessible the woman, the greater the knight's determination to win her favour and the greater his need to develop in himself the virtues and qualities which were valued by his social class. Usually the knight chose as his lady the woman least accessible, the wife of his suzerain, or often the queen. Only such a "platonic" love could spur the knight on to perform miracles of bravery and was considered virtuous and worthy. The knight rarely chose an unmarried woman as the object of his love, for no matter how far above him in station and apparently inaccessible the girl might be, the possibility of marriage and the consequent removal of the psychological lever could not be ruled out. Hence feudal morality combined recognition of the ideal of asceticism (sexual restraint) with recognition of love as a moral virtue. In his desire to free love from all that was carnal and sinful and to transform it into an abstract emotion completely divorced from its biological base the knight was prepared to go to great lengths, choosing as his lady a woman he had never seen or joining the ranks of the lovers of the Virgin Mary. Further he could not go.

Feudal ideology saw love as a stimulus, as a quality assisting

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in social cohesion: spiritual love and the knight's adoration of his lady served the interests of the noble class. The knight who would have thought nothing of sending his wife to a monastery or of slaying her for unfaithfulness would have been flattered if she had been chosen by another knight as his lady, and would have made no objections to her platonic friendships. But while placing so much emphasis on spiritual love, feudal morality in no way demanded that love should determine legal marriage relationships. Love and marriage were kept separate by feudal ideology, and were only united by the bourgeois class that emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The exalted sophistication of feudal love existed, therefore, alongside indescribably crude norms of relations between the sexes. Sexual intercourse both within and outside marriage lacked the softening and inspiring element of love and remained an undisguisedly physiological act.

The church pretended to wage war on depravity, but by encouraging "spiritual love" it encouraged crude animal relations between the sexes. The knight who would not be parted from the emblem of the lady of his heart, who composed poetry in her honour and risked his life to win her smile, would rape a girl of the urban classes without a second thought or order his steward to bring him a beautiful peasant for his pleasure. The wives of the knights, for their part, did not let slip the opportunity to enjoy the delights of the flesh with the troubadours and pages of the feudal household.

With the weakening of feudalism and the growth of new conditions of life dictated by the interests of the rising bourgeoisie, a new moral ideal of relations between the sexes developed. Rejecting platonic love, the bourgeoisie defended the violated rights of the body and injected the combination of the spiritual and physical into the very conception of love. Bourgeois morality did not separate love and marriage; marriage was the expression of the mutual attraction of the couple. In practice of course the bourgeoisie itself, in the name of convenience, continually sinned against this moral teaching, but the recognition of love as the pillar of marriage had a profound class basis.

Under the feudal system the family was held together firmly by the traditions of nobility and birth. The married couple was held in place by the power of the church, the unlimited authority of the head of the family, the strength of family tradition and the will of the suzerain; marriage was indissoluble. The bourgeois family evolved in different conditions; its basis was not the co-ownership of family wealth but the accumulation of capital. The family was the guardian of this capital; in order that accumulation might take place as rapidly as possible, it was

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important that a man's savings should be handled with care and skill: in other words, that the woman should not only be a good housewife but also the helper and friend of her husband. With the establishment of capitalist relations and of the bourgeois social system, the family, in order to remain stable, had to be based not only on economic considerations but also on the co-operation of all its members, who had a joint interest in the accumulation of wealth. And co-operation could serve as a more powerful factor when husband and wife and parents and children were held together by strong emotional and psychological bonds.

At the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, the new economic way of life gave rise to a new ideology. The conceptions of love and marriage gradually changed. The religious reformer, Luther, and the other thinkers and public figures of the Renaissance and the Reformation, understood the social force of love perfectly. Aware that the stability of the family – the economic unit on which the bourgeois system rests – required that its members be linked by more than economic ties alone, the revolutionary ideologists of the rising bourgeoisie propagated the new moral ideal of a love that embraced both the flesh and the soul. The reformers of the period challenged the celibacy of the clergy and made merciless fun of the "spiritual love" of chivalry that kept the knight in a continual state of aspiration but denied him the hope of satisfying his sensual needs. The ideologists of the bourgeoisie and the reformation recognised the legitimacy of the body's needs. Thus, while the feudal world had divided love into the sexual act (relations within marriage or with concubines) on the one hand, and spiritual, platonic love (the relations between the knight and the lady of his heart) on the other, the bourgeois class included both the physical attraction between the sexes and emotional attachments in its concept of love. The feudal ideal had separated love from marriage; the bourgeoisie linked the two. The bourgeoisie made love and marriage inseparable. In practice, of course, this class has always retreated from its ideal; but while the question of mutual inclination was never raised under feudalism, bourgeois morality requires that even in marriages of convenience, the partners should practise hypocrisy and pretend affection.

Traces of feudal tradition and feudal attitudes to marriage and love have come down to us, surviving the centuries and accommodating themselves to the morality of the bourgeois class. Royal families and the higher ranks of the aristocracy still live according to these old norms. In these circles it is considered "amusing" but rather "awkward" when a marriage is concluded on the basis of love. The princes and princesses of this world still have to bow to the demands of birth and

politics, joining themselves for life to people they do not care for.

In peasant families one also finds that family and economic considerations play a big part in marriage arrangements. The peasant family differs from that of the urban industrial bourgeoisie chiefly in that it is an economic labour unit; its members are so firmly held together by economic circumstances that inner bonds are of secondary importance. For the medieval artisan, love likewise had no role in marriage, for in the context of the guild system the family was a productive unit, and this economic rationale provided stability. The ideal of love in marriage only begins to appear when, with the emergence of the bourgeoisie, the family loses its productive functions and remains a consumer unit also serving as a vehicle for the preservation of accumulated capital.

But though bourgeois morality defended the rights of two "loving hearts" to conclude a union even in defiance of tradition, and though it criticised "spiritual love" and asceticism, proclaiming love as the basis of marriage, it nevertheless defined love in a very narrow way. Love is permissible only when it is within marriage. Love outside legal marriage is considered immoral. Such ideas were often dictated, of course, by economic considerations, by the desire to prevent the distribution of capital among illegitimate children. The entire morality of the bourgeoisie was directed towards the concentration of capital. The ideal was the married couple, working together to improve their welfare and to increase the wealth of their particular family unit, divorced as it was from society. Where the interests of the family and society were in conflict, bourgeois morality decided in the interests of the family (cf. the sympathetic attitude of bourgeois morality – though not the law – to deserters and to those who, for the sake of their families, cause the bankruptcy of their fellow shareholders). This morality, with a utilitarianism typical of the bourgeoisie, tried to use love to its advantage, making it the main ingredient of marriage, and thereby strengthening the family.

Love, of course, could not be contained within the limits set down by bourgeois ideologists. Emotional conflicts grew and multiplied, and found their expression in the new form of literature – the novel – which the bourgeois class developed. Love constantly escaped from the narrow framework of legal marriage relations set for it, into free relationships and adultery, which were condemned but which were practised. The bourgeois ideal of love does not correspond to the needs of the largest section of the population – the working class. Nor is it relevant to the life-style of the working intelligentsia. This is why in highly

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developed capitalist countries one finds such an interest in the problems of sex and love and in the search for the key to its mysteries. How, it is asked, can relations between the sexes be developed in order to increase the sum of both individual and social happiness?

The working youth of Soviet Russia is confronting this question at this very moment. This brief survey of the evolution of the ideal of love-marriage relationships will help you, my young friend, to realise and understand that love is not the private matter it might seem to be at a first glance. Love is an important psychological and social factor, which society has always instinctively organised in its interests. Working men and women, armed with the science of marxism and using the experience of the past, must seek to discover the place love ought to occupy in the new social order and determine the ideal of love that corresponds to their class interests.

Love-comradeship

The new, communist society is being built on the principle of comradeship and solidarity. Solidarity is not only an awareness of common interests; it depends also on the intellectual and emotional ties linking the members of the collective. For a social system to be built on solidarity and co-operation it is essential that people should be capable of love and warm emotions. The proletarian ideology, therefore, attempts to educate and encourage every member of the working class to be capable of responding to the distress and needs of other members of the class, of a sensitive understanding of others and a penetrating consciousness of the individual's relationship to the collective. All these "warm emotions" – sensitivity, compassion, sympathy and responsiveness – derive from one source: they are aspects of love, not in the narrow, sexual sense but in the broad meaning of the word. Love is an emotion that unites and is consequently of an organising character. The bourgeoisie was well aware of this, and in the attempt to create a stable family bourgeois ideology erected "married love" as a moral virtue; to be a "good family man" was, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, an important and valuable quality. The proletariat should also take into account the psychological and social role that love, both in the broad sense and in the sense of relationships between the sexes, can and must play, not in strengthening family-marriage ties, but in the development of collective solidarity.

What is the proletariat's ideal of love? We have already seen that each epoch has its ideal; each class strives to fill the conception of love with a moral content that suits its own interests. Each stage of

cultural development, with its richer intellectual and emotional experiences, redefines the image of Eros. With the successive stages in the development of the economy and social life, ideas of love have changed; shades of emotion have assumed greater significance or, on the other hand, have ceased to exist.

In the course of the thousand-year history of human society, love has developed from the simple biological instinct – the urge to reproduce which is inherent in all creatures from the highest to the lowest – into a most complex emotion that is constantly acquiring new intellectual and emotional aspects. Love has become a psychological and social factor. Under the impact of economic and social forces, the biological instinct for reproduction has been transformed in two diametrically opposed directions. On the one hand the healthy sexual instinct has been turned by monstrous social and economic relations, particularly those of capitalism, into unhealthy carnality. The sexual act has become an aim in itself – just another way of obtaining pleasure, through lust sharpened with excesses and through distorted, harmful titillations of the flesh. A man does not have sex in response to healthy instincts which have drawn him to a particular woman; a man approaches any woman, though he feels no sexual need for her in particular, with the aim of gaining his sexual satisfaction and pleasure through her. Prostitution is the organised expression of this distortion of the sex drive. If intercourse with a woman does not prompt the expected excitement, the man will turn to every kind of perversion.

This deviation towards unhealthy carnality takes relationships far from their source in the biological instinct. On the other hand, over the centuries and with the changes in human social life and culture, a web of emotional and intellectual experiences has come to surround the physical attraction of the sexes. Love in its present form is a complex state of mind and body; it has long been separated from its primary source, the biological instinct for reproduction, and in fact it is frequently in sharp contradiction with it. Love is intricately woven from friendship, passion, maternal tenderness, infatuation, mutual compatibility, sympathy, admiration, familiarity and many other shades of emotion. With such a range of emotions involved, it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish direct connection between the natural drive of "wingless Eros" and "winged Eros", where physical attraction and emotional warmth are fused. The existence of love-friendship where the element of physical attraction is absent, of love for one's work or for a cause, and of love for the collective, testify to the extent to which love has become "spiritualised" and separated from its biological base.

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In modern society, sharp contradictions frequently arise and battles are waged between the various manifestations of emotion. A deep intellectual and emotional involvement in one's work may not be compatible with love for a particular man or woman, love for the collective might conflict with love for husband, wife or children. It may be difficult for love-friendship in one person to coexist with passion in another; in the one case love is predominantly based on intellectual compatibility, and in the other case on physical harmony. "Love" has many faces and aspects. The various shades of feeling that have developed over the ages and which are experienced by contemporary men and women cannot be covered by such a general and inexact term.

Under the rule of bourgeois ideology and the capitalist way of life, the complexity of love creates a series of complex and insoluble problems. By the end of the nineteenth century the many-sidedness of love had become a favourite theme for writers with a psychological bent. Love for two or even three has interested and perplexed many of the more thoughtful representatives of bourgeois culture. In the sixties of the last century our Russian thinker and writer Alexander Herzen tried to uncover this complexity of the inner world and the duality of emotion in his novel Who Is Guilty?, and Chernyshevsky tackled the same questions in his novel What is to be Done?. Poetic geniuses such as Goethe and Byron, and bold pioneers in the sphere of relations between the sexes such as George Sand, have tried to come to terms with these issues in their own lives; the author of Who Is Guilty? also knew of the problems from his own experience, as did many other great thinkers, poets and public figures. And at this present moment many "small" people are weighed down by the difficulties of love and vainly seek for solutions within the framework of bourgeois thought. But the key to the solution is in the hands of the proletariat. Only the ideology and the life-style of the new, labouring humanity can unravel this complex problem of emotion.

We are talking here of the duality of love, of the complexities of "winged Eros"; this should not be confused with sexual relations "without Eros", where one man goes with many women or one woman with a number of men. Relations where no personal feelings are involved can have unfortunate and harmful consequences (the early exhaustion of the organism, venereal diseases etc.), but however entangled they are, they do not give rise to "emotional dramas". These "dramas" and conflicts begin only where the various shades and manifestations of love are present. A woman feels close to a man whose ideas, hopes and aspirations match her own; she is attracted physically to another. For

one woman a man might feel sympathy and a protective tenderness, and in another he might find support and understanding for the strivings of his intellect. To which of the two must he give his love? And why must he tear himself apart and crippple his inner self, if only the possession of both types of inner bond affords the fullness of living?

Under the bourgeois system such a division of the inner emotional world involves inevitable suffering. For thousands of years human culture, which is based on the institution of property, has been teaching people that love is linked with the principles of property. Bourgeois ideology has insisted that love, mutual love, gives the right to the absolute and indivisible possession of the beloved person. Such exclusiveness was the natural consequence of the established form of pair marriage and of the ideal of "all-embracing love" between husband and wife. But can such an ideal correspond to the interests of the working class? Surely it is important and desirable from the proletariat's point of view that people's emotions should develop a wider and richer range? And surely the complexity of the human psyche and the many-sidedness of emotional experience should assist in the growth of the emotional and intellectual bonds between people which make the collective stronger? The more numerous these inner threads drawing people together, the firmer the sense of solidarity and the simpler the realisation of the working-class ideal of comradeship and unity.

Proletarian ideology cannot accept exclusiveness and "all-embracing love". The proletariat is not filled with horror and moral indignation at the many forms and facets of "winged Eros" in the way that the hypocritical bourgeoisie is; on the contrary, it tries to direct these emotions, which it sees as the result of complex social circumstances, into channels which are advantageous to the class during the struggle for and the construction of communist society. The complexity of love is not in conflict with the interests of the proletariat. On the contrary, it facilitates the triumph of the ideal of love-comradeship which is already developing.

At the tribal stage love was seen as a kinship attachment (love between sisters and brothers, love for parents). The ancient culture of the pre-christian period placed love-friendship above all else. The feudal world idealised platonic courtly love between members of the opposite sex outside marriage. The bourgeoisie took monogamous marital love as its ideal. The working class derives its ideal from the labour co-operation and inner solidarity that binds the men and women of the proletariat together; the form and content of this ideal naturally differs from the conception of love that existed in other cultural epochs. The

advocacy of love-comradeship in no way implies that in the militant atmosphere of its struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat the working class has adopted a strait-jacket ideology and is mercilessly trying to remove all traces of tender emotion from relations between the sexes. The ideology of the working class does not seek to destroy "winged Eros" but, on the contrary, to clear the way for the recognition of the value of love as a psychological and social force.

The hypocritical morality of bourgeois culture resolutely restricted the freedom of Eros, obliging him to visit only the "legally married couple". Outside marriage there was room only for the "wingless Eros" of momentary and joyless sexual relations which were bought (in the case of prostitution) or stolen (in the case of adultery). The morality of the working class, on the other hand, in so far as it has already been formulated, definitely rejects the external forms of sexual relations. The social aims of the working class are not affected one bit by whether love takes the form of a long and official union or is expressed in a temporary relationship. The ideology of the working class does not place any formal limits on love. But at the same time the ideology of the working class is already beginning to take a thoughtful attitude to the content of love and shades of emotional experience. In this sense the proletarian ideology will persecute "wingless Eros" in a much more strict and severe way than bourgeois morality. "Wingless Eros" contradicts the interests of the working class. In the first place it inevitably involves excesses and therefore physical exhaustion, which lower the resources of labour energy available to society. In the second place it impoverishes the soul, hindering the development and strengthening of inner bonds and positive emotions. And in the third place it usually rests on an inequality of rights in relationships between the sexes, on the dependence of the woman on the man and on male complacency and insensitivity, which undoubtedly hinder the development of comradely feelings. "Winged Eros" is quite different.

Obviously sexual attraction lies at the base of "winged Eros" too, but the difference is that the person experiencing love acquires the inner qualities necessary to the builders of a new culture — sensitivity, responsiveness and the desire to help others. Bourgeois ideology demanded that a person should only display such qualities in their relationship with one partner. The aim of proletarian ideology is that men and women should develop these qualities not only in relation to the chosen one but in relation to all the members of the collective. The proletarian class is not concerned as to which shades and nuances of feeling predominate in winged Eros. The only stipulation is that these

emotions facilitate the development and strengthening of comradeship. The ideal of love-comradeship, which is being forged by proletarian ideology to replace the all-embracing and exclusive marital love of bourgeois culture, involves the recognition of the rights and integrity of the other's personality, a steadfast mutual support and sensitive sympathy, and responsiveness to the other's needs.

The ideal of love-comradeship is necessary to the proletariat in the important and difficult period of the struggle for and the consolidation of the dictatorship. But there is no doubt that with the realisation of communist society love will acquire a transformed and unprecedented aspect. By that time the "sympathetic ties" between all the members of the new society will have grown and strengthened. Love potential will have increased, and love-solidarity will become the lever that competition and self-love were in the bourgeois system. Collectivism of spirit can then defeat individualist self-sufficiency, and the "cold of inner loneliness", from which people in bourgeois culture have attempted to escape through love and marriage, will disappear. The many threads bringing men and women into close emotional and intellectual contact will develop, and feelings will emerge from the private into the public sphere. Inequality between the sexes and the dependence of women on men will disappear without trace, leaving only a fading memory of past ages.

In the new and collective society, where interpersonal relations develop against a background of joyful unity and comradeship, Eros will occupy an honourable place as an emotional experience multiplying human happiness. What will be the nature of this transformed Eros? Not even the boldest fantasy is capable of providing the answer to this question. But one thing is clear: the stronger the intellectual and emotional bonds of the new humanity, the less the room for love in the present sense of the word. Modern love always sins, because it absorbs the thoughts and feelings of "loving hearts" and isolates the loving pair from the collective. In the future society, such a separation will not only become superfluous but also psychologically inconceivable. In the new world the accepted norm of sexual relations will probably be based on free, healthy and natural attraction (without distortions and excesses) and on "transformed Eros".

But at the present moment we stand between two cultures. And at this turning-point, with the attendant struggles of the two worlds on all fronts, including the ideological one, the proletariat's interest is to do its best to ensure the quickest possible accumulation of "sympathetic feelings". In this period the moral ideal defining relationships is not the unadorned sexual instinct but the many-faceted love experi-

ence of love-comradeship. In order to answer the demands formulated by the new proletarian morality, these experiences must conform to three basic principles: 1. Equality in relationships (an end to masculine egoism and the slavish suppression of the female personality). 2. Mutual recognition of the rights of the other, of the fact that one does not own the heart and soul of the other (the sense of property, encouraged by bourgeois culture). 3. Comradely sensitivity, the ability to listen and understand the inner workings of the loved person (bourgeois culture demanded this only from the woman). But in proclaiming the rights of "winged Eros", the ideal of the working class at the same time subordinates this love to the more powerful emotion of love-duty to the collective. However great the love between two members of the collective, the ties binding the two persons to the collective will always take precedence, will be firmer, more complex and organic. Bourgeois morality demanded all for the loved one. The morality of the proletariat demands all for the collective.

But I can hear you objecting, my young friend, that though it may be true that love-comradeship will become the ideal of the working class, will this new "moral measurement" of emotions not place new constraints on sexual relationships? Are we not liberating love from the fetters of bourgeois morality only to enslave it again? Yes, my young friend, you are right. The ideology of the proletariat rejects bourgeois "morality" in the sphere of love-marriage relations. Nevertheless, it inevitably develops its own class morality, its own rules of behaviour, which correspond more closely to the tasks of the working class and educate the emotions in a certain direction. In this way it could be said that feelings are again in chains. The proletariat will undoubtedly clip the wings of bourgeois culture. But it would be short-sighted to regret this process, since the new class is capable of developing new facets of emotion which possess unprecedented beauty, strength and radiance. As the cultural and economic base of humanity changes, so will love be transformed.

The blind, all-embracing, demanding passions will weaken; the sense of property, the egoistical desire to bind the partner to one "forever", the complacency of the man and the self-renunciation of the woman will disappear. At the same time, the valuable aspects and elements of love will develop. Respect for the right of the other's personality will increase, and a mutual sensitivity will be learned; men and women will strive to express their love not only in kisses and embraces but in joint creativity and activity. The task of proletarian ideology is not to drive Eros from social life but to rearm him according to the

new social formation, and to educate sexual relationships in the spirit of the great new psychological force of comradely solidarity.

I hope it is now clear to you that the interest among young workers in the question of love is not a symptom of "decline". I hope that you can now grasp the place love must occupy in the relationships between young workers.

If this is a lament
Bejan Matur
Translated by Canan Marasligil with Jen Hadfield

They speak of a land that never was,
a non-existent tongue.
There is no utterance,
no words.

If we're put on earth
to understand each other –
who can make sense of death?

Explain how the mountains stole breath,
or translate the darkness
that has fallen?

Who can say what burgeons
in a child's dream?

Flapping out of an ancient tale,
birds' wings bear down
on me – and skin's

akin to stone
as the old women used to say.
When darkness falls

beyond the mountains,
the people I remember look to me
in pain. My words are elegy.

If this is a lament,
we haven't even
begun to cry.

‹‹‹

Touching Visions

The affective, ethical, and practical engagements of caring invoke in-
volved embodied, embedded relations in closeness with concrete con-
ditions. And yet I am exploring care for a speculative ethics. Embracing
the tension between the concrete and the speculative, this chapter engages
with paths to the reembodiment of thinking and knowing that have been
opened by passionate engagements with the meanings of "touch." Stand-
ing here as a metonymic way to access the lived and fleshy character of
involved care relations, the *haptic* holds promises against the primacy of
detached vision, a promise of thinking and knowing that is "in touch" with
materiality, touched and touching. Yet the promises of this onto-epistemic
turn to touch are not unproblematic. If anything, they increase the intense
corporeality of ethical questioning. In navigating the promises of touch,
this chapter attempts to exercise and expand the disruptive potentials of
caring knowing that this book explores. It attempts to treat haptic tech-
nologies as matters of care, and in doing so continues unpacking and co-
shaping a notion of care in more than human worlds.

Unfolding and problematizing the possibilities of touch draws me into
an exploration of its literal as well as figural meanings. I follow here the
enticing ways opened in theory and cultural critique to explore the specific-
ity and interrelation of different sensorial universes (Rodaway 1994; Marks
2002; Sobchack 2004; Paterson 2007). All senses are affected by these re-
examinations of subjectivity and experience, but touch features saliently,
as a previously *neglected* sensorial universe, as a metaphor of intensified

relation. So why is touch so compelling? And what new implications for thinking are being suggested by invoking touch?

Attention to what it means to touch and to be touched deepens awareness of the embodied character of perception, affect, and thinking (Ahmed and Stacey 2001; Sedgwick 2003; Blackman 2008). Understanding contact as touch intensifies a sense of the co-transformative, in the flesh effects of connections between beings. Significantly, in its quasi-automatic evocation of close relationality, touching is also called upon as the experience par excellence where boundaries between self and other are blurred (Marks 2002; Radcliffe 2008; Barad 2012). The emphasis on embodied interaction is also prolonged in science and technology studies, for instance, by exploring "the future of touch" as made possible by developments in "robotic skin" (Castañeda 2001). Drawing attention to laboratory touching devices can also highlight the materiality and corporeality of subject-object "intraactions" in scientific practices, missed out by epistemologies founded on "representation" that tend to separate the agencies of subjects and objects (Barad 2007). Touch emphasizes the improvisational "haptic" creativity through which experimentation performs scientific knowledge in a play of bodies human and not (Myers and Dumit 2011, 244). And engaging with touch also has political significance. In contrast to expecting *visible* "events" that are accessible to or ratified by the politics of representation, fostering of "haptic" abilities figures as a sensorial strategy for perceiving the less noticeable politics in ordinary transformations of experience missed by "optic" objectivist representation (Papadopoulos, Stephenson, and Tsianos 2008b, 55). Here, haptic engagement conveys an encouragement for knowledge and action to be crafted *in touch* with everyday living and practice, in the proximity of involvement with ordinary material transformation. I read these interventions as manifesting a deepened attention to materiality and embodiment, an invitation to rethink relationality in its corporeal character, as well as a desire for concrete, tangible, engagement with worldly transformation—all features and meanings that pertain to the thinking with care that I am exploring in this book.

Embodiment, relationality, and engagement are all themes that have marked feminist epistemology and knowledge politics. Exploring meanings of touch for knowledge politics and subjectivity prolongs discussions

regarding situated and committed knowledge initiated in chapters 1 and 2. To think with touch has a potential to inspire a sense of connectedness that can further problematize abstractions and disengagements of (epistemological) distances, the bifurcations between subjects and objects, knowledge and the world, affects and facts, politics and science. Touch counteracts the sensorial metaphor of vision, dominant in modern knowledge making and epistemologies. But the desire for better, profounder, more accurate vision is more than a metaphor. Feminist critiques have questioned the intentions and the effects of enhanced visual technologies aimed at penetrating bodies to open up their inner truths.[1] Engaging within this tradition of ontopolitical suspicion about visual representation, Donna Haraway proposed nonetheless that we reappropriate the "persistence of vision" as a way to engage with its dominant inheritance. The challenge is to foster "skill . . . with the *mediations* of vision" (Haraway 1991d, 191, emphasis added), notably by contesting and resisting to adopt an unmarked and irresponsible "view from nowhere" that pretends to see everything and everywhere. This embodied and *situated* material-semiotic reclaiming of the technologies of vision is at the heart of her reworked figure of a "modest witness" for technoscience (Haraway 1997b) that transfigures the meanings of objectivity in ways that opens possibilities for knowledge practices committed to as well as possible worlds (Haraway 1991d, 183–201).

Significantly, by embracing touch, others have also sought to emphasize *situatedness* and make a difference in cultural atmospheres strongly attuned to visual philosophical models of ways of being in the world (Radcliffe 2008, 34). Is knowledge-as-touch less susceptible to be masked behind a "nowhere"? We can see without being seen, but can we touch without being touched? In approaching touch's metaphorical power to emphasize matters of involvement and committed knowledge, I can't help but hear a familiar voice saying "theory has only *observed* the world; the point is to *touch* it"—lazily rephrasing Marx's condemnation of abstract thought that "philosophers have only interpreted the world . . . the point is to change it." And yet, the awareness, suggested in previous chapters, that knowledge-making processes are inseparably world-making and materially consequential does evoke knowledge practices' power to touch—and

commitment to keep in touch with political and ethical questions at stake in scientific and other academic conversations.

Engaging in discussions that are revaluing touch brings me back to the paradoxes of reclaiming. Reclaiming technologies of vision entailed reappropriating a *dominant* sensorial universe and epistemological order, seeking for alternative ways of seeing. The poisons encountered in these grounds are optic arrangements that generate disengaged distances with others and the world, and claims to see everything by being attached nowhere. In contrast, much like care, touch is called upon not as dominant, but as a *neglected* mode of relating with compelling potential to restore a gap that keeps knowledge from embracing a fully embodied subjectivity. So how, then, is reclaiming touch opening to other ways of thinking if it is already somehow an alternative onto-epistemic path? The reclamation of the neglected is in continuation with the thinking strategy encountered in the previous chapters: thinking from, with, and for marginalized existences as a potential for perceiving, fostering, and working for other worlds possible. But these ways of thinking don't need to translate in expectation that contact with the neglected worlds of touch will immediately signify a beneficial renovation. On the contrary, to reclaim touch as a form of caring knowing I keep thinking with the potential of marginalized oppositional visions to trouble dominant, oppressive, indifferent configurations, a transformative desire that also requires resisting to idealization. When partaking in the animated atmosphere of reclamations of touch, there is a risk of romanticizing the paradigmatic other of vision as a signifier of embodied *unmediated* objectivity. Rather than ensuring resolution, thinking with touch opens new questions.

The Lure of Touch

Like others, I have been seduced into the worlds of touch, provoked and compelled by the very word, by the mingling of literal and metaphorical meanings that make of touch a figure of intensified feeling, relating, and knowing. Its attractiveness to the project of this book, however, is not only that of evoking a specifically powerful sensorial experience but also that of providing the affective charge that makes it a good notion to think about the ambivalences of caring. Starting with being touched—to be attained,

moved—touch exacerbates a sense of concern; it points to an engagement that relinquishes detached distance. Indeed, one insight often advanced about the specificity of experiencing touch (often supported by references to Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology) is its "reversibility": when bodies/things touch, they are also touched. Yet here already I wonder: to touch or to be touched physically doesn't automatically mean *being in touch* with oneself or the other. Can there be a detached touch? Unwanted touch, abusive touch, can induce a rejection of sensation, a self-induced numbness in the touched. So maybe we have to ask what kind of touching is produced when we are unaware of the needs and desires of that what/whom we are reaching for? This resonates with the appropriation of others' through caring that I discussed in the previous chapters; the troubling character of these dynamics is exacerbated when thought can be conceived as a corporeal appropriation through "direct" touch.

These questions become more pressing when facing touch's potentially *totalizing* signification: touch, affirms Jean Louis Chrétien, is "inseparable from life itself" (Chrétien 2004, 85). I touch, therefore I am. There is something excessive in that we touch with our whole bodies, in that touch is there *all the time*—by contrast with vision, which allows distant observation and closing our eyes. Even when we are not intentionally touching something, the absence of physical contact can be felt as a manifestation of touch (Radcliffe 2008, 303). Moreover, to be felt, sensorial and affective inputs that other senses bring to experiencing necessarily pass through material touching of the body. This total influence contributes to a sense of "immersion" (Paterson 2006, 699) and is incarnated in its atypical, all-encompassing organ, the skin (Ahmed and Stacey 2001). Touch exhibits as much ascendancy as it exposes vulnerability.

Touché is a metaphorical substitute for wounded. The way in which touch opens us to hurt, to the (potential) violence of contact, is emphasized by Thomas Dumm, who reminds us that touch comes from the Italian *toccare,* "to strike, to hit." Dumm's meditations on touch are particularly illuminating regarding its ambivalent meanings.[2] Touching, he says, "makes us confront the fact of our mortality, our need for each other, and, as [Judith] Butler puts it, the fact that we are undone by each other" (Dumm 2008, 158). In contrast, Dumm explores two meanings of becoming *untouchable*.

First, the loss of somebody we cared about that makes this person untouchable: "that which we imagine as part of us is separate now" (132). Second, to become oneself untouchable: "a figure of isolation, of absolute loneliness" (155).

But how would becoming untouchable, to undertake a protective disconnection with feeling, be possible given the omnipresence of bodily touch? Total presence of touch doesn't necessarily entail awareness of its influence. Dumm makes us see that rejecting touch is possible and sometimes necessary to survive hurt. Yet if such shielding becomes entire, it entails a negation of life itself. The unavoidable ambivalence of touch is thus of conveying a vital form of relation and a threat of violence and invasion. Dumm unfolds Ralph Waldo Emerson's avowal of feeling untouched by the death of his son and his affirmation that touching is both "an impossible act" and necessary for becoming "actors in the world of experience." Dumm concludes that losing touch is a flight into the "futility of total thought," while touching is a turn to the "partial nature of action," a move "from transcendence to *immanence*, from the untouchable to the embrace of *corporeal* life" (Dumm, 158, emphasis added). Life is inevitable mortality, partiality, and vulnerability: the troubles and *conditions* of living. Trust might be the unavoidable condition that allows this openness to relation and corporeal immanent risk.

Exposure through touch translates into another emblematic extreme often associated with touch, healing: "If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well," thinks a sick woman approaching Jesus (Matthew 9:21). This biblical verse came to mind as I encountered the logo for a company developing three-dimensional anatomical simulation software for medical learning purposes—TolTech—*Touch of life technologies*.[3] It featured two human hands, index fingers extended to touch each other, invoking the divine connection between God and Adam represented by Michelangelo and his apprentices on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. However, offering "the ability to approach the human body from any combination of traditional views," Touch of Life's version referred to the enhanced vision of anatomical parts via 3D technologies that could bring medical practitioners in training closer to a re-creation of actually touching them. The image was science-fiction oriented, offering a first-contact extraterrestrial-like sight of two

index fingers at the point of touching, contrasted against an outer-space dark blue background. An uncanny light had been depicted emanating from the space close to this not-yet-accomplished contact, producing circling waves of brilliance that contour supernatural hands. The technobiblical imagery invoked by this vision of medical technology appealed to ancestral yearnings of healing transformation, and maybe salvation, through embodied and direct contact with a powerful technoscientific (godlike) promise.

Touch is mystical. Touch is prosaic. Though neither scientific nor political cultures have ever been (totally) secular, there is, however, a sensible way in which embodied contact with *evidential knowledge* is associated with the material rather than the spiritual. This connection is supported by a long history in which concrete, factual, material knowledge is opposed to "bare" belief. Remaining in the biblical imaginary, we can remember Saint Thomas, who became the paradigmatic doubter, manifesting human weakness in his need to touch Jesus in order to believe the news of his resurrection. In declarations following the explosion of the financial speculative bubble leading to the 2008 financial crisis, Benedict XVI, the catholic pope in office at the time, encouraged people to hold on to beliefs that are not based on material things. He warned that those who think that "concrete things we can touch are the surest reality" are deceiving themselves.[4] This time, touch falls decisively on the side of prosaic knowledge; it serves the doubtful, those who need to get hold of something, while faith belongs to trust in untouchable immaterial forces. During the first years of the crisis, my bank was nationalized after it threatened to collapse. It struck me how, months later, its offices still exhibited posters of a campaign inviting clients to give up "paper titles" in favor of digitalized ones with the slogan: *Dematerialisation. Inform yourself here*.[5] Pope Benedict XVI was clearly out of touch with what critics of the imploded financial system had been relentlessly highlighting: the immaterial and unreal character of a speculative bubble frantically inflated by global markets disconnected from the finite material resources of people and this planet. Dematerialized, financialized wealth. From this perspective, it was not so much the materiality of things we can touch that led to the global financial meltdown in 2008 but their deadly negation by a "delirious," out-of-touch capitalist version of the speculative (Cooper 2008).

My point here is not to refute faith in the ungraspable, nor the appeal of touching the concrete. I am just realizing how easily an inclination for touch as a way of intensifying awareness of materiality and immanent engagement can get caught in a quarrel about what counts as real and authentic, worth of belief and reliance. Whether this "real" is a source of divine promise or of tangible factuality, *authenticity* is at play. This aspiration to the truthful is reproduced by promises of enhanced immediacy and intensified *reality* in computing experience that abound in the research markets of innovative haptic or touch technologies. If seeing stands for *believing,* touching stands for *feeling* (Paterson 2006). Here, *to feel* becomes the ultimate substantiation of reality, while seeing is expelled from genuine feeling, and believing's authenticity rate plummets. The rush to the "material" in reclamations of touch made me wonder if the increased desire for touch manifests an urge to rematerialize reliability and trust within a technoscientific culture fueled by institutionalized skepticism? In other words, could the yearning for touch manifest also a desire to reinfuse *substance* in more than human worlds where digitalized technology extends and delocalizes the networks and mediations that circulate reliable witnessing?

Touching Technologies

The reclamation of touch is a wide cultural phenomenon with relevance for ethical speculative considerations. One can just think of how the boom of touch technologies, a market only growing, mobilizes a vast range of more than human reassemblages. How these technologies are made to matter is concomitant with how they transform what matters. Touch technologies emerged in the early 2000s as a promise of what Bill Gates proclaimed to be the "age of digital senses."[6] They "do for the sense of touch what lifelike colour displays and hi-fi sound do for eyes and ears," announced *The Economist* in the early days of haptic hype. The time to lick and sniff keyboards and screens is yet to be trumpeted.[7] For now, technology is "bringing the *neglected* sense of touch into the digital realm."[8] These emerging haptic technologies engaged with a new frontier for the *enhancing* of human experience through computing and digitalized technology. As transhumanist speculations, promises, and expectations about the

"innovative" prospects of touch for people in technoscience they consti-
tute a massive matter of investment in a future in which smartphones and
other handy devices are only gadget sprouts.

   Though here I focus on problems posed by the imaginaries of enhance-
ment in everyday experience, the proliferation of applications is vast. Hap-
tic or touch devices are implemented, or fantasized, in relation to many
different technologies: for developments of touch sensors in precise in-
dustrial robotics[9]; for the creation and manipulation of virtual objects; to
allow a feel of materials in video games; to enhance sensorial experience in
varied simulators (surgery, sex) and other devices aimed at distant control
and operation. They also refer to technologies allowing direct command
of laptops and phones through the screen. From the most sophisticated and
specialized to the most banal gadgetry, the marketing of these develop-
ments uses exciting language that engages play, dexterity of manipulation,
augmented or enhanced reality, and experiences of sensorial immersion
that mimic *the real thing*, all driven by promises of more immediate con-
nection at the heart of cultural imaginaries of affection. The sense of mate-
riality of contact can take opposed implications; for instance, exposure
remains connected to vulnerability so that if it may seem particularly
exciting to touch and manipulate "virtual" entities. In other contexts it is
reassuring to touch without being touched, to manipulate without physi-
cally touching (e.g., in military situations such as the use of drone technol-
ogy or demining robotics, the viewer remains untouched, touch sensors
act as mediators, and distanced bodies and unmanned artifacts receive the
immediate physical consequences [Suchman 2016]).

   In his essay "Feel the Presence," the haptic geographer Mark Paterson
describes these technologies of "touch and distance" and their possibilities
of concrete and immediate manipulation of objects, virtual or not. Others
and things can be located far away but become "co-present" (Paterson
2006). Paterson explains how adding touch to visual effects produces a
sense of "immersion," how these technologies give a feeling of "reality,"
enhancing the experience of users. However, he shows that the efforts to
reproduce and "mimic" tactile sensation are actually productive, performa-
tive. An active reconstruction of the sensorial is at stake when developers

discuss what will be the *right* feel of a virtual object to implement within the actual design. The transformation of sensorial experience doesn't occur only through *prosthesis* but participates in the "interiorization of technological modes of perceiving" (696; Danius 2002). In other words, touch technologies as more than human assemblages could be remaking what touching means. Inversely, I would add, haptic technology works with the powerful imaginary of touch and its compelling affective power to produce a touching technology, that is, an appealing technology.

Exploring the kinds of more than human worlds that are brought to matter through celebrations of technotouch requires attention to meaning-producing effects emerging in specific configurations. It is not so much a longing for the *real* that is the problem of sociotechnological arrangements that conceal material mediations while pretending quasi-transparent immediacy but rather what will count as real. A politics of care is concerned by which mediations, forms of sustaining life, and problems will be neglected in the count. Which meanings are mobilized—and reinforced—for realizing the promise of touch? By which forms of connection, presence, and relation is technotouch supposed to *enhance* everyday experience? In the technopromises of touch, "more than human" often takes the sense it has for transhumanism, that of a desire to transcend human limitations. A trend that, far from decentering human agency via a more than human reassemblage, reinforces it even if disembodied, aiming at making humans more powerful through technoscientific progress. As the protagonist of David Brin's SF novel puts it, as he collects trash from space with an extended body that connects his isolated, encapsulated, imperfect body to a distant outer space, a "more real" world is the dream:

> The illusion felt perfect, at last. . . . Thirty kilometers of slender, conducting filament.
>
> . . . At both ends of the pivoting tether were compact clusters of sensors (my eyes), cathode emitters (my muscles), and grabbers (my clutching hands), that felt more part of him, right now, than anything made of flesh. More real than the meaty parts he had been born with, now drifting in a cocoon far below, near the bulky, pitted space station. That distant human body seemed almost imaginary.

Dreams of technological extension beg a more specific question: Which qualities are selected for human improvement? The question of enhancement does not need us to examine any particularly extravagant science-fiction scenarios; it is visible in the most ordinary settings. In the early days of excited hype about haptic technology, *tactile technologies*, a company dedicated to the development and expansion of touch screens, advertised the benefits in its promotional website.[10] The first claimed advantage was speed: "Fast, faster, fastest." Touch screens cut time waste through direct touch in a world where "being one second faster could make all the difference." This directness is enhanced and integrated for "everybody," as a second advantage is promoted: "touch makes everybody an expert" by "intuitive" reaching out; "you just point at what you want." To touch is to get. Expertise would ameliorate as "touchscreen-based systems virtually eliminate errors as users select from clearly defined menus." The goal is intuitive immediacy, reduction of training to *direct* expertise, elimination of mistakes based on preordered selection. In conclusion, they offer a "naturally easy interface to use" for what the job requires: efficacy and speediness, reduction of training time, and keeping costs down. On top of these advantages—hands being guilty vehicles of everyday contagions—touch screens are purportedly "cleaner." This company therefore offered systems that are "not affected by dirt, dust grease or liquids." Here the driving dream is not so much of enhanced reality but enhanced effectiveness and speed. Touch stands for unmediated directness of manipulation, while hygiene worries respond to remnants of involved flesh. This is a particular vision of the more than human reassemblage offered by touch technologies, one that rather than innovating relation reinforces prevalent conceptions of efficiency—identified to accelerated productiveness. In the last chapter of the book, I will engage with how the paradigm of productivity, accelerated speed, and focus on output affects the temporality of care. What the ambivalent value of touch exposes here is that enhancing material connection does not necessarily mean awareness of embodied effects.

Computers are touching technologies in a very special way via keyboards, screens, and mouses. As somebody who spends a great amount of time behind a computer, I am not immune to the seductive hype of smooth touch screens. But as an intermittent member of the community affected

by Repetitive Stress Syndrome and other health hazards of the computer-
ized workplace, I also wonder why possible innovations offered by these
technologies for at least not worsening this epidemic are not being pro-
moted. Many users' computing experience includes diverse ergonomic
devices that make repetitive touch labor easier and dress up the cyborg
imaginary of flesh wired to a keyboard (adapted mouse and keyboard,
wrist and back elastic bands, microphones and voice recognition software,
etc.). In order to situate keyboard-related illness as a historically collective
phenomenon, it is insightful to read Sarah Lochlann Jain's account of the
injury production concomitant to this device's history. Making touching
technologies a matter of care requires that we learn about the possibilities
overlooked by an industry in hasty development: missed opportunities to
be in touch with the consequences that constant keyboard touch feedback
doubled with pressures of efficiency has had on user's everyday lives (Jain
2006). Touch and proximity belong to the conceptual nebula of care, but
they are not caring per se.

   And yet yearnings of proximity in caring involvements mark the every-
dayness of computing technology. These are finely expressed in a poem by
Susan Leigh Star, who also raises ambivalent feelings about promises of
enhancement via technical extension:

> *ii*
> my best friend lives two thousand miles away
> and every day
> my fingertips bleed distilled intimacy
> trapped Pavlovas
> dance, I curse, dance
> bring her to me
> the bandwith of her smell
>
> *ii*
> years ago I lay twisted
> below the terminal
> the keyboard my only hope
> for work

for continuity
my stubborn shoulders
my ruined spine
my aching arms
suspended above my head
soft green letters
reflect back
Chapter One:
no one can see you
Chapter Two:
your body is filtered here
Chapter Three: you are not alone (Star 1995, 30–31)

Computers are more than working prostheses; they are existential companions for people trying to keep in touch with dislocated networks of loved ones. *My sister lives ten thousand miles away*—my parents, siblings, and friends are spread throughout the World Wide Web. A scattered heart, bleeding fingertips, and a ruined back, frustrations of "distilled intimacy," are not enough to stop efforts to remain in touch through screens. E-political communities in a globalized world also depend on virtual touching and social media props. Haptic technologies feel particularly appealing for those for whom mobility has transformed community and who have to "survive in the diaspora" (Haraway 1991a, 171). Touch technologies and longings of being in touch match well. The remaking of sensorial experience through the intensification of digital touch feeds on the marketing of proximities in the distance and our investment in longing.

Yearnings for touch, for being in touch, are also at the heart of caring involvement. But there is no point in idealizing the possibilities. If touch extends, it is also because it is a reminder of finitude (why would infinite beings yearn for extension?). And if touch deprivation is a serious issue, *overwhelming* is the word that comes to my mind when enhancement of experience is put at the forefront. Permanent *intouchness*? With what? Like care, touch is not a harmless affection. Touch receptors, located all over our bodies, are also pain receptors; they register what happens through our surface and send signals of pain and pleasure. When absorbed by work

and e-relations, these sensations take time to be perceived. We can get relatively out of touch with what bodies endure and forget the care and labor that is needed to get them through the day. There is no production of virtual relationality, whether commodified by capitalist investment or consumer society, that will not draw upon the life of some-body some-where. Kalindi Vora shows, for instance, how the "vital energy" of call-center workers in India is drained by the overnight labor required for keeping in touch with the needs of clients in North America to which their bodies are invisible in turn (Vora 2009b). Insisting on the many ways in which digitalized technologies engage material touching of finite flesh renders insufficient the qualification of knowledge economies and affective labors as "immaterial" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 290). More alertness to chains of touch in digital culture could also expand awareness of the layers of material mediations that allow technological connection. Besides human labor, virtual technocultures always touch some*thing* somewhere—through demands for electric power generation and the proliferation of high-tech trash (Stephenson 1996; Basel Action Network 2002; Strand 2008).[11]

As I have argued above, transforming purported facts and objects into matters of care by thinking with and for neglected labors and marginalized experiences is a way to remain in touch with problems erased or silenced by thriving technoscientific mobilizations. This means addressing inno-vatory technologies that are supposed to enhance living conditions with questions about the social relations, labors, and desires that may become obliterated through their development, use, and implementation. Such issues appear particularly relevant in another field of haptic research invest-ment and expectations to enhance ordinary experiences. I am thinking of distant surgery where touch sensors seek dexterity in distant manipulation (Satava 2004). The rationale here is not *more* touching but improving the chain of technological mediations in order to give a sense of directness and precision of touch while accessing distant flesh and bodies. The sur-geon could become physically absent, a "telepresence" that, however, can work simultaneously on multiple patients. A possible reduction in number of nurses that will do the work *on site* is also invoked. Again we encounter "the epitome of efficiency," understood purely in quantitative terms: reduc-tion of costs and human resources. If complex chirurgical intervention is

not yet realizable this way, healing through telecare is not a fantasy. Sometimes it aims to enhance access to health care in deprived locations where developing haptic technologies for co-presence makes sense. However, we need also to ask what types of experiences of caring will be produced through these innovations? Which new managed "conducts" will pass as care? (Latimer 2000). Thinking from labors that become less visible and from the perspective of patients/users and, importantly, also that of "non users," Nelly Oudhsoorn shows how care at a distance challenges existing modes of interaction and *transforms* rather than reduces burdens of labor. Also, the replacing of face-to-face interaction places sections of the networks of health care out of touch for patients (Oudshoorn 2008a; 2008b). The materiality and directness of touch acquires added tones as other mediations are rendered irrelevant: What are more efficient doctors going to be in touch with? What kind of healing-touch is this? Is the reversibility of touch, its potential of consequential corelationality, of shared vulnerability, invalidated when patients cannot reach who is touching them?[12] One thing seems sure in a finite world, that these new forms of connection produce as much copresence as they increase absence. They do not really *reduce* distance; they redistribute it.

Pausing: Dilemmas of Speculative Thinking

Questions and skepticism about expanded possibility in promises of touch accumulate. Yet my aim is not to distance myself from these yearnings, neither to purify an "other" vision of touch—the "really" caring one. I am not interested in the elucidation of underlying social, political, and cultural reasons and causes for the lure of touch and the attractiveness of promises of technotouching. I could be discussing how this "turn" to touch may correspond to other declared theoretical turns: turns to materiality, to practices, to ontology, to radical empiricism. But while I am hesitating here about the promises of touch, I remain concerned about the pitfalls of theoretical critique discussed in the previous chapters. Blanketing the specificities of situations and cases under a general rationale that critiques the haptic promise, placing myself as observer at a distance from where I could understand what is at stake, would be falling into one of those pitfalls. Zooming out at theoretical speed, blending categories that mirror

each other into a feel of sameness to support the argument that *something is happening* in the turn to touch might be precisely what thinking with touch, thinking haptically, is not about: the specificity of textures disappears and "a" problem surreptitiously becomes everybody's problem.

My engagement with touch remains situated within an exploration of what caring signifies for thinking and knowing in more than human worlds. Here, a caring politics of speculative thinking could reclaim *hapticity* as a way to keep close to an engagement to respond to what a problem "requires." And of course, what we come to consider problematic is grounded in the collective commitments that shape our thinking and what we care for. And yet a speculative commitment grounded in the problems that we have set out to respond to seeks not to "simply reflect that which, a priori, we define as plausible" (Stengers 2004), or that which confirms a theory. In other words, engaged speculative responses are situated by what appears as a problem within specific commitments and inheritances, within contingencies and experiences in situation. If to care is to become susceptible of being affected by some matters rather than others, then situated responses are engaged in interdependent more-than-one modes of subjectivity and political consciousness. Therefore, in revaluations of touch, in reclamations of touch, not only do I read the kind of world-making that is being speculated upon through the partialities of my cares but I also think with other speculative possibilities.

That things could be different is the impulse of speculative thinking. In this book the speculative refers to a mode of thought committed to foster visions of other worlds possible, to paraphrase the motto of the alter-globalization movement, "another world is possible."[13] Related to the sense of sight, the way of the speculative is traditionally associated with vision, observation. In feminist approaches, as I mentioned in the introduction, speculative thinking fuels hope and the desire for transformative action. It belongs to feminism visions' affective power to touch, to nurture hope about what the world could be, and to engage with its promises and threats (Haran 2001). This involves political imagination of the possible, purposes of making a difference with awareness and responsibility for consequences: speculative thinking as involved intervention—as speculative commitment.

But the notion of speculative vision also seems to suggest—as in the phrasing "pure speculation"—a flight transcending the material conditions that ground transformation in the present, from the plainness and mundaneness of the everyday that visionaries are habitually suspected of neglecting. The predicament of speculative thought somehow reenacts a worn-out fraught question for critical thought: How can thinking lead to material change? And paradoxically, it doesn't help that vision, as a metaphor for knowing, has traditionally conveyed the notion that true thought and knowledge is based on clear and unpolluted observation and reason, on a disembodied relation to a distinct world, the pride of modern science according to rationalist humanist philosophies. If the speculative is suspected of improbability, thought and action led by metaphors of clear vision have been criticized for a reductionist, bifurcated, form of relating, abstracted from the bodily engagement that makes knowing subjects relevant in interdependent worlds. What's more, opting for the speculative as the making of a difference, for diffraction rather than reflection of the same, for alternative investments in thinking the possible or the virtual, I also have to consider my belonging to a time and culture radically turned into investment into a future (of outputs and returns of investment) in ways that tend to drain present everyday conditions (an issue that I address in the last chapter of the book). In my world, the speculative is also the name of fairly intoxicating financialized bubbles out of touch with finite pasts, presents, and futures. These unsolved tensions are embedded in an attempt of thinking with care invested in speculative thinking of what could be but grounded in the mundane possible, in a hands-on doing connected with neglected everydayness.

Devising relevant and grounded interventions calls for speculative thinking that goes beyond descriptions and explanations of what is and of how things came to be. The worlds into which touch will attract us are not written in its technologies or in the purported nature of touch's singular phenomenology. The concrete differences made when reclaiming touch and reinventing touching technologies for everyday life are all but neutral; they will be marked by visions that touch us, and that we want others to be touched by, speculative visions of touch—touching visions. Where this consideration of the ambivalent promise of touch for thinking speculatively

with care has brought me is to questions such as: How can visionary diffractive efforts resist inflated virtual (future) possibility detached from (present) material finitudes? And can we resist the promises of immanent touch to transcend fraught mediations?

Touching Visions

My initial leaning for touch as a sensorial universe that expresses the ambivalences of caring emerged from its potential for responding to the abstract and disengaged distances more easily associated with knowledge-as-vision. But because touch short-circuits distance, it is also susceptible to convey other powerful expectations: immediacy as authentic connection to the *real,* including otherworldly realities for spiritual or mystic traditions, as well as claims not so much of transparent and unpolluted observation but of *direct* and extended accelerated *efficient* intervention. If touch could offer a sensorial, embodied grounding for the proximities of caring knowing, we also need touching visions more susceptible to foster accountability for the mediations, ambivalences, and eventual pitfalls of touch and its technologies. Connected bodily experience is not per se oriented to improve caring, nor does reducing distance necessarily trouble in predominant oppressive configurations. It is in this spirit that I return now to interventions that engage with touch to reclaim vision, by manifesting deep attention to materiality and embodiment in ways that rethink relationality, in ways that suggest a desire for tangible engagements with mundane transformation.

A grounded vision of transformation, rather than "enhancement," of experience through touch can be read in how Claudia Castañeda engages speculatively with the "future of touch," exploring specific touch-abilities in developments of "robotic skin" (Castañeda 2001). One of the stories she critically engages with is that of a "bush" robot constructed with a trillion tiny "leaves," each equipped with tactile sensors. This touchy leafy skin would, according to its conceiver's ambitious vision, see *better* than the human eye, for instance, by feeling a photograph or a movie through directly touching its material (227). Castañeda is interested in the "suggestiveness" of such a robotic formation for feminist theories of embodiment and relationality: "What would it be like to touch the visual in the

way this [robot] can?" Castañeda argues that when vision is "rematerial-ized" through direct contact, refusing the distinction between vision and touch troubles the ground of objectivity: "the distinction between distanced (objective) vision and the subjective, embodied contact" (229). Yet her vision of touching futures doesn't translate in a promise of overcoming (human) limitations. On the contrary, Castañeda reminds us that robotic touch is not limitless; it responds to the technological reproduction of specific understandings of how touch works.

In other projects Castañeda looks for alternatives, where robotic skin is rather conceived as a site of learning in interaction with the environment. One characteristic of these learning robots' interactive skin is that it first acts as protection: an alarm system that assists in learning to distinguish what is harmful and can destroy it (Castañeda 2001, 231). The requirement and outcome of ongoing technohaptic learning is not here mastery of dexterous manipulation but a skillful recognition of vulnerability. This suggests that, in contrast with dreams of directness, implementing touching technologies could foster awareness that learning (to) touch is a process. Developing skills is required for precise and careful touching, for learning *how to touch*, specifically. The experience of touch can then serve to insist on the specificity of contact. Castañeda draws from Merleau-Ponty to argue that the experience of touch "cannot be detached from its embodiment," but neither is it "reducible to the body itself." The skin, as an active living surface, "becomes a site of possibility" (232–34). In this vision, the generative character of touch is not given; it emerges from contact with *a* world, a process through which a body learns, evolves, and becomes. All but a dream of immediacy. The affirmation of specificity of contact and encounters is also not a limitation imposed on possibility. Specificity *is* what produces diversity: this is precisely how touch can have multiplying effects, extending the range of experiences rather than extending one mode of experience.

We can go further to affirm that touch is world-making, a thought that resonates with the relational ontology for which being *is* relating approached in the previous chapter. We can read Karen Barad's (2007) account of the seeing-touching made possible by "scanning tunnelling microscopes" in this direction. These devices are used to "observe" surfaces at atomic level,

a procedure that operates "on very different physical principles than visual sight" (53). This account calls upon the "physicality of touch." A sense of the object passes through a "microscope tip" and the "feel" of the surface passes through an electron current tunneled through the microscope. The data produced (including the resulting image of the surface) corresponds to "specific arrangements of atoms." In this encounter, where the physical universe is as much an agent in the *meeting* with a knower, there is no separateness between observing and touching, figuring well a vision that does not separate knowing from being-relating. Barad's account of the closeness of touch stands for a conception where "knowing does not come from standing at a distance and representing the world but rather from *a direct material engagement with the world*" (49, emphasis added).

This vision challenges the framing of knowing within epistemologies of representation and "optics of mediation" (Barad 2007, 374–77)—in social constructivism, for instance, "nature" never comes to "us" but is mediated by the knowledge social beings have of it. A critique of this bifurcated optic order requires a more subtle thinking of the "agency" involved in knowing yet without necessarily speaking for immediacy, for directness in touching the real, or nature. On the contrary, vision-as-touch works rather to increase a sense of the entanglement of multiple materialities, as in Barad's theory of the "intra-activity" of human and nonhuman matters in the scientific constitution of phenomena. Going further than inter-action, Barad's intra-action problematizes not only subjectivity but also the attribution of agency merely to human subjects (of science)—as the ones having power to intervene and transform (construct) reality. The reversibility of touch (to touch is to be touched) also inspires the troubling of such assumptions: Who/what is *object*? Who/what is *subject*? It is not only the experimenter/observer/human agent who sees, touches, knows, intervenes, and manipulates the universe: there is *intra-touching*. In the example above, it is not only the microscope that touches a surface; this surface *does* something to the artifact of touching-vision. In other words, touching technologies are material and meaning producing embodied practices entangled with the very matter of relating-being. As such, they cannot be about touch and get, or about immediate access to more reality. Reality *is* a process of intra-active touch. Interdependency is intrarelational.

As it undermines the grounds of the invulnerable, untouched position of the master subject-agent that appropriates inanimate worlds, this ontology carries ethical resonance. What we do in, to, a world can come back, re-affect someone somehow.

This is thinking touch as world-making. How we know in the world populates it with specific connections. People and things "are in mutually constituting active touch" that "rich naturecultural contact zones multiply with each tactile look" (Haraway 2007b, 6–7). Thought as a material embodied relation that holds worlds together, touch intensifies awareness about the transformative character of contact, including visual contact—tactile looks. Here the sense of intensified curiosity is figured by a particular way of seeing-touching, a haptic-optic figured by Eva Hayward's "fingeryeyes." Coined in speculative thinking with the sensorial impressions of encountering cup corals, this figuration speaks of a visual-haptic-sensorial apparatus of "tentacular visuality" as well as the "synaesthetic quality of materialized sensation" (Hayward 2010, 580). Hayward's sensuous writing compels us into the queerness of caressing encounters with cup corals but retains awareness of the predicaments of closeness to fragile nonhuman others:

> The coralogical impressions of fingeryeyes that I have described cannot be agnostic about animal well-being because ontology is what is at stake. Cross-species sensations are always mediated by power that leaves impressions, which leaves bodies imprinted and furrowed with consequences. Animal bodies—the coral's and mine—carry forms of domination, communion, and activation into the folds of being. As we look for multispecies manifestations we must not ignore the repercussions that these unions have for all actors. In the effort to touch corals, to make sense of their biomechanics, I have also aided in the death of the corals I describe here; this species-sensing is not easily refused by the animals. (592)

What these visions that play with vision as touch and touch as vision invite to think is a world constantly done and undone through encounters that accentuate both the attraction of closeness as well as awareness of alterity. And so, marked by unexpectedness, they require a situated ethicality.

There is a particular form of multifaceted collective reciprocity at stake in the ability and responsibility to respond to being touched: a "response-ability," in Haraway's terms. This requires curiosity about what happens in contact zones, asking question such as: "whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?" with which Haraway opens her adventurous exploration of the layers of naturecultural relations that make interspecies touchings possible—including sophisticated and mundane technologies—while actively speculating on what could be possible through taking seriously these chains of touch. These are worlds of collective feeling, relational processes that are far from being always pleasant or livable but have something specific and situated to teach us. The question of how we learn to live with others, being in the world—to be touched as much as to actively touch, is an opening to "becoming with." Touch "ramifies and shapes accountability" (Haraway 2007b, 36), furthers a sense of inheriting "in the flesh," and invites us to be more aware about how living-as-relating engages both "pleasure and obligation" (7). In contrast with promises of touching technologies for network extension and human enhancement thinking about caring proximities, these situated touching visions can increase ethical awareness about material consequences. Here, knowing practices engage in adding relation to a world by involvement in touching and being touched by what we "observe." Thinking with these visions, I seek a sense of touch that doesn't evoke a hold on reality with improved grasp that intensifies proximity with gradualness and care, attention to detail in encounters, reciprocal exposure, and vulnerability, rather than speeded efficacy of appropriation.[14]

A beautiful example of a nuanced reclamation of touch, paradoxically within a reaffirmation of vision, is how, in her analysis of close-up images, taken at an almost touching closeness, media theorist Laura U. Marks describes the blurred figures produced by intimate detailed images of tiny things, inviting the viewer into "a small caressing gaze" on pores and textures at the surface (Marks 2002, xi). She argues that the power of a *haptic* image is not the identification of/with a distinct "figure" but to engage viewer and image in an immersed "bodily relationship." Yet wanting to "warm up" rather than negate optic culture, Marks doesn't aim to abolish distance but rather to keep an "erotic oscillation" in which the desire of

banishing distances is in tension with the letting go of the other, not driven by possessiveness (13–15). Significantly, she says that the closeness of haptic visuality induces us to acknowledge the "*unknowability* of the other." When vision is blurred in close imagery, objects become "too close to be seen properly," "optical resources fail to see," and optic knowing is "frustrated." It is then that the impulse of haptic visuality is stirred up, inviting us to "haptic speculation" (16). We learn that to speculate is also to admit that we do not *really* know wholly. Though there are indeed many things that knowledge-as-distant vision fails to feel, if touch augments proximity, it also can disrupt and challenge the idealization of longings for closeness and, more specifically, of superior knowledge in proximity.

Haptic speculation doesn't guarantee material certainty; touching is not a promise of enhanced contact with "reality" but rather an invitation to participate in its ongoing redoing and to be redone in the process. Dimitris Papadopoulos, Niamh Stephenson, and Vassilis Tsianos (2008b, 143) conceive a haptic approach to engage with transformative possibilities in everyday forms of sociability that are neglected by optic representation. They encourage haptic experiencing as an attempt to change our perception, to "hone" it to perceive the "imperceptible politics" in everyday practices in which another world is *here*, in the making, before "events" become visible to representation. In these they see a chance, not only for subversion but for creating alternative knowledges. Haptic (political) experience is for them a craft of *carving* possibility in the midst of potential incommensurability. Unknowability takes here yet another meaning.[15] Haptic speculation is not about imaginative expectation of events to come; it is the everyday (survival) strategy rooted in the present of "life below the radars" of optic orders that do not welcome, know, or not even *perceive* the practices that exceed preexistent representations and meanings. It is not difficult to see why this way of being-knowing with a world can be attuned to the sensibilities of thinking with care, to honing perception to matters of care. Focusing on everydayness, on the uneventful, is a way of noticing care's ordinary doings, the domestic unimpressive ways in which we get through the day, without which no event would be possible. While events are those breaks that make a difference, marking a before and after that gets recorded in history, care, in spite of all the work of political reclaiming, in spite of its

hegemonic marketization, remains associated with the unexciting, blended with the dullness of the everyday, with an uneventful temporality. Haptic engagement is akin to thinking with care as a (knowledge) politics of inhabiting the potentials of neglected perception, of speculative commitments that are about relating with, and partaking in, worlds struggling to make their other visions not so much *visible* but possible. These engagements do not so much entail that knowing will be enhanced, more given, or immediate through touch than through seeing; rather, they call attention to the dimension of knowing, which is not about elucidating, but about affecting, touching and being touched, for better or for worse. About involved knowing, knowledge that cares.

Coda: Sensory Values

> Kira laid a slim hand on the bulkhead, on the square plate that was the only access to Helva's titanium shell within the column. It was a gesture of apology and entreaty, simple and swift. Had Helva been aware of *sensory values* it would have been the lightest of pressures. (McCaffrey 1991, 35, emphasis added)

Kira is a human traveling through space *in* Helva, a female-gendered spaceship with a human brain, the central character of Anne McCaffrey's science-fiction classic, *The Ship Who Sang*. These two beings are starting their first conjoint mission and learning to know each other. Both are touchy, in intense pain due to the loss of loved ones (a husband in Kira's case, the previous human ship skipper in Helva's). The excerpt above comes from a scene where Helva, the ship, is physically touched by Kira after a moment of tense argument between them. Helva has no skin sensitive to "sensory values"; however, she indeed *feels* something, beyond her titanium shell body, just by seeing Kira's touching gesture. Helva cannot touch Kira back; her power to act through physical touch is limited. She touches Kira through careful word communication, and by readjusting functions in order to create a caring environment for her in her body-spaceship. Kira knows that Helva's titanium shell cannot "feel" her touch and still her gesture of apology expresses the "lightest of pressures," which Anne McCaffrey qualifies as a "sensory value."

Throughout this chapter I have used "vision," instead of sight, to refer to visual sensorial universes and to speculative ethico-political imagination. Lacking a word that makes of touch what vision makes of sight, I have used touching visions as a surrogate. The promise of touching visions is not just given by the haptic's particular phenomenology. Following the lure of the haptic, I ended up looking for visions that could engage touch with care, that is, that do not idealize it. Without proposing these to become normative orientations, I wonder what it could mean to foster something like "sensory values" for the power of touch, for our touching technologies? I'm thinking of values as collective ventures embodied and embedded in prosaic material everyday agencies, contingently becoming vital to situated relationalities that ground them in a living web of care; of values not necessarily as that which should define the good but as interrogative demands emerging from relations. Sensory values are not qualities reserved to touch, but thinking with touch emphasizes them well because of the intensification of closeness that the haptic signifies and enacts. Touching technologies do not need to celebrate the inherent significance of touch but rather touching visions that also account for haptic asperities. Values for touching visions call for an ethical engagement with the possibility of care as a relation that short-circuits (critical) distance and that is about immersed, impure, ethical involvement, but remain in tension with both moral orderings—such as managerial orientations toward efficiency and speed—and idealized longings for immanent relations.

A sensory value in Kira and Helva's interaction inspired by the trope of touch could be named "tactfulness," the same word for the sense of touch in some languages—for example, in Spanish, *tacto*. A form of sensorial politeness, understood as a political art of gauging distance and proximity.[16] An ethical and political learning that might well be vital in caring for worlds in the making through intensified, constant touch between entities human and more than human—a daily practice of "articulating bodies to other bodies with care so that significant others can flourish" (Haraway 2007b, 92). Thinking touch with care beautifully emphasizes intra-active reversibility, and therefore vulnerability in relational ontologies. If touch is an experience where boundaries of self and other tend to blur, it also speaks of intrusiveness and appropriation: it *is* possible to touch without

being touched. Appropriation abolishes significance. Thought through a politics of care, "intra-active" touch demands attentiveness to the response, or reaction, of the touched. It demands to question when and how we shall avoid touch, to remain open for our haptic speculations to be cut short by the resistance of an "other," to be frustrated by the encounter of another way of touching/knowing. A sense of careful "reciprocity" could therefore be another value for thinking with touch's remarkable quality of reversibility.

Thinking sensory values of care with the universe of touch is a speculative displacement of ethical questioning. Reciprocity is an interesting notion to expose this. Thinking the webs of care through sensorial materiality, as chains of touch that link and remake worlds, troubles not only longings for closeness but also the reduction of relations of reciprocity to logics of exchange between individuals. Sensory values such as intra-touching politeness and haptic reciprocity refer to an obligation to reciprocate attentiveness to others, but one that is quite different from that of a moral contract or the enactment of norms—a quality of caring obligations that I discuss in the next chapter. Thinking care through the haptic and the haptic through care brings up one of the most appealing aspects of care for a speculative ethics in more than human worlds: that its "value" is inseparable from the implication of the carer in a doing that affects her. Care *obliges* in ways embedded in everyday doings and agencies; it obliges because it is inherent to relations of interdependency.

Affirming care as an inherently material obligation is a fraught terrain, given what this means for caregivers, that caring is often a trap, a reason why, as Carol Gould has argued, reducing political obligation to consent or choice is an extremely gendered ideal that excludes a whole set of relations from the political sphere where choice and consent between autonomous individuals has little meaning (Gould 1988). Here I am obviously arguing for a distributed notion of the material obligation of care—not as something that only some should be forced to fulfill.[17] Thinking reciprocity through a collective web of obligations, rather than individual commitments, exposes the multilateral circulation of agencies of care.[18] As David Schmidtz argues, the common idea of "symmetrical" reciprocity doesn't exhaust the ways people try to "pass on" a good received (Schmidtz 2006, 82–83). Care troubles reciprocity in this way because the living web of care

is not one where every giving involves taking, nor every taking will involve giving. The care that touches me today and sustains me might never be given back (by me or others) to those who generated it, who might not even need or want my care. In turn, the care I will give will touch beings who never will give me (back) this care. Reasons to support this vision are advanced by work that sees the ethical implications of care challenging an ethics based on "justice" (Gilligan 1982). And why others ask for the reciprocity of care to be collectively distributed (Kittay 1999), contest the reciprocity model of economic exchange, support "unconditional welfare" (Segall 2005) for example, the State would provide means for care (through unconditional basic income) that could ensure that those with care responsibilities, but who might not have somebody caring for them, are not depleted or neglected. And so by being cared for, they also continue to be able to care for others. Whether we agree or not that the state, given its major role in the structural reproduction of inequalities, is the appropriate collective to foster an ethics inherent to communally reciprocal relations, the essential notion here is that reciprocity in *as well as possible* care circulates multilaterally, collectively: it is shared. Iris Marion Young adds another problematic dimension to these relations when she argues that reciprocity cannot be thought as symmetrical because this masks the asymmetrical positions in which people are situated and the possibility of a different ethics: "opening up to the other person is always a *gift*; the trust to communicate cannot await the other person's promise to reciprocate" (Young 1997, 352). I propose to think of relations of care giving and receiving in a similar way not so much because care is a gift but because there is no guarantee that care will be reciprocated; it happens asymmetrically both in terms of power and because people who care, caregivers, cannot give with the expectation for it to be symmetrically reciprocated. The care that has been "passed on"—as is neglect—continues to circulate, not necessarily morally or intentionally, in an embodied way, or simply embedded in the world, environments, infrastructures that have been marked by that care. The passing on of "care" does not need to be determined by the care we have received to be tangible. What these multilateral reciprocities of care disrupt are conceptions of the ethical as a moral compound of obligations and responsibilities presiding over the agency of intentional (human) moral subjects.

In the following chapters, we will see how these questions have brought this journey closer to attempts to think differently about the circulation of ethicality in more than human worlds—close to those who contest the reduction of ethicality to human intentionality (Barad 2007) and to those who engage with the intentionality of the other than human, seeking to think of "nature in the active voice" (Plumwood 2001). These are paths for questioning human-centered notions of agency that do not necessarily converge, but they are both compelling and challenging to thinking with care in more than human worlds. Interrogating the intra-active but non-bilateral reciprocity of touching with care for the touched, thinking touch through care and as sensory values, invites us to distribute and transfer ethicality through multilateral asymmetrical agencies that don't follow uni-directional patterns of individual intentionality. Caring, or not caring, however, are ethico-political problems and agencies that we mostly think as they pass *from* humans toward others. But thinking care with things and objects exposes that the thick relational complexity of the intratouch-ing circulation of care might be even more intense when we take into account that our worlds are more than human: the agencies at stake mul-tiply. How to care becomes a particularly poignant question in times when other than humans seem to be utterly appropriated in the networks of (some) Anthropos. What does it mean to think how, in the web of care, other than humans constantly "reciprocate"? Can we, at least speculatively, include such thoughts in an ethical inquiry modestly reaching out with care from the uneasy inheritances of human antiecological situatedness? Following such intimations, Part II of this book attempts to think care as a generalized condition that circulates through the stuff and substance of the world, as agencies without which nothing that has any relation to humans would live well, whether all that is alive is engaged in giving or care, whether care is intentionally ethical.

There It Is
BY JAYNE CORTEZ

My friend
they don't care
if you're an individualist
a leftist a rightist
a shithead or a snake
They will try to exploit you
absorb you confine you
disconnect you isolate you
or kill you

And you will disappear into your own rage
into your own insanity
into your own poverty
into a word a phrase a slogan a cartoon
and then ashes

The ruling class will tell you that
there is no ruling class
as they organize their liberal supporters
into
white supremacist lynch mobs
organize their children into
ku klux klan gangs
organize their police into
killer cops
organize their propaganda into
a device to ossify us with angel dust
preoccupy us with western symbols in
african hair styles
inoculate us with hate
institutionalize us with ignorance
hypnotize us with a monotonous sound
designed
to make us evade reality and stomp our
lives away
And we are programmed to self-destruct
to fragment
to get buried under covert intelligence
operations of
unintelligent committees impulsed toward
death
And there it is

The enemies polishing their penises
between
oil wells at the pentagon
the bulldozers leaping into demolition
dances
the old folks dying of starvation
the informers wearing out shoes looking
for crumbs
the life blood of the earth almost dead in
the greedy mouth of imperialism
And my friend
they don't care
if you're an individualist
a leftist a rightist
a shithead or a snake

They will spray you with
a virus of legionnaire's disease
fill your nostrils with
the swine flu of their arrogance
stuff your body into a tampon of
toxic shock syndrome
try to pump all the resources of the world
into their own veins
and fly off into the wild blue yonder to
pollute another planet

And if we don't fight
if we don't resist
if we don't organize and unify and
get the power to control our own lives
Then we will wear
the exaggerated look of captivity
the stylized look of submission
the bizarre look of suicide
the dehumanized look of fear
and the decomposed look of repression
forever and ever and ever
And there it is

10
Listening, Caring, Becoming: Anarchism as an Ethics of Direct Relationships

Jamie Heckert

> 'cause I know there is strength
> in the differences between us
> and I know there is comfort
> where we overlap.
>
> <div align="right">(Ani DiFranco)</div>

Anarchism is notoriously difficult to define. It has been referred to as an ideology, a discourse (Williams, 2007), a political culture (Gordon, 2008), a utopian philosophy and even a 'definite trend' in the history of humankind (Rocker, cited in Chomsky, 2005: 9). And that is just among its supporters. Here, I want to add to this polyvocal effort to understand and explore anarchism with a complementary notion: that of anarchism as an ethics of relationships. Ecological and social, embodied and symbolic, interpersonal and interspecies, of class and race and gender and nation, anarchist ethics apply to relationships of all sorts.

Of course, ethics are always concerned with relationships. Sometimes, however, they are prescriptive, scripting in advance the right way to relate. In this sense, ethics are imagined to precede social relations, whereby that potentially messy and emotionally challenging work of actually relating is imagined to have already been achieved. There are established rules, procedures, protocols or principles to be followed – a social contract to which we have already consented without being asked our desires (Brown, 1995). An action can thus be judged, by those claiming moral/juridical authority, as right or wrong, ethical or unethical, moral or immoral, legal or illegal according to a story which preceded the act. An anarchist ethic of relationships might work otherwise.

Anarchy does not mean simply opposed to the *archos*, or political leader. It means opposed to *archē*. Now, archē, in the first instance, means *beginning*, origin. From this it comes to mean a *first principle, an element*; then *first place, supreme power, sovereignty, dominion, command, authority*; and finally a *sovereignty, an empire, a realm, a magistracy, a governmental office.*

(Tucker, 1897: 112, his emphasis)

My proposal here is an ethics with neither origin nor conclusion, ethics which are continually produced in the present, in being present. Ethics here are not simply about relationships: distant, objective and cool. They are born of relationships, of relating: directly, intersubjectively and warmly. An intimate process which never ends:

The theoretical and practical progress of Justice is such that we cannot detach ourselves from it in order to see its end. [...] we will never know the end of Right, because we will never cease creating new relations among ourselves.

(Proudhon, 1930: 328; trans. Jesse Cohn)

Anti-state, anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-hierarchical, anti-authoritarian: anarchism and other forms of radical politics are criticised for being anti-everything, begging the question, what is anarchism for? I was once challenged for posing a similar question at an activist and intellectual gathering (*Hack the Knowledge Lab*, Lancaster University), by someone who was 'tired of anti-anti'. So, before rushing into what values anarchism affirms, I want to recognise the power and importance of anti-, of no. From the anti-fascist 'no pasaran' of the Spanish Civil War and beyond to the 'fuck off' of anarcho-punk, saying no to domination in whatever form it appears is absolutely crucial in undermining its power. To say no, first, is to carve out a space to say maybe, yes or even 'many yeses' (Kingsnorth, 2003). I see this, too, in an interview from the research project where I first began to think of anarchism as an ethics of relationships. 'Erica' was talking about how she reclaimed her sexuality after a history of childhood sexual abuse:

My first really sexual experience was to decide not to have sex. To just say 'no' to sex and it came out of fear and out of confusion and out of all sorts of shit but actually it was really affirming and sexual and

made me feel really sexy because I realised that I couldn't really say 'yes' to sex without knowing what it was like to say 'no'.

(Heckert, 2005: 145)

My concern, shared with others (such as Sullivan, 2007), is that the no can be imagined to be unconnected to any yes. Caught up in the addictive numbness of resentment (Nietzsche, 1969), nihilism offers an enticing substitute for an empowering anarchism which has space for both yes and no. Just as a no without a yes denies the possibilities of life, a yes without a no denies the possibilities of choice.

The yes which does not know how to say no (the yes of the ass) is a caricature of affirmation. This is precisely because it says yes to everything which is no, because it puts up with nihilism it continues to serve the power of denying – which is like a demon whose every burden it carries. The Dionysian yes on the contrary, knows how to say no: it is pure affirmation, it has conquered nihilism and divested negation of all autonomous power. But it has done this because it has placed the negative at the service of the powers of affirming. To affirm is to create, not to bear, put up with or accept.

(Deleuze, 2005: 175)

Part of my project, in this chapter, then is to hear the yes behind the no (Kashtan, 2002). For anarchism, with all of its anti-s, 'is an affirmative force that breaks the chains of domination through revolt only in order to better affirm, in the very movement of rupture, another possibility, another composition of the world' (Colson, 2001: 33; trans Cohn). In anarchist critiques of speaking for others and in practices of collective organising, I hear a radical commitment to listening. In offering challenges to institutionalised domination and in demonstrating the power of mutual aid, I hear a radical commitment to care. In undermining the false futures of neoliberalism and stories of the 'end of history' and in practices of individual and collective empowerment and transformation, I hear a radical commitment to becoming.

I see interpreting anarchism as an ethics of direct relationships as consistent with anarchist traditions where the state is viewed as 'a relationship between human beings, a way by which people relate to one another' (Landauer, 2005: 165), characterised by being 'watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded' (Proudhon, 1923: 293–4), a social

relationship which cannot be 'blown up' (Anonymous, 1990), but can be destroyed 'by entering into other relationships, by behaving differently to one another' (Landauer, 2005: 165). Anarchism is offered as affirming alternative relationships to those of state (and equally, to intertwined hierarchical relationships including capitalism, patriarchy, heteronormativity and colonialism). Furthermore, it does so in a way which recognises the capacity of individuals and groups to change those relationships: 'That power is a relationship [...] and not something metaphysical or otherwise beyond the grasp and control of human individuals, is clearly understood by anarchist thinkers' (Brown, 1996: 149).

Approaching anarchism as an ethics of relationships supports long-standing anarchist feminist criticisms of how gendered patterns of domination continue within anarchist milieux by refusing to draw a line between personal and political relationships; or, as Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 213) write, 'every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics.' Refusing to acknowledge borders between the micro and the macro, the personal and the political, the social and the psychological, anarchism as an ethics of relationships is consistent, too, with postcolonial critique.

> [Colonialism's] most important area of domination was the mental universe of the colonised, the control, through culture, of how people perceived themselves and their relationship to the world.... To control a people's culture is to control their tools of self-definition in relation to others.
>
> (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, cited in West, 2007: 67; see also, Reinsborough, 2003; de Angelis, 2005)

Placing the emphasis on relationships, then, may offer a basis for letting go of the individualism associated with certain constructions of masculinity and whiteness that are carried into radical anti-racist and anti-sexist movements (starr, 2006; Winnubst, 2006). Understanding anarchism as an ethics of relationships might also explain how anarchist critique encompasses economic, erotic, emotional, ecological and aesthetic relationships as well as a focus on what is narrowly constructed as the political. In doing so, it may bridge the supposedly unbridgeable, offering a common ground where the lifestyle anarchist and the social anarchist (Davis, 2010), the luddite and the hacker (Gordon, 2008), the class warrior and the queer permaculturist may find mutual understanding, if not necessarily agreement. In this logic of affinity (Day, 2005),

anarchism recognises that security comes not from the fascist desire for sameness, or the unity of the state (Rocker, 1937; Dean and Massumi, 1992), but through connections which recognise and affirm difference as well as commonality.

Finally, this understanding of anarchism is an eminently practical one. While anarchist discourses frequently prioritise organisation (e.g., in communities and in workplaces), I am in agreement with Donna Haraway (2003: 20) when she argued that 'the "relation" is the smallest possible unit of analysis,' and consequently, a place to start. It seems to me that both individual empowerment and collective organising depend fundamentally on relationships: with self, with other beings, with the land. And anarchism offers a history of thought in practice on the character of sustainable, empowering and egalitarian relationships. As the eco-feminist and anarchist philosopher Chaia Heller (1999: 93) once wrote,

> if capitalism is a set of *social* relationships based on exploitation, regularization, alienation, and commodification, then the antidote to capitalist rationalization is a new relationality, an empathetic, sensual, and rational way of relating that is deeply cooperative, pleasurable, and meaningful.

Yet how often are the relationships in groups put aside to focus on abstract, macropolitical questions? How many anarchist projects have struggled or even fallen apart disastrously because of relationship difficulties (an example being Hansen, 2002)? Or, to put it another way, what else is anarchism but an invitation to the joys and pains of relating to each other in deeply egalitarian ways? In this chapter, I hope to offer some helpful thoughts on the very practical question of organising.

Nurturing autonomy in communities, workplaces, ecosystems and homes, it seems to me, necessarily involves getting on with others who experience the world differently. Things fall apart or come together through relationships. In this way, anarchist politics does not need to hold itself against those dominant, and dominating, terms of a 'culture of evaluation' (Weaver, 2008): success and failure, particularly where success refers to a global revolution abolishing all systems of domination and failure refers to all else. Instead, an emphasis on relationships prioritises the small steps of everyday life, making anarchy accessible without being watered down, not so much gradualist or reformist as *emergent* (Chesters, 2003; Chesters and Welsh, 2006). Likewise, this emphasis on relationships maintains anarchy as alive (Gordon, 2008) without

being limited to *anarchists*; anarchism, in this sense, might be understood as an appreciation of (and desire for) the anarchy which in various ways and to varying degrees already exists: as nature (Kropotkin, 2009; Jones, 2009), as ontology (Bey, 1994), as human culture (Barclay, 1990; Graeber, 2004) and as an everyday part of life hidden when we focus on domination as definitive of reality (Ward, 1982; Shukaitis, 2009). Anarchy is alive and well, and it is everywhere.

My methodology in coming to tell this story of anarchism as an ethics of direct relationships is, among other things, ethnographic.

> When one carries out an ethnography, one observes what people do, and then tries to tease out the hidden symbolic, moral, or pragmatic logics that underlie their actions; one tries to get at the way people's habits and actions make sense in ways that they are not themselves completely aware of. One obvious role for a radical intellectual is to do precisely that: to look at those who are creating viable alternatives, try to figure out what might be larger implications of what they are (already) doing, and then offer those ideas back, not as prescriptions, but as contributions, possibilities – as gifts.
>
> (Graeber, 2004: 11–12)

Listening, caring, becoming. These are the anarchist ethics I have seen, heard, felt, tasted. They are also the ethics I have desired. Perhaps this chapter contains not only histories of anarchist thought and an ethnography of the present but also 'an archaeology of the future' (Le Guin, 1988: 3).

10.1 Listening

> The capacity to give one's attention to a sufferer is a very rare and difficult thing; it is almost a miracle; it is a miracle. Nearly all those who think they have the capacity do not possess it.
>
> (Simone Weil, quoted in Rosenberg, 2003: 92)

For anarchists, a critique of representation is 'something absolutely fundamental: the indignity of speaking for others' (Deleuze, 1977; see also, May, 1994; Sullivan, 2005; Tormey, 2006). In anarchist discourse, this is expressed as an ethical commitment to people being involved as directly as possible in making the decisions that affect their lives. It might also be expressed as the dignity of listening to others, the dignity of being listened to.

This process might begin with learning to listen to oneself, to the authority of one's own experience, one's own knowledge, one's own body. Indeed, it is essential in learning to question others' claims of authority.

> In the matter of boots I refer to the authority of the bootmakers; concerning houses, canals or railroads I consult that of the architect or engineer. For such or such special knowledge I apply to such or such a savant. But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor the savant to impose his authority upon me. I accept them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure.
>
> (Bakunin, cited in Kinna, 2005: 70)

This sentiment is echoed strongly in anarcha-feminist discourse where women support each other to resist patriarchal claims of authority, whether in relation to health (see Gordon and Griffiths, 2007; Griffiths and Gordon, 2007; Lisa, 2008) or notions of what constitutes the political or the revolutionary (examples include Dark Star, 2002; Jeppesen, 2004; Ackelsburg, 2005; Jose, 2005; Davis, forthcoming).

Learning to listen to oneself might be seen to constitute a practice of direct action, a counter-practice to a culture in which many of us have learned to doubt ourselves, to believe ourselves lesser (or greater) than others. This may also be understood as prefigurative – a means which is an end in itself. Listening is also a becoming. By listening to oneself, I do not mean to become caught up in the stories of the mind – the tales of how things really are, of who you really are and of what is possible. I suggest caution towards these narratives – they are simply stories, simply points of view (e.g., Stainton Rogers and Stainton Rogers, 1997; Chödrön, 2002). Coming to believe that they are unquestionably true inhibits one's capacity to listen, to empathise, to care. There are always other stories, other ways to see. No, I refer here to a deeper listening – a listening to one's own body, to sensations and desires, to pleasure and pain, to breathe and perhaps even to a stillness within that lies behind thought and feeling (Adyashanti, 2006). For domination, too, exists 'in a more subtle psychological sense, of body by mind, of spirit by a shallow instrumental rationality' (Bookchin, 2003: 4). And I know, the more deeply I listen to myself, the more I am able to listen to others, to be open to their stories, their points of view, to craft together revolutions great and small (Rosenberg, 2003).

The capacity to listen to others is, it seems to me, integral to the radically libertarian, egalitarian and participatory forms of organisation promoted and practised in anarchism. Liberty to express one's own thoughts, feelings and desires (verbally or through other forms of behaviour) without listening with care to the thoughts, feelings and desires of others is more consistent with the macho individualism of capitalism than the social libertarianism of anarchism. Likewise, the equality under the law of liberal democracy only requires very shallow forms of listening (such as ballot counting, lobbying and petitioning) in contrast to the deep listening desired, if not always found, in horizontal methods of organising. And in anarchism as participatory culture, where everyone is invited to make their contributions to decision-making and to co-creating the structures of social life, participants ideally learn to listen to each other in order to work and play together (such as McDonald, 2002; Le Guin, 2004; Sitrin, 2006). It is this ethic of listening which keeps anarchism fresh and alive, like the Zapatismo which is one of its contemporary sources of inspiration.

> The idea of a listening revolution turns preconceived notions of struggle on their head. Zapatismo throws political certainty to the wind, and out of the shape-shifting mist it grasps change; change not as a banal revolutionary slogan, but as actual process. Change as the ability of revolutionaries to admit mistakes, to stop and question everything.
>
> (Jordan, 2004: 484)

Rather than relying on fixed structures and rigid thinking, anarchism perhaps then involves developing a comfort with uncertainty (Chödrön, 2002).

Finally, many currents of anarchism, contemporary and historical, are inspired by a deep recognition of the interdependence of humankind with the rest of the ecosystems of which we are only ever a part. This is sometimes expressed as learning to listen to the land. For pagan, permaculturist and/or primitivist anarchists, this may have a very literal meaning. Influential writers such as Derrick Jensen (2000) and Starhawk (2004) have described their deepening sense of connection with land and life through listening to plants and non-human animals – something which might be considered insane in Eurocentric discourses of pathologisation (i.e., labelling difference as illness). Jensen and Starhawk, among others, reverse this discourse, arguing that indigenous cultures have always listened to the land, that it is the dominant

culture that is insane in its refusal to do so. Similarly, many anarchists are inspired by permaculture – an ethical design system for creating permanent agriculture and permanent culture inspired by the understandings of natural systems developed by indigenous peoples. It is a practical method of producing abundance despite capitalism's efforts to produce scarcity. Like anarchism, ecology is a fundamentally cooperative effort, and, as permaculturist Patrick Whitefield (2007: 414) writes,

> We can only co-operate with a person or a place if first we listen to them. I use the word listening here in its broadest sense, to include all the ways we can learn about places and people, not just those which involve our ears.

10.2   Caring

> [Human beings suffer from] a nostalgia for which there is no remedy upon earth except as is to be found in the enlightenment of the spirit – some ability to have a perceptive rather than an exploitative relationship with his [*sic*] fellow creatures.
>
> <div align="right">(Bakunin, quoted in Tifft and Sullivan, 1980: 2)</div>

Whether expressed as class solidarity (Franks, 2006), mutual aid (Kropotkin, 2009) or love (Horrox, 2009; Christoyannopoulos, 2010; Davis, forthcoming), anarchism involves an ethic of care. I use this term advisedly, aware of the ways in which control over others, including institutionalisation, can be exercised under the guise of care. It is in this patronising sense that disability activists, for example, have been critical (Sposaro, 2003; Hughes et al., 2005; Shakespeare, 2006). Similarly, an anarchist ethic of care rejects paternal notions of development: 'If you come only to help me, you can go back home. But if you consider my struggle as part of your struggle for survival, then maybe we can work together' (Q. Australian aboriginal woman in People's Global Action, 2008). I remember how shocked I felt the first time I heard an anarchist say, 'I don't support charity.' I have since come to recognise how the dynamics by which charity, imposed notions of development and certain practices called care continually act to produce hierarchical relationships, separating the giver from the receiver. An anarchist ethic of care, therefore, is one which emphasises equality, mutuality, embodiment and interdependence – similar in many ways to certain contemporary feminist formulations (Beasley and Bacchi, 2007).

The practice of this ethic of care might, once again, begin with the self. In purely practical terms, an uncared-for self is unlikely to be able to practise sustainable and mutual forms of care. To prioritise care for others over care for the self, or indeed to imagine that they are separable, is to sidestep mutuality, perhaps out of certain cultural norms of the strong and independent individual, and to ensure burnout (Jones, 2007). For Foucault, with whom a number of thinkers see a great affinity with anarchism, care of the self is a practice of freedom. In the antiquity which he studied, it was this practice by which one constituted oneself an ethical subject, ethical in relationships with others and with regard to questions of social organisation. Before his death he was unable to turn to the question of how one might apply this practice in response to current patterns of domination. However, on the subject Foucault (1987: 14) said,

I have the impression that in the political thought of the 19th century – and we might even have to go beyond, to Rousseau and Hobbes – the political subject has been thought essentially as subject to law, either in naturalist terms or in terms of positive law. In turn, it seems to me that the question of an ethical subject does not have much of a place in contemporary political thought.

The ethical subject, that of anarchist (anti-)political philosophy, who is not subject to law, may only come into existence through care of the self. This care of the self is simultaneously a care for others; this is the interdependent self, the relational self, the ecological self whose needs are intertwined with the needs of other beings.

Anarchist ethics emphasise the care for others, often crossing borders of species, citizenship and any supposed line between 'us' and the 'more-than-human world' (Abram, 1997). This may be expressed through valuing some practices of relationship over others. Note, for example, Uri Gordon's contrasting of permaculture with capitalism.

The permaculture ethic of 'care for the land and the people', transposed into broader cultural terms, would involve facilitating that self-development of the plant or the person, the garden or the community, each according to its own context – working with, rather than against, the organic momentum of the entity cared for. Whereas in monoculture (or industry, or existing social relations) what is

sought after is the opposite – maximal control and harnessing of natural processes and labour power.

(2008: 137)

In capitalist stories, resources are inherently scarce and it is not possible for everyone's needs to be met. In anarchist stories, scarcity is precisely the effect of capitalism, of the enclosure of resources. The same applies to care; what patterns of social relations produce an apparent scarcity of love, intimacy, understanding and empathy? In this story, only some of us are good, deserving of love and respect; or, in other words, capitalism involves a moral economy of personhood (Skeggs, 2004). Some are bad, undeserving, unworthy. We might invert this story of bourgeois morality, instead claiming that the oppressed are good and the oppressors bad (what Nietzsche refers to as a slave morality). Rosenberg (2003) offers an alternative, questioning the purpose of moral judgement entirely and working to undermine moral hierarchies through micropolitical practice and through the development of sociocracy (a model for a self-governing society which has affinities to, and overlaps with, anarchist approaches). Is moral judgement always at the same time an unacknowledged expression of pain for life-serving desires (e.g., freedom or equality) unmet or of pleasure for those which are fulfilled? What is the insistence on moralising but a strategy for denying pain (and thus pleasure), resorting instead to abstraction (what Nietzsche calls *ressentiment*)?

Drawing on Nietzsche's argument, the feminist philosopher Wendy Brown has suggested that the disempowering strategy of a state-centred politics of recognition may well be an effect of this simultaneous denial of, and holding on to, pain: 'politicised identities generated out of liberal, disciplinary societies, insofar as they are premised on exclusion from a universal ideal, require that ideal, as well as their exclusion from it, for their own perpetuity as identities' (1993: 398). I suspect the same may apply to anarchist identities. Like Newman, my interest is in 'an anarchism without ressentiment' (2004: 124). Letting go of pain, resentment and judgement may offer the basis of a compassionate anarchist ethic, sidestepping the disempowering effects of identities and politics defined by inequality, by unfreedom. Pleasures and pains, values and desires expressed directly may be easier for others to hear than the authority-claims of morality, thus further facilitating relationships (Rosenberg, 2003). This compassionate spirit infuses much, though certainly not all, of anarchist discourse. I see it here in this critique of prison by American anarchist Voltairine de Cleyre (2004: 154).

I think that within every bit of human flesh and spirit that has ever crossed the enigma bridge of life, from the prehistoric racial morning until now, all crime and all virtue were germinal. Out of one great soul-stuff are we sprung, you and I and all of us; and if in you the virtue has grown and not the vice, do not therefore conclude that you are essentially different from him whom you have helped to put in stripes and behind bars.

Instead of a punitive 'justice' system, anarchist criminology emphasises restorative justice:

[J]ustice done restoratively requires that participants continually remain open to each other's concerns, ideas, needs, feelings, desires, pain and suffering, so that each can see the other not as a resource to be used or exploited or as an object to be derided or scorned, but as he or she is, similar to oneself, a person engaged in an unending struggle to become human, with dignity [...]. When such collaboration takes place, we experience the beginnings of a restorative community, of a political economy of peace and democracy.

(Sullivan and Tifft, 2001: 30; see also Tifft and Sullivan, 1980; Rosenberg, 2004; Gaarder, 2009)

This ethos of care for others is not limited to a critique of prisons, but is found throughout anarchist politics: in animal liberation, deep ecology, feminist health projects, anti-militarism, class struggle, queer liberation, No Borders activism and beyond.

10.3   Becoming

Anarchists have often compared this open cooperative social struc-ture to a biological organism. Organisms are living beings which evolve of their own free will through a process of perpetual becom-ing that is unbounded and non-deterministic. Similarly, an anarchist society emulates this openness through a harmonious social structure that is free, dynamic, and ever-evolving.

(Antliff, 2008: 6)

One of the most frequent responses to anarchist ideas is that they sound good in theory, but can never work. People are just not like that – caring, cooperative and egalitarian. For anarchist theorists, among other social

scientists and philosophers of course, this human nature argument is suspect.

> Surely our understanding of the nature of man [*sic*] or of the range of viable social forms is so rudimentary that any far-reaching doctrine must be treated with great scepticism, just as scepticism is in order when we hear that 'human nature' or 'the demands of efficiency' or 'the complexity of modern life' requires this or that form of oppression and autocratic rule.
>
> (Chomsky, 2005: 119)

One might well ask two questions in response to a human nature argument: (1) how is it that people come to perceive each other as predominantly or essentially hierarchical and competitive? (2) What is it about particular macro-level patterns of social relations (such as the state, capitalism and patriarchy) that support or encourage particular traits (such as obedience, competition and domination)?

In relation to the second question, anarchists have developed more sophisticated arguments than simply suggesting that the official political economy and all other mechanisms of control could be abolished in a moment allowing human nature to be free to express its natural cooperative instincts, free of repression (Clark, 2007; Morland, 1997).

> The problem is not of trying to dissolve [relations of power] in the utopia of perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self, which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination.
>
> (Foucault, 1987: 18)

Rather than an event of liberation, social revolution towards possible anarchist futures might be understood better as a becoming – the process by which people learn self-management (autonomy).

Autonomy, too, is a becoming:

> Autonomy is not a fixed, essential state. Like gender, autonomy is created through its performance, by doing/becoming; it is a political practice. To become autonomous is to refuse authoritarian and compulsory cultures of separation and hierarchy through embodied practices of welcoming difference [. . .]. Becoming autonomous is a

political position for it thwarts the exclusions of proprietary knowledge and jealous hoarding of resources, and replaces the social and economic hierarchies on which these depend with a politics of skill exchange, welcome, and collaboration. Freely sharing these with others creates a common wealth of knowledge and power that subverts the domination and hegemony of the master's rule.

(subRosa Collective, 2003: 12–13)

Both the macro-level patterns of social order desired (such as anarchy or autonomy) and the individuals who both constitute and are constituted by the social order are processes. The anarchist is made, not born. As Carole Pateman points out, 'participation develops and fosters the very qualities necessary for it; the more individuals participate the better able they become to do so' (1970: 42–3). More recently, non-hierarchical ecological politics have also drawn on this ethic of empowerment through direct participation, direct action.

Power-to must involve participation, but not any kind of participation: it is only when it is active and constructive that it meets needs effectively. Empowerment is a process of self-organisation and self-realisation – a process, because it is passed on through co-operation between different empowered agents. Through co-operation, we can build whole empowered societies.

(Begg, 2000: 141)

Once again, empowerment of the individual is intertwined with empowering relationships – there is no division between the personal and the political. The question of whether or not people are immediately capable of self-organisation without rigid structures of control is, then, perhaps not the most relevant one. Anarchists, instead, might ask: what do people need to learn, what do I need to learn, to practice, to become more capable? How can we support each other in those practices, in that learning?

To return to the question of perception, one of the reasons I have emphasised listening to the self, care of the self, is precisely because it seems to me that these are what enable both a broader perception of *what is* and a wider imagination of *what is possible*. How quickly we have learned to draw conclusions about the state of the world, the state of human nature, to come to believe those stories as unquestionable truths. The practice of anarchy, of autonomy, necessitates a certain

open-mindedness – otherwise, it becomes a new dogma, a new institu-tionalisation of knowledge/power (as discussed by Crimeth Inc., 2002; also see Foucault, 1980). Anarchists have taken up numerous strate-gies in order to nurture this open-mindedness. Radical pedagogy (such as Suissa, 2006; Latif and Jeppesen, 2007) and mental health projects (raised by The Icarus Project, 2009), film making (Porton, 1999, 2009), storytelling (Le Guin, 2004, 2009; Killjoy, 2009), street theatre and other forms of cultural activism (Duncombe, 2002; Grindon, 2008; Shepard, 2009) and, of course, anarchist philosophy all work to nurture a sense of imagination, an openness to possibilities.

Imagination has long been important to anarchism (Shukaitis, 2009). For those who particularly emphasise the inseparability of mind and body, a flexibility of imagination and emotion is deeply intertwined with a flexibility of muscle and ligament. Thus, anarchist practices of becoming also include yoga, tai chi, dance, football and other forms of movement and play. These practices alter perception not only of what is possible but also of what already exists. As Anaïs Nin once wrote, 'We see the world as "we" are, not as "it" is; because it is the "I" behind the "eye" that does the seeing' (Quoted in Institute of General Seman-tics, 2009). Changing ourselves changes our perception of 'reality' and, consequently, what might be realistic.

10.4   Conclusion: Being and becoming

> The state is a relationship between human beings, a way by which people relate to one another; and one destroys it by entering into other relationships, by behaving differently to one another. [...] we are the state – and are it as long as we are not otherwise, as long as we have not created the institutions that constitute a genuine community and society of human beings.
>
> (Landauer, 1910/2005: 165)

What characterises this condition, this relationship between human beings, that we might call the state? Is it, at least in part, a fear of inti-macy, a fear of life? Is this the contrast Landauer offers when he posits community as other than the state? Community, not as idealised vision of perfect harmony and easy relationships – relationships of production and reproduction, of work and family, of culture and knowledge. No, not this. Community, rather, as living experience, always involving the pleasures and pains of intimacy. Community as a vibrant network of

relationships, of relating to each other as equals (May, 2009), as subjects not objects, as co-creators, as fellow beings who are always becoming.

And the state? The state is that condition, that relationship, that strategy of trying to make something happen (Scott, 1998). Rules and regulations, standards and measures, blueprints and judgements, the state is the relationship that is trying too hard to get it right and in doing so prevents the very intimacy desired. The state is the mind intruding on the body: the dancer getting in the way of the dance, the seducer, fancying himself the lover yet never experiencing love, the protector of the weak (Brown, 1995), denying himself the pleasures of weakness – of receiving care, of surrendering to a life which is so much more than just himself and his armour. I do not say this to judge the dancer, the seducer, the protector; if I do, I judge myself at the same time. Instead, I might simply grieve. For the state, as a simultaneously micro-political and emergent macro-web of social relations, is a multitude of opportunities for intimacy lost.

To listen, to care, involves an awareness of presence, of being which is not caught up in thought, in judgement. When judgement arises, compassionate listening may be able to hear the feelings and desires which underlie the judgement. It is this which allows for connection, for relationship (Rosenberg, 2003). This is an intimate form of direct action. The non-authoritarian philosophy of J. Krishnamurti may be helpful here. He questions the place of thought in relationships – are we relating to a living, breathing and changing self/other or to the image of the self/other in the mind? For him, 'relationship is direct, not through an image' (2005: 23). Letting go of the image, of the need to draw conclusions about who we/they are, relationship is to Krishnamurti the key to freedom because it creates an alternative to violence and to authority.

> Obviously there must be authority as long as community is based on violence. Is not our present social structure based on violence, on intolerance? The community is you and another in relationship; and is not your relationship based on violence? Are you not ultimately out for yourself? Is not our present relationship based on violence – violence being the process of self-enclosure, isolation? Is not our daily action a process of isolation? And since each one is isolating himself [sic], there must be authority to bring about cohesion, either the authority of the state, or the authority of organised religion.
>
> (1997: 19)

Like Foucault and many anarchists before and since, Krishnamurti points out the problem is not simply the state as institution, but also the individualism upon which the state and other forms of domination depend. If, as Krishnamurti suggests, *being present* is precisely what enables direct relationship, enables a letting go of individualism, then this may be the continual practice from which the becoming-revolution springs.

whose side are you on?

the side of the busstop woman
trying to drag her bag
up the front steps before the doors
clang shut   i am on her side
i give her exact change
and him the old man hanging by
one strap his work hand folded shut
as the bus doors i am on his side
when he needs to leave
i ring the bell   i am on their side
riding the late bus into the same
someplace   i am on the dark side always
the side of my daughters
the side of my tired sons

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2

To Preserve the Life of the Other

I propose a relatively simple question, one that we might immediately identify as belonging to moral psychology, or perhaps to moral philosophy: What leads any of us to seek to preserve the life of the other? Of course, debates about the preservation of life now inform medical ethics, including those concerning reproductive freedom and technology, but also those regarding health care, law enforcement, and prisons. Although I will not be entering into those debates in detail here, I hope that some of what I argue will have implications for how we enter those debates. I want, rather, to point out a feature of debates about when and where the preservation of life is called for: namely, that we invariably make some assumptions about what counts as life. These assumptions include not only when and where it begins or how it ought to end, but also, perhaps in another register, the question of *whose lives* count as living.

So, when we ask the question, "Why do we seek to preserve the life of the other?" we could be asking about what motivates us to do so, or we could instead be asking what *justifies* actions of that kind—or, indeed, what establishes as morally unjustifiable the refusal or failure to preserve a life. The first question is psychological, though clearly one of moral psychology; the second belongs to moral philosophy, or to ethics, fields that sometimes

rely on moral psychology to make their claims. But do these questions also overlap with social theory and political philosophy?

Much depends on how we pose the question and what assumptions we make when we pose it. For instance, it makes a difference if we pose the question about a singular other person: What leads any of us to seek to preserve the life of this other person? That question is different from asking whether we seek to preserve the lives of some particular group with which we strongly identify, those belonging to a vulnerable group that seems to us in danger of violence or destruction, or of all who are living. Asking what leads us to seek to preserve the life of a particular other person presumes a dyadic relation: You may be someone I know or someone I do not know; in either case, I may, under certain circumstances, be in a position to ward off danger or to stop a destructive force that threatens your life. What do I do, and why do I do it? And what justifies the action that I finally take? These questions seem to belong to the field of moral philosophy and moral psychology, without exhausting the range of questions considered by those fields. Asking whether we seek to preserve the life of some particular group —asking what justifies actions of that kind—presumes what we might well call a "biopolitical" consideration. It asks that we consider not only what counts as a life, but whose lives count as worthy of preservation. Under certain conditions, it makes sense to ask whose life *counts as a life,* even when that formulation seems to founder in tautology: if it is a life that does not count, is it not still a life?

I will return to this question of biopolitics in the next chapter. For now, let us return to the first question with which I began: What leads any of us to seek to preserve the life of the other? It is a question that, in some form, has to be asked not just of individuals, but also of institutional arrangements, economic systems, and forms of government: What structures and institutions are in place to safeguard the life of a population or, indeed, that of every population? We will turn to psychoanalysis to see what grounds are given there for *not* taking a life, and for seeking to preserve one. It is not a matter of thinking about the relation of individual to group psychology, for the two invariably overlap, and even our very singular and subjective dilemmas implicate us in a broader political world. The "I" and the "you," the "they" and the "we" are implicated in one another, and that implication is not only logical; it is lived out as an ambivalent social bond, one that constantly poses the ethical demand to

negotiate aggression. So, if we start the moral inquiry with the uncritical use of the "I," or indeed the "we," we have occluded a prior and pertinent inquiry that considers how both the singular and plural subject are formed and contested by the relations they seek to negotiate through moral reflection.

The way this question is posed raises another: that of paternalism. Who belongs to the group who does the "preserving," and who is imagined as having lives in need of "preservation"? Are "we" not also in need of having our lives preserved? Are the lives of those who ask the question the same as the lives about whom the question is asked? For those of us who pose the question, do we consider that our own lives are also worthy of preservation, and if so, who is called upon to preserve them? Or is it rather that we presume the worthiness of our lives, presume that everything will be done to preserve our lives, such that "we" ask this question about "others" who do not live with such presumptions? Is the "we" really separable from those "other" lives we may seek to preserve? If there is a "we" who seeks to solve this problem, and then there are "others" who are the recipients of our deliberations, do we then assume a certain divide, arguably paternalistic, between those who have—or are invested with—the power to preserve life (or those of us for whom there exists a power that seeks already to preserve our lives) and those whose lives are in danger of not being preserved—that is, those whose lives are imperiled by a form of violence, either deliberate or negligent, and whose survival can only be countered by a countervailing sort of power?

This happens, for instance, when "vulnerable groups" are identified. On the one hand, the discourse on "vulnerable groups" or "vulnerable populations" has been important to both feminist human rights work and the ethics of care.[1] For if a group is called "vulnerable," then it gains a status that enables it to make a claim for protection. The question then emerges: To whom is that claim addressed, and which group emerges as charged with the protection of the vulnerable? On the other hand, have the ones who bear responsibility for vulnerable groups become divested of vulnerability through that designating practice? Of course, the point is to highlight the unequal distribution of vulnerability; but if such a designation implicitly distinguishes between vulnerable and invulnerable groups, and charges the invulnerable with the obligation to protect the vulnerable, then that formulation makes two problematic assumptions: first, it treats groups as if

they are already constituted as vulnerable or not vulnerable; second, it fortifies a paternalistic form of power at the very moment in which reciprocal social obligations are most urgently required.

Those of us who understand ourselves as responding to an ethical claim to safeguard life, even to protect life, may find ourselves subscribing to a social hierarchy in which, for ostensibly moral reasons, the vulnerable are distinct from the paternalistically powerful. It is, of course, possible to claim that such a distinction is descriptively true, but when it becomes the basis of a moral reflection, then a social hierarchy is given a moral rationalization, and moral reasoning is pitted against the aspirational norm of a shared or reciprocal condition of equality. It would be awkward, if not fully paradoxical, if a politics based on vulnerability ended up fortifying hierarchies that most urgently need to be dismantled.

I began by posing a question about the psychological motivations for preserving another's life or the lives of others in the plural and sought to show that such a question, perhaps in spite of itself, opens onto a political problem concerning the management of demographic differences and the ethical ruses of paternalistic forms of power. As of yet, my inquiry leaves critically unexplored such key terms as "life," "the living," what it means "to preserve and to protect," and whether these can be thought as reciprocal actions such that those who potentially preserve the lives of others are also in potential need of preservation—as well as what that implies about potentially shared conditions of vulnerability and exposure, the obligations they imply, and the sorts of social and political organization they require.

My inquiry is meant to ask about the possibility of safeguarding life against modes of destruction, including the kinds of destruction that we ourselves unleash. My wager is that not only do we find ways to preserve the very lives that we ourselves have the power to destroy, but also that such preservation of life requires infrastructures organized with that purpose in mind. (Of course, there are infrastructures that seek precisely not to preserve lives, so infrastructure alone is not a sufficient condition for the preservation of life.) My question is not just *what* we, as morally accountable subjects, do, or refuse to do, to preserve a life or set of lives, but *how* the world is built such that the infrastructural conditions for the preservation of life are reproduced and strengthened. Of course, in some sense, we do build that world; but, in another sense, we find ourselves emerging into a biosphere, including a built world, that we personally have

never made. Further, as we know from the increasingly urgent issue of climate change, the environment changes as a result of human intervention, bearing the effects of our own powers to destroy the conditions of livability for human and non-human life-forms. This is yet another reason why a critique of anthropocentric individualism will turn out to be important to the development of an ethos of nonviolence in the context of an egalitarian imaginary.

An ethos of nonviolence, whatever that might prove to be, will turn out to be different from both moral philosophy and moral psychology, though moral inquiry takes us to a site where it opens up both psychoanalytic and political fields. When we take moral psychology as a point of departure, as Freud surely did when considering the origins of destructiveness and aggression, our reasoning makes sense only in light of fundamental political structures, including assumptions we make about how destructive potential inheres in any social bond. Of course, lives appear one way or the other only when viewed from specific historical perspectives; they acquire and lose value depending on the framework in which they are regarded, which is not to say that any given framework has the full power to decide the value of a life. The differential ways in which the value of life is gauged are informed by tacit schemes of valuation according to which lives are deemed to be more or less grievable; some achieve iconic dimensions—the absolutely and clearly grievable life—while others barely make a mark—the absolutely ungrievable, a loss that is no loss. And there is a vast domain of others whose value is foregrounded within one framework and lost within another, that is, whose value is flickering, at best. One could claim that there is a continuum of the grievable, but that framework does not let us understand those occasions in which, for instance, a life is at the same time actively mourned within one community and fully unmarked—and unmarkable—within a dominant national or international frame. And yet this happens all the time. It is one reason why the community that mourns also protests the fact that the life is considered ungrievable, not only by those responsible for taking the life, but also by those who live in a world where the presumption is that such lives are always vanishing, that this is simply the way things go. This is one reason why mourning can be protest, and the two must go together when losses are not yet publicly acknowledged and mourned. The mournful protest—and here we can think of Women in Black or the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, or the

families and friends of the Ayotzinapa forty-three[2]—makes the claim that this lost life ought not to have been lost, that it is grievable and should have been regarded as such long before any injury was done. And it demands the forensic evidence that will establish the story of the death and who is accountable. The failure of accounting for violent death makes it impossible to grieve. For though the loss is known, the explanation of how the death took place is not, and so the loss cannot be fully registered. The dead remain, to that extent, ungrievable.

One normative aspiration of this work is to contribute to the formulation of a political imaginary of the radical equality of grievability. It's not just that we all have a right to mourn the dead, or that the dead have the right to be mourned—that is doubtless true, but it does not capture the full sense of what I mean. There is a difference between someone's being grieved and that same person's bearing, in their living being, a characteristic of grievability. The second involves the conditional tense: those who are grievable *would be* mourned if their lives *were* lost; the ungrievable are those whose loss would leave no trace, or perhaps barely a trace. So, if I were to call for "the radical equality of all those who *are* grievable," I would not be able to focus on the way that grievability is differentially allocated such that some do not rise to the level of the grievable, cannot be grasped as lives worth mourning. In the same way that we talk about the unequal distribution of goods or resources, I believe that we can also speak about the radically unequal distribution of grievability. That does not mean there is a center of power that distributes according to a calculus, but it may well mean that a calculation of this sort pervades regimes of power in more or less tacit ways. And though some may think that I am calling for everyone to cry in the face of another's death and to ask how we might grieve for those we do not even know, I want to suggest that grieving takes a different form, even an impersonal form, when the loss is not proximate, when it is loss at a distance or when, in fact, it is nameless. To say that a life is grievable is to claim that a life, even before it is lost, is, or will be, worthy of being grieved on the occasion of its loss; the life has value in relation to mortality. One treats a person differently if one brings the sense of the grievability of the other to one's ethical bearing toward the other. If an other's loss would register as a loss, would be marked and mourned, and if the prospect of loss is feared, and precautions are thus taken to safeguard that life from harm or destruction, then our very ability to value and

safeguard a life depends upon an ongoing sense of its grievability—the conjectured future of a life as an indefinite potential that would be mourned were it cut short or lost.

The scenario I have offered acts as if the problem belongs to ethical relations structured in a dyadic way. I regard you as grievable and valuable, and perhaps you regard me as the same. Yet, the problem goes beyond the dyad and calls for a rethinking of social policy, institutions, and the organization of political life. Indeed, if institutions were structured according to a principle of the radical equality of grievability, that would mean that every life conceived within those institutional terms would be worth preserving, that its loss would be marked and lamented, and that this would be true not only of this or that life, but of every life. This would, I suggest, have implications for how we think about health care, imprisonment, war, occupation, and citizenship, all of which make distinctions between populations as more and less grievable.

And there is still that tricky question of life, and when life starts, and what kinds of living beings I have in mind when I speak about those who are "living": Are they subjects of a human kind? Would that include the embryonic, and so not quite a "they" at all? And what about insects, animals, and other living organisms—are these not all forms of living that deserve to be safeguarded against destruction? Are they distinct kinds of being, or are we referring to living processes or relations? What of lakes, glaciers, or trees? Surely they can be mourned, and they can, as material realities, conduct the work of mourning as well.[3]

For now, it seems worth reiterating that the ethic I am articulating is bound up with a specific political imaginary, an egalitarian imaginary that requires a conjectural way of proceeding, a way of experimenting with the conditional: only those lives that would be grieved if they were lost qualify as grievable lives, and these are lives actively and structurally protected from violence and destruction. This use of the grammatical form of the second conditional is one way of experimenting with a potential, postulating what would follow if all lives were regarded as grievable; it might let us see how a utopic horizon opens up in the midst of our consideration of whose lives matter and whose lives do not, or whose lives are more likely to be preserved and whose lives are not. Let us, in other words, embed our ethical reflections within an egalitarian imaginary. The

imaginary life turns out to be an important part of this reflection, even a condition for the practice of nonviolence.

For the most part, when we confront moral dilemmas regarding the conditions under which life should be preserved, we formulate hypotheses and then test them by imagining various scenarios. If I were a Kantian, I might ask: If I act in a certain way, can I, without contradiction, will that everyone act in that same way, or at least in accord with the same moral precept? For Kant, the question is whether one commits a contradiction or acts reasonably in willing as one does. He gives us a negative and a positive formulation: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law";[4] and then, "Act always on that maxim whose universality as a law you can at the same time will."[5] One example he offers is that of the false promise, made to extricate oneself from a difficult situation. That route seems not to work, for "I become aware at once that I can indeed will to lie, but I can by no means will a universal law of lying."[6] Others, he claims, would "pay me back in like coin," and his "maxim, as soon as it was made a universal law, would be bound to annul itself."[7] I take it that I cannot reasonably will that false promising become a universal practice for the simple reason that I don't like the prospect of being lied to. Yet, I do have to imagine that very possibility if I am to understand the contradictory character of any maxim that permits of lying.

For consequentialists, of course, the imperative to imagine the consequences of living in a world in which everyone would act as you choose to act leads to the conclusion that some practices are utterly untenable, not because they are irrational, but because they inflict consequential damage that is unwanted. In both cases, I would suggest, a potential action is figured as hypothetically reciprocal: one's own act comes back in the imagined form of another's act; another might act on me as I would act on the other, and the consequences are unacceptable because of those damaging consequences. (For Kant, the damage is done to reason, though this is not the case for all moral philosophers who engage the hypothetical in that way.) The broader question is whether one would want to live in a world in which others acted in the same way that I propose to act when I posit a set of violent acts. Again, we could conclude that it would be irrational to will something for myself that I could not possibly will for

another. Or we might conclude that the world itself would not be livable if others were to act in the way that I propose to act, and then we would be indexing a threshold of livability.

In either moral experiment, one imagines one's act as someone else's, a potentially destructive act reversed or reciprocated. It is a difficult and disturbing kind of imagining, one that mandates my dispossession from my own act. The act that I imagine is no longer the one I imagine myself doing, even as it has something of me in it, to be sure; however, I have assigned it to a possible someone, or an infinite number of someones, and so have taken more than a bit of distance from the act itself. When the act returns, impressing itself upon me as the potential act of another, I should not really be surprised, since I started by distancing myself from the act that I aim to consider and attributing it to anyone and everyone. If the act is out there, the act of anyone, and it is thus not mine, then to whom does it finally belong? Thus, paranoia begins. My postulation is that such a form of imagining intersects with psychoanalysis and its account of fantasy in some important ways: one's action comes back to oneself in the form of another's action. That action might be duplicated or, in the case of aggression, be figured as emanating from the other and directed against oneself. In scenes of persecutory fantasy, the imagined return of one's own aggression through an external figure is hardly a livable situation. If we ask what links the act of imagining the reciprocated act in moral philosophy (how would it be if others acted as I act) and the reversals that take place in fantasy (whose aggression is it that comes back toward me in external form—could it be my own?), we may understand the act of imagining reciprocal action as crucial to an understanding of the ways in which one's own aggression becomes bound up with another's. This is not simply a mirror of projections or a cognitive misfire, but a way of thinking about aggression as part of any social bond. If the act that I imagine doing can, in principle, be the one that I also suffer, then there is no way to separate the reflection on individual conduct from the reciprocal relations that constitute social life. This postulation will turn out to be important for the argument I hope to make about the equal grievability of lives.

My suggestion is that the site where moral philosophy is quite radically implicated in psychoanalytic thought is the phantasmatic dimension of *substitutability:* the idea that one person can be substituted for another, and that this happens quite often in psychic life. Let me, then, briefly recast one

version of a consequentialist view in light of this thesis: if I contemplate an action of destructiveness, and I imagine that others might do as I plan to do, I may end up casting myself as the recipient of that action. That might result in a persecutory fantasy (or phantasy in the Kleinian account which attributes to it an unconscious character) strong enough to dissuade me from acting as I thought (or surely wished) I might. The thought that others might do as I propose to do, or that others might do to me what I propose to do to others, proves to be unmanageable. Of course, if I become convinced that I will be persecuted, not realizing that the action I imagine is in part my own imagined action, carrying my own wish, then I might construct a rationale for acting aggressively against an aggression that is coming at me from the outside. I can use that persecutory phantasm as a justification for my own acts of persecution. Or it could, ideally, persuade me not to act, but only if I still recognize my own potential action in the phantasm that presses itself upon me.

That is all the more tragic or comic when one realizes that it is my own aggression that comes toward me in the form of the other's action and against which I now aggressively seek to defend myself. It is my action, but I assign it to another's name, and as misguided as that substitution may be, it nevertheless compels me to consider that what I do can be done to me. I say "consider," but this is not always a reflective procedure. Once a substitution becomes subject to fantasy, there are involuntary associations that follow. So though the experiment may start quite consciously, those kinds of substitutions, of me for another, of another for me, implicate me in an involuntary set of responses that suggest that the process of substitution, the psychic susceptibility to substitutability, a primary and transitive mimesis, cannot be fully orchestrated or restrained by a deliberate act of mind.[8] In some ways, substitution is prior to the very emergence of the "I" that I am, operating prior to any conscious deliberation.[9] So when I consciously set myself the task of substituting others for me, or substituting myself for others, I may well become susceptible to an unconscious domain that undercuts the deliberate character of my experiment. Something is thus experimenting with me in the midst of my experiment; it is not fully under my control. This point will prove to be important to the question of why any of us should preserve the life of the other, since the question I pose reverses and expands in the course of its formulation, and is ultimately recast as a scene of reciprocal action. As a result, in seeing how my life and the life of

the other can be substituted for one another, they seem to be not so fully separable. The links between us exceed any that I may have consciously chosen. It may be that the act of hypothetical substitution of myself for another, or another for me, brings us to a broader consideration of the reciprocal damage done by violence, the violence, as it were, done to reciprocal social relations themselves. And yet, sometimes this very capacity for substituting oneself for another and another for oneself can build up a world that leads to greater violence. How and why is this the case?

One reason we cannot, or may not, take away the lives of those we would rather see gone is that we cannot consistently live in a world in which everyone does the same. To apply this measure to our actions means that we have to imagine a world in which we *do* act that way, to set ourselves on the road to action and query whether there are grounds to stop ourselves. We have to imagine the consequences of our murderous action, and that involves passing through a disturbing fantasy, one that, I would suggest, is not altogether consciously orchestrated. For, to imagine that the other might die because of me suggests already that the reverse might be true: I might die at the hands of the other. And yet I may well compartmentalize my beliefs so that I imagine my action as unilateral and unreciprocated, which would mean that I become split off from entertaining the possibility of dying at the hands of the other. If one's beliefs are founded on such a denial, or such a splitting off, what consequences does that have for how one understands oneself?

In performing the thought experiment, one might conclude that others would seek to destroy me, or that they surely will, at which point I may conclude that I am a fool if I do not destroy them first. Once the thought experiment gives way to those modal possibilities of persecution, the argumentation can work to support the decision to kill. But what is the basis of such a perception of others as intent on destroying me?

Freud was not at all convinced that reason has the power to order and constrain murderous wishes—a remark he made when the world was on the brink of another war. And we can see how a form of circular reasoning can function as an instrument of aggression, whether that aggression is desired or feared. Given the reality of destructive urges, Freud argued that ethical severity is surely required. At the same time, he wondered whether ethical severity could do the job. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud makes a

joke that the ethical severity of the super-ego "does not trouble itself enough about the facts of the mental constitution of human beings" since, in his words, "the ego does not have unlimited mastery over the id."[10] Freud claims, as well, that the commandment "Love thy neighbor as thyself" "is the strongest defense against human aggressiveness and an excellent example of the unpsychological proceedings of the cultural super-ego."[11] Earlier, in his "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" (1915), he writes that no matter how elaborate our rational commitments might be, "the very emphasis on the commandment 'thou shalt not kill' makes it certain that we spring from an endless series of generations of murderers, who had the lust for killing in their blood, as, perhaps, we ourselves have to-day." After disputing the developmental trajectory of civilization—as well as the false moral promise of white rule—he asserts an unconscious dimension of lives that traverses all cultures: "if in our unconscious impulses we daily and hourly get rid of anyone who stands in our way … our unconscious will murder even for trifles."[12] Freud points out that "we may indeed wonder that evil should appear again so actively in persons who have received a [moral] education." Something about the murderous impulse remains to some degree uneducable, and this happens especially when individuals meld with groups.

We ought not to underestimate the power of this "unconquerable" dimension of psychic reality, one that he would come to associate with the death drive. Though we have focused briefly on the desire to kill, and even on what restrains us from killing, we can see that the death drive operates within political deliberations that are quite dissociated from the toll that they actually take on human life. We might think about "collateral damage" as a prime instance of this kind of reasoning, one based on a disavowal that is, effectively, the instrument through which destruction happens.

We can find plenty of evidence of a resistance to legal and political forms of reciprocity: an insistence on the justification of colonial rule; a willingness to let others die through disease or lack of nutrition, or, perhaps, through closing the ports of Europe to newcomers and letting them drown, en masse, even though those bodies may well wash up on the shores of Europe's most coveted resorts. But there is, as well, sometimes a contagious sense of the uninhibited satisfactions of sadism, as we have seen in police actions against black communities in the United States in which unarmed black men running away from police are shot down with ease, and with

moral impunity and satisfaction, as if those killed were hunted prey. Or, again, in the stubborn arguments against climate change by those who understand that by admitting to its reality, they would be obliged to limit the expansion of industry and the market economy. They know that destruction is happening, but prefer not to know, and in this way they arrange not to give a damn whether or not it happens as long as they make a profit during their time. In such a case, destructiveness happens by default; even if it is never said or thought, there is an "I don't give a damn about destruction" that gives license to destruction and perhaps even a sense of satisfactory liberation in opposing checks on industrial pollution and market expansion. We see, as well, in our contemporary political life how many people thrill to the various ways that Donald Trump calls for the lifting of prohibitions against racist policy and action, against violence—standing, it seems, for the liberation of the populace from the cruel and weakening super-ego, represented by the left and including its feminist, queer, and anti-racist proponents of nonviolence.

No position against violence can afford to be naive: it has to take seriously the destructive potential that is a constitutive part of social relations, or what some call "the social bond." But, if we take seriously the death drive, or that late version of the death drive defined as both aggression and destructiveness, then we have to consider more generally the kind of dilemma a moral precept against destruction poses for psychic life. Is this a moral precept that seeks to do away with a constitutive dimension of the psyche? And if it cannot do that, does it have another option besides strengthening the super-ego and its severe and cruel demands of renunciation? One Freudian response to this question is that the renunciation of such impulses is the best we can hope for, though we pay the psychic cost, of course, with a form of morality that now unleashes cruelty on our own impulses; its dictum might be understood this way: "Murder your own murderous impulse." Freud develops the idea of conscience in *Civilization and Its Discontents* along these lines, showing that destructiveness is now directed against destructiveness itself, and that because it cannot fully destroy its own destructiveness, it can intensify its operation as a superegoic unleashing. The more intensely the super-ego seeks to renounce the murderous impulse, the more cruel the psychic mechanism becomes. At such a moment, aggression, even violence, is prohibited; but surely it is neither destroyed nor done away with, since it

retains an active life lambasting the ego. This does not remain Freud's only way of handling destruction, as we shall see in Chapter 4 when we consider how ambivalence offers a pathway for ethical struggle.

In a sense, Freud is asking a similar question to the one I am posing here—What leads any of us to seek to preserve the life of the other?—but he is asking that question negatively: What, if anything, in psychic life keeps any of us from doing damage when we are in the grip of murderous wish? However, there is an alternative within psychoanalytic thinking, an affirmative way to rephrase that question: What kind of motivation is animated in psychic life when we actively seek to safeguard the life of another? Returning to the problem of substitution, we can ask: How do unconscious forms of substitution come to inform and vitalize what we might call "moral sentiments"? What conditions the possibility of putting oneself in the place of the other without precisely taking over that place? And what makes possible putting another in one's own place without precisely becoming engulfed? Such forms of substitution demonstrate the ways that lives are implicated in one another from the start, and this insight gives us a way to understand that whatever ethic we finally adopt, it won't do to distinguish between preserving oneself and preserving the other.

Melanie Klein makes a psychoanalytic contribution to moral philosophy in her essay "Love, Guilt, and Reparation," finding precisely in the dynamics of love and hate the site where individual and social psychology converge. Klein maintains that the desire to make people happy is linked with "strong feelings of responsibility and concern" and that "genuine sympathy with other people" involves "putting ourselves in the place of other people." To do this, "identification" brings us as close as we can get to the possibility of altruism: she writes, "We are only able to disregard or to some extent sacrifice our own feelings and desires, and thus for a time to put the other person's feelings and desires first, if we have the capacity to identify ourselves with the loved person." This disposition is not a full self-abnegation, for in seeking the happiness of the one we love we are understood to share in that person's satisfaction. A vicarious moment intervenes in the act of putting the other first, such that "we regain in one way what we have sacrificed in another."[13]

At this moment in her text, Klein drops down to a footnote that begins with the remark, "As I said at the beginning there is a constant interaction of love and hate in each of us."[14] Something about vicarious living brought

on this reflection; or perhaps in order to conduct the discourse on love separately, it had to be graphically separated on the page from the discourse on aggression. In any case, the two discourses come funneling back to converge a few paragraphs on. In the footnote, she remarks that although she is now focusing on love in the text, she wants to make clear that aggression is co-present, that both aggression and hatred can be productive, and that we should not be surprised to find that people very capable of loving can and do also manifest these other feelings. She makes clear that in giving to others, and even in protecting them, we reenact the ways in which we have ourselves been treated by parents, or we reenact the phantasy about how we wish we had been treated. She keeps these two options open. She writes, "Ultimately, in making sacrifices for somebody we love and in identifying ourselves with the loved person, we play the part of the good parent, and behave towards this person as we felt at times the parents did to us—or as we wanted them to do."

So, though she has told us that "genuine sympathy" with another is possible and that it involves "the ability to understand them, as they are and as they feel," it is established through modes of identification that involve playing a role, even replaying a role, within a phantasmatic scene in which one is positioned as the child or as the parent, as they were or as they should have been, which is the same as what one "wished they were." In fact, Klein goes on to assert that "at the same time, we also play the part of the good child towards his parents, which we wished to do in the past, and are now acting out in the present."[15] So, let us note that in the moment of what Klein identifies as vicarious identifying essential to the effort to make another happy and even to give moral priority to that person over ourselves, we are role-playing and reenacting some unmourned losses or some unfulfilled wishes. She concludes the discussion this way: "By reversing a situation, namely, in acting towards another person as a good parent, in phantasy we re-create and enjoy the wished-for love and goodness of our parents."

At this point, it is unclear whether we had that good love and then lost it when we became older, or whether we only wished for that good love that we did not really have (or, at least, that did not fully fulfill our wishes). It seems now to matter whether in our vicarious and giving modalities we are actually mourning what we once had, or are instead wishing for a past we never had—or even experiencing a bit of both. At the point where Klein

imports the discussion of aggression from the footnotes back into the text itself, she writes:

> But to act as good parents towards other people may also be a way of dealing with the frustrations and sufferings of the past. Our grievances against our parents for having frustrated us, together with the feelings of hate and revenge to which these have given rise in us, and again, the feelings of guilt and despair arising out of this hate and revenge because we have injured the parents whom at the same time we loved—all these, in phantasy, we may undo in retrospect (taking away some of the grounds for hatred), by playing at the same time the parts of loving parents and loving children.[16]

Thus, a discussion that begins with the assertion that genuine sympathy is possible through modes of identification develops into an exposition of how in treating others well and seeking to secure their happiness, we, each of us, replay our grievances against those who did not love us well enough or whose good love we have unacceptably lost.

At the same time, according to this logic, one is able now to be the good child one was not, or, rather, could not have been, given the waves of aggression that overwhelmed all those early efforts to be good. So I am, as it were, working out my losses and grievances, even expiating my guilt, when I engage in what Klein calls "genuine sympathy." I put the other first, but my scene establishes all the roles that I or you can play. Perhaps it is all quite easy. I am only sharing in the satisfaction that I give the other because I love the other, and because what the other feels, I feel as well: genuine sympathy is possible and feeling is reciprocal. The simplicity of that formulation becomes questionable, however, once we ask whether the other to whom I give my love is ever encountered apart from those scenarios that I replay: my effort to reconstitute what I have lost, or what I never had; or my reconciliation of the guilt I have accrued in having sought, or seeking still, to destroy the other, even if only in phantasy. Is my sympathy motivated by my own loss and guilt, or is it the case that in sharing the other's happiness that I help to bring about, the "I" and the "you" are not as distinct as we might have thought? If they are sharing, what precisely do they share? Or are they partially obscured by the phantasy within which they appear?

When Klein concludes this discussion by claiming that "making reparation" is fundamental to love, she gives us another way to think about sympathy. Even as I have sympathy for another, perhaps for the reparation that another never received for a loss or for a deprivation, it seems that I am, at the same time, making reparation for what I never had, or for how I should have been cared for. In other words, I move toward the other, but I repair myself, and neither one of these motions takes place without the other. If identification involves playing out my losses, to what extent can it serve as the basis for a "genuine" sympathy? Is there always something "ungenuine" in the effort to make another happy, something self-preoccupied? And does this mean as well that identification with another is never quite successful if one condition of its possibility is a phantasy of self-reparation?

In these passages, Klein comes to focus on grievance and guilt, but grievance makes sense only in light of the claim that one has been deprived in the past. The deprivation may come in the form of loss (I once had that love and no longer do), or it may come in the form of reproach (I never had that love, and surely I should have had such love). Guilt in these passages seems to be linked with feelings of hatred and aggression. Whether or not one literally tore at, or tore apart, the parent, the phantasy is operative, and the child does not always know whether it was a phantasy of destruction or an actual deed. The continuing presence of the targeted parent does not suffice as living proof that the child is not a murderer, nor apparently does abundant documentation that the deceased parent died by natural causes. For the child, there is this murdered person living on in a more or less inexplicable way, sometimes under the same roof, or sometimes the child is the murdered person inexplicably living on (Kafka's Odradek in "The Cares of a Family Man"). Indeed, we cannot understand the reparative trajectory of identification without first understanding the way that sympathetic identification, according to Klein, is wrought from efforts to replay and reverse scenes of loss, deprivation, and the kind of hatred that follows from non-negotiable dependency.

Klein writes, "My psycho-analytic work has convinced me that when in the baby's mind the conflicts between love and hate arise, and the fears of losing the loved one become active, a very important step is made in development."[17] At issue is the fact that the phantasy of destroying the mother begets the fear of losing the very one on whom the infant is

fundamentally dependent. To do away with the mother would be to imperil the conditions of one's own existence. The two lives seem to be bound together: "There is … in the unconscious mind a tendency to give her up, which is counteracted by the urgent desire to keep her forever."[18] The baby is no calculating creature. There is at some primary level a recognition that one's own life is bound up with this other life, and though this dependency changes form, I would suggest that this is the psychoanalytic basis for a theory of the social bond. If we seek to preserve each other's life, this is not only because it is in my interest to do so or because I have wagered that it will bring about better consequences for me. Rather, it is because we are already tied together in a social bond that precedes and makes possible both of our lives. My life is not altogether separable from the other life, and this is one way that phantasy is implicated in social life.

Guilt has to be understood not only as a way of checking one's own destructiveness, but as a mechanism for safeguarding the life of the other, one that emerges from our own need and dependency, from a sense that this life is not a life without another life. Indeed, when it turns into a safeguarding action, I am not sure it should still be called "guilt." If we do still use that term, we could conclude that "guilt" is strangely generative or that its productive form is reparation; but "safeguarding" is yet another future-directed modality, a kind of anticipatory care or way of looking out for another life that actively seeks to preempt the damage we might cause or that can be caused by others. Of course, reparation is not strictly tied to what has happened in the past: it might be undertaken for a damage I only *wished* to inflict, but never did. But "safeguarding" seems to do something else, establishing conditions for the possibility of a life to become livable, perhaps even to flourish. In this sense, safeguarding is not quite the same as preserving, though the former presupposes the latter: preserving seeks to secure the life that already is; safeguarding secures and reproduces the conditions of becoming, of living, of futurity, where the content of that life, that living, can be neither prescribed nor predicted, and where self-determination emerges as a potential.

Klein famously and repeatedly tells us that the infant feels great gratification at the mother's breast, but also great urges of destructiveness. In the presence of its own aggressive wishes, the infant fears that it has "destroyed the object which, as we know, is the one whom he loves and needs most, and on whom he is entirely dependent."[19] At another moment,

the infant is said to feel not only guilt about losing the mother, or the one on whom he is most dependent, but also "distress," indicating an anxiety that belongs to a felt sense of radical helplessness.

"In the last analysis," she writes, "it is the fear that the loved person—to begin with, the mother—may die because of the injuries inflicted upon her in phantasy, which makes it unbearable to be dependent on this person."[20] This unbearable dependency nevertheless persists, delineating a social bond that, however unbearable, has to be preserved. Unbearable enough to give rise to a murderous rage, but one that would, if acted out, given the dependency of one on the other, take down the both of them at once.[21]

Significantly, and perhaps paradoxically, the desire to give to the other, to make sacrifices for her, emerges from this recognition that if one destroys her, then one imperils one's own life. So, the child begins to repair the breach she understands herself to have instigated or imagined, or perhaps to repair the breach that is yet to come, thus countering destructiveness through repair. If I seek to repair her, I understand myself to have damaged her, or perhaps to have enacted a murder at a psychic level. In this way, I do not disavow my destructiveness, but I seek to reverse its damaging effects. It is not that destructiveness converts into repair, but that I repair even as I am driven by destructiveness, or precisely because I am so driven. Whatever sacrifices I make are part of the trajectory of reparation, and yet reparation is not an effective solution. Feminist literary theorist Jacqueline Rose notes that "reparation can reinforce omnipotence" and, moreover, that it sometimes emerges within Kleinian theory as a developmental, if not disciplinary, requirement and imperative.[22] Reparation is fallible and ought to be distinguished from efforts to rewrite, and so deny, the past. Such a form of hallucinatory denial may serve the purpose of dissociating from or reversing a psychic legacy of dependency and distress, producing a schizoid condition.

The psychoanalytic answer to the question of how to curb human destructiveness that we find in Freud focuses on conscience and guilt as instruments that re-circuit the death drive, holding the ego accountable for its deeds by means of a super-ego that lashes out with absolute moral imperatives, cruel punishments, and definitive judgments of failure. But this logic, in which one's destructive impulses are curbed through

internalization, seems to find its culminating moment in a self-lacerating conscience or negative narcissism, as we saw in Freud.

In Klein, however, that inversion, or negative dialectic, spawns another possibility: the impulse to preserve that other life. Guilt turns out not to be fully self-referential, but one way to preserve a relation to another. In other words, guilt can no longer be understood as a form of negative narcissism that cuts the social tie, but rather as the occasion for the articulation of that very bond. Klein thus gives us a way to understand the important way that guilt marshals the destructive impulse for the purpose of preserving the other and myself, an act that presupposes that one life is not thinkable without the other. For Klein, this inability to destroy the one life without destroying the other operates at the level of phantasy. Although the developmental account presumes infant and mother, can we say that *this ambivalent form of the social bond takes a more general form once the interdiction against murder becomes an organizing principle of a sociality?* After all, that primary condition in which survival is insured through an always partially intolerable dependency does not exactly leave us as we age; indeed, it often becomes more emphatic as we age and enter into new forms of dependency that recall the primary ones, for instance, housing and institutional arrangements accompanied by caregivers, if they exist.

We saw, in the consequentialist scenario, how each of us concludes that it is really not in our best interest to go about killing those for whom we feel antipathy or emotional ambivalence, because then, others who feel antipathy toward us may well get the idea and decide to take our life or the life of another, since we would not be able to universalize any rule governing that mode of conduct without jeopardizing the very rationality that distinguishes us as humans and that constitutes the world as habitable. In different ways, each of these positions elaborates a scenario in which we are asked to duplicate or replicate our actions, imagining others in our position or projecting ourselves into the position of others, and then to consider and evaluate the action we propose to ourselves in light of that experiment. For Klein, however, we are from the start, and quite without deliberation, in a situation of substituting ourselves for another, or finding ourselves as substitutes. And that reverberates throughout adult life: I love you, but you are already me, carrying the burden of my unrepaired past, my deprivation and my destructiveness. And I am doubtless that for you, taking the brunt of punishment for what you never received; we are for one

another already faulty substitutions for irreversible pasts, neither one of us ever really getting past the desire to repair what cannot be repaired. And yet here we are, hopefully sharing a decent glass of wine.

"Life, as we find it," Freud tells us in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, "is too hard for us."[23] This explains the need for various forms of narcosis (including, of course, art). Carrying the burden of ungrievable loss, intolerable dependency, and irreparable deprivation, we seem to be, in what we call our "relations," spinning out scenarios of need for repair and seeking to repair through various forms of giving. It is, perhaps, a persistent dynamic, one in which polarities such as giving and receiving, or safeguarding and repairing, are not always distinct: who is acting is not always separable from who is acted upon. Perhaps this kind of morally and sensuously fecund ambiguity constitutes us in a potentially common way.

If my continuing existence depends upon another, then I am here, separated from the one on whom I depend, but also, quite crucially, over there; I am ambiguously located here and there, whether in feeding or in sleeping or in being touched or held. In other words, the separateness of the infant is in some ways a fact, but in significant ways it is a struggle, a negotiation, if not a relational bind. No matter how good the parenting, there is always some measure of distress and lack of gratification, since that other body cannot be there at every possible moment. So, hatred for the ones upon whom one is intolerably dependent is surely part of what is signified by the destructiveness that invariably surges forth in relations of love.

How, then, does this translate into a more general principle, one that might lead us back to the question of what keeps us from killing and what leads us to preserve the life of the other? Could it be that even now, in destroying another, we are also destroying ourselves? If so, it is because this "I" that I am has only ever been ambiguously differentiated, and is one for whom differentiation is a perpetual struggle and problem. Klein and Hegel seem to converge here: I encounter you, but I encounter myself there, as you, reduplicated in my disrepair; and I myself am not just me, but a specter I receive from you searching for a different history than the one you had.

Thus, the "I" lives in a world in which dependency can be eradicated only through self-eradication. Some abiding truth of infantile life continues to inform our political lives, as well as the forms of dissociation and

deflection out of which phantasies of sovereign self-sufficiency are born.[24] This is one reason, Rose has suggested, that if we want to avoid going to war, we should "hang on" to forms of "derision" and "failure" that preempt or undercut forms of triumphalism.[25]

We may think that a "genuine" sympathy requires that I understand myself as quite separate from you; but it may be that my capacity *not* to be me—that is, to play the role, even to act out the place of the other—is part of who I am, even what allows me to sympathize with you; and this means that in identification, I am partly comported beyond myself in you, and that what you levy in my direction is carried by me. So, there is some way in which we are lodged in one another. I am not only the precipitate of all those I have loved and lost, but also the legacy of all those who failed to love me well, as well as that of all the ones I imagine to have successfully kept me away from that intolerably early distress over my survival and away from that unbearable guilt (and anxiety) over the destructive potential of my rage. And I endeavor to become the one who seeks to secure the conditions of your life and to survive whatever rage you feel about a dependency you cannot flee. Indeed, we all live, more or less, with a rage over a dependency from which we cannot free ourselves without freeing the conditions of social and psychic life itself.

But if we can imagine this dependency within personal life and intimate forms of dependency, can we not also understand that we are dependent on institutions and economies without which we cannot persist as the creatures that we are? Further, how might this perspective work to think about war, political violence, or the abandonment of populations to disease or to death? Perhaps the moral precept that prohibits killing has to be expanded to a political principle that seeks to safeguard lives through institutional and economic means, and to do so in a way that *fails* to distinguish between populations that are immanently grievable and those that are not.

In the next chapter, I hope to show that a consistent and expansive conception of a grievable life promises to revise our notions of equality in the spheres of biopolitics and the logics of war. The point is not only to find ways to repair the damage we have done (though that is surely important), or even the damage we believe we have done, but to anticipate and forestall the damage that is *yet to come*. For that purpose, an anticipatory form of repair has to be mobilized, an active form of safeguarding existing life for

its unknowable future.[26] We might say: without that open future, a life is merely existing, but it is not living. My wager is that the reason we sometimes do not act violently is not simply that we calculate that someone else might act violently against us, and thus that it is not in our best self-interest to bring about that scenario. The reason, rather, is to be found in those conflicted social conditions that lay the ground for subject formation within the world of pronouns: this "I" that I am is already social, already bound to a social world that exceeds the domain of familiarity, both urgent and largely impersonal. I first become thinkable in the mind of the other, as "you" or as a gendered pronoun, and that phantasmatic ideation gives birth to me as a social creature. The dependency that constitutes what I am prior to the emergence of any pronoun underscores the fact that I depend on the ones whose definition of me gives me form. My gratitude is doubtless mixed with some understandable rage. And yet, it is precisely here where ethics emerges, for I am bound to preserve those conflicted bonds without which I myself would not exist and would not be fully thinkable. Thus, the matter of working with conflict and negotiating ambivalence becomes paramount to keep rage from taking violent forms.

If all lives are considered equally grievable, then a new form of equality is introduced into the understanding social equality that bears on the governance of economic and institutional life, which would involve a wrestling with the destruction of which we ourselves are capable, a force against force. This would be different from protecting the vulnerable by strengthening forms of paternalistic power. After all, that strategy always arrives late and fails to address the differential production of vulnerability. But if a life is regarded as grievable from the outset, considered as life that could potentially be lost, and that such a loss would be mourned, then the world organized itself to forestall that loss and safeguard that life from harm and destruction. If all lives are apprehended through such an egalitarian imaginary, how would that change the conduct of actors across the political spectrum?

It is notoriously difficult to get the message across that those who are targeted or abandoned or condemned are also grievable: that their losses would, or will, matter, and that the failure to preserve them will be the occasion of immense regret and obligatory repair. What disposition, then, allows us to establish the anticipatory powers of regret and remorse such lament? In Greek tragedy, lament seems to follow rage and is usually belated. But sometimes there is a chorus, some anonymous group of people gathering and chanting in the face of propulsive rage, who lament in advance, mourning as soon as they see it coming.[27]

MONIKA RINCK
POND

SAYS HE: GRIEF IS A POND.
SAYS I: YES, GRIEF IS A POND.
BECAUSE GRIEF LIES IN A HOLLOW,
RECKING AND SHOT THROUGH WITH FISH.
SAYS HE: AND GUILT IS A POND.
SAYS I: YES, GUILT'S A POND, TOO.
BECAUSE GUILT SLOSHES ABOUT IN A HOLE
ALREADY REACHING THE FLATTENED PIT
OF MY STIFFLY UPSTRETCHED ARM.
SAYS HE: DECEIT IS A POND.
SAYS I: YES, DECEIT IS ALSO A POND.
BECAUSE ON SUMMER NIGHTS YOU CAN
PICNIC ON THE BANKS OF DECEIT
AND SOMETHING ALWAYS GETS LEFT BEHIND.

Dream House as Bluebeard

Bluebeard's greatest lie was that there was only one rule: the newest wife could do anything she wanted—anything—as long as she didn't do that (single, arbitrary) thing; didn't stick that tiny, inconsequential key into that tiny, inconsequential lock.[14]

But we all know that was just the beginning, a test. She failed (and lived to tell the tale, as I have), but even if she'd passed, even if she'd listened, there would have been some other request, a little larger, a little stranger, and if she'd kept going—kept allowing herself to be trained, like a corset fanatic pinching her waist smaller and smaller—there'd have been a scene where Bluebeard danced around with the rotting corpses of his past wives clasped in his arms, and the newest wife would have sat there mutely, suppressing growing horror, swallowing the egg of vomit that bobbed behind her breastbone. And then later, another scene, in which he did unspeakable things to the bodies (women, they'd once been women) and she just stared dead into the middle distance, seeking some mute purgatory where she could live forever.

(Some scholars believe that Bluebeard's blue beard is a symbol of his supernatural nature; easier to accept than being brought to heel by a simple man. But isn't that the joke? He can be simple, and he doesn't have to be a man.)

Because she hadn't blinked at the key and its conditions, hadn't paused when he told her her footfalls were too heavy for his liking, hadn't protested when he fucked her while she wept, hadn't declined when he suggested she stop speaking, hadn't said a word when he left bruises on her arms, hadn't scolded him for speaking to her like she was a dog or a child, hadn't run screaming down the path from the castle into the nearest village pleading with someone to *help help help*—it made logical sense that she sat there and

watched him spinning around the body of wife Number Four, its decaying head flopping backward on a hinge of flesh.

This is how you are toughened, the newest wife reasoned. This is where the tenacity of love is practiced; its tensile strength, its durability. You are being tested and you are passing the test; sweet girl, sweet self, look how good you are; look how loyal, look how loved.

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14. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, Type C610 and C611, The one forbidden place (forbidden chamber).

Dream House as World Building

Places are never just places in a piece of writing. If they are, the author has failed. Setting is not inert. It is activated by point of view.

Later, you will you learn that a common feature of domestic abuse is "dislocation." That is to say, the victim has just moved somewhere new, or she's somewhere where she doesn't speak the language, or has been otherwise uprooted from her support network, her friends or family, her ability to communicate. She is made vulnerable by her circumstance, her isolation. Her only ally is her abuser, which is to say she has no ally at all. And so she has to struggle against an unchangeable landscape that has been hammered into existence by nothing less than time itself; a house that is too big to dismantle by hand; a situation too complex and overwhelming to master on her own. The setting does its work.

This world might as well have been an island, surrounded by impassable waters. On one side, a golf course—owned by the university, as was the house—where drunk undergrads would stagger like zombies, silhouetted on the hill. On another, a stand of trees that suggested a forest, mysterious and laced with wildlife and darkness. Nearby, houses occupied by strangers who either never heard or didn't want to get involved. Last, a road, but the sort of road that led to another road, a larger one. Unfriendly to pedestrians. Not meant to be traversed, really. Miles from the town's center.

The Dream House was never just the Dream House. It was, in turn, a convent of promise (herb garden, wine, writing across the table from each other), a den of debauchery (fucking with the windows open, waking up with mouth on mouth, the low, insistent murmur of fantasy), a haunted house (*none of this can really be happening*), a prison (*need to get out need to get out*), and, finally, a dungeon of memory. In dreams it sits behind a green door, for reasons you have never understood. The door was not green.

Dream House as Appetite

You make a mistake early on, though you don't know it at the time. You admit to her that you are constantly nursing low-grade crushes on many people in your life. Nothing acted on, just that you find many people attractive and do your best to surround yourself with smart, funny minds, and the result is a gooey, lovely space somewhere between philia and eros. You've been this way as long as you can remember. You've always found this quirk of your personality to be just that, a quirk, and she laughs and says she's charmed by it.

Over the course of your relationship, she will accuse you of fucking, or wanting to fuck, or planning to fuck, the following people: your roommate, your roommate's girlfriend, dozens of your friends, the Clarion class you haven't even met yet, a dozen of her friends, not a few of her colleagues at Indiana, her ex-girlfriend, her ex-boyfriend, your ex-boyfriends, several of your teachers, the director of your MFA program, several of your students, one of your doctors, and—in perhaps the most demented moment of this exercise—her father. Also, an untold litany of strangers: people on the subway and in coffee shops, waiters at restaurants, store clerks and grocery store cashiers and librarians and ticket takers and janitors and museumgoers and beach sleepers.

The problem is that denial sounds like confession to her, so the burden of proof is forced upon you. To show that you have not been fucking those people, you become adept at doing searches on your phone, providing evidence that you haven't been in contact with anyone. You stop talking about a promising student in one of your classes, because she becomes fixated on the idea that you have a crush on a nineteen-year-old who has just learned how to balance exposition and scene.

One day, as she rubs her fingers over your clit, and you close your eyes in pleasure, she grabs your face and twists it toward her. She gets so close to you, you can smell something sour on her breath. "Who are you thinking about," she says. It is phrased like a question but isn't. Your mouth moves, but nothing comes out, and she squeezes your jaw a little harder. "Look at me when I fuck you," she says. You pretend to come.

Dream House as Lost in Translation

How to read her coldness: She is preoccupied. She is unhappy. She is unhappy with you. You did something and now she's unhappy, and you need to find out what it is so she will stop being unhappy. You talk to her. You are clear. You think you are clear. You say what you are thinking and you say it after thinking a lot, and yet when she repeats what you've said back to you nothing makes sense. Did you say that? Really? You can't remember saying that or even thinking it, and yet she is letting you know that it was said, and you definitely meant it that way.

Dream House as 9 Thornton Square

Before it was a verb, *gaslight* was a noun. A lamp. Then there was a play called *Angel Street* in 1938, and then a film, *Gaslight,* in 1940, and then a second film in 1944, directed by George Cukor and featuring an iconic, disheveled, unraveling performance from Ingrid Bergman.

A woman's sanity is undercut by her conniving husband, who misplaces objects—a brooch, a painting, a letter—in an attempt to make her believe she is mad so that he ultimately can send her to an asylum. Eventually his plan is revealed: he had murdered her aunt when the woman was a child and orchestrated their whirlwind romance years later in order to return to the house to locate some missing jewels. Nightly, Gregory—played by a silky, charismatic Charles Boyer—ventures into their attic, unbeknownst to her, to search for them. The eponymous gaslights are one of the many reasons the heroine believes herself to be truly going mad—they dim as if the gas has been turned on elsewhere in the house, even when, it would seem, no one has done so.

Bergman's Paula is in a terrible, double-edged tumble: as she becomes convinced she is forgetful, fragile, then insane, her instability increases. Everything she is, is unmade by psychological violence: she is radiant, then hysterical, then utterly haunted. By the end she is a mere husk, floating around her opulent London residence like a specter. He doesn't lock her in her room or in the house. He doesn't have to. He turns her mind into a prison.

Watching the film, you feel for Paula, even though she is not real: her suffering is captured in celluloid's carbonite. You watch it over and over again in the dark: admiring the eerie shots of their respective shadows against the fanciful Victorian furniture and

decor, pausing over her defeated expressions, her swooning, her dewy, trembling mouth.

Ingrid Bergman is a mountain of a woman, tall and robust, but in this movie she is worn down like a sand dune. Gregory makes her break down in public, during a concert; later, he does so in their home, with only their two maids as witnesses. No audience is too small for her debasement. "Don't humiliate me in front of the servants," Paula sobs. But even if they hadn't come in and seen what they'd seen, we would have. She might as well have said, "Don't humiliate me in front of the audience." Because either way, we— servants, viewers—are witnesses without power.

People who have never seen *Gaslight,* or who have only read secondhand descriptions of it, often say that Gregory's entire purpose—the reason he "makes the lamps flicker"—is to drive Paula mad, as though that is the sum of his desires. This is probably one of the most misunderstood aspects of the story. In fact, Gregory has an extremely comprehensible motivation for his actions—the need to search for the jewels unimpeded by Paula's presence. The flickering gas lamps are a side effect of that pursuit, and even his deliberate madness-inducing machinations are directed to this very sensible end. And yet, there is an unmistakable air of enjoyment behind his manipulation. You can plainly see the microexpressions flit across his face as he improvises, torments, schemes. He enjoys it and it serves him, and he is twice satisfied.

This is all to say, his motivations are not unexplainable. They are, in fact, aggravatingly practical—driven by greed, augmented by a desire for control, shot through with a cat's instinct for toying with its prey. A reminder, perhaps, that abusers do not need to be, and rarely are, cackling maniacs. They just need to want something, and not care how they get it.

Dream House as Déjà Vu

She says she loves you. She says she sees your subtle, ineffable qualities. She says you are the only one for her, in all the world. She says she trusts you. She says she wants to keep you safe. She says she wants to grow old with you. She says she thinks you're beautiful. She says she thinks you're sexy. Sometimes when you look at your phone, she has sent you something weirdly ambiguous, and there is a kick of anxiety between your lungs. Sometimes when you catch her looking at you, you feel like the most scrutinized person in the world.

Dream House as Epiphany

Most types of domestic abuse are completely legal.

Dream House as Ambiguity

In an essay in *Naming the Violence*—the first anthology of writing by queer women addressing domestic abuse in their community—activist Linda Geraci recalls a fellow lesbian's paraphrasing Pat Parker to her straight acquaintance, "If you want to be my friend, you must do two things. First, forget I am a lesbian. And second, never forget I am a lesbian."[33] This is the curse of the queer woman—eternal liminality. You are two things, maybe even more; and you are neither.

Heterosexuals have never known what to do with queer people, if they think of their existence at all. This has especially been the case for women—on the one hand, they seem like sinners in theory, but with no penis how do they, you know, *do it*? This confusion has taken many forms, including the flat-out denial that sex between women is even possible. In 1811, when faced with two Scottish schoolmistresses who were accused of being lovers, a judge named Lord Meadowbank insisted their genitals "were not so formed as to penetrate each other, and without penetration the venereal orgasm could not possibly follow." And in 1921 the British Parliament voted against a bill that would have made illegal "acts of gross indecency between females." Why would an early twentieth-century government be so progressive? "The interpretation of this outcome offered by modern history," writes academic Janice L. Ristock, "is that lesbianism was not only unspeakable but 'legally unimaginable.'"

But this inability to conceive of lesbians has darker iterations too. In 1892, when Alice Mitchell slit her girl-lover Freda Ward's throat in a carriage on a dusty Memphis street—she was enraged that Freda had, with the encouragement of her family, dissolved their relationship—the papers hardly knew what to do with themselves.

In her book *Sapphic Slashers,* Lisa Duggan writes, "Reporters found it difficult to sketch out a clear plot or strike a consistent moral pose: was Alice a poor, helpless victim of mental disease, or was she truly a monstrous female driven by masculine erotic and aggressive motives? … A love murder involving two girls presented an astonishing and confusing twist that confounded the gendered roles of villain and victim."[34] The story was simultaneously salacious and utterly baffling. They were … engaged? Alice had given Freda a ring, along with promises of love and devotion and material support. Should they execute her for murder, or put her in a hospital for her unnatural passions? Was she a scorned lover or a madwoman? But to be a scorned lover, she'd have to be—they'd have to be—?

"I resolved to kill Freda because I loved her so much that I wanted her to die loving me," Alice wrote in a statement her attorneys provided to the press, sounding every bit the possessive boyfriend from a Lifetime original movie. "And when she did die I know she loved me better than any human being on earth. I got my father's razor and made up my mind to kill Freda, and now I know she is happy."

The jury chose madwoman, and Alice spent the rest of her life in the Western State Insane Asylum in Bolivar, Tennessee.

Even when sex between women was, in its own way, acknowledged, it functioned as a kind of unmooring from gender. A lesbian acted like a man but was, still, a woman; and yet she had forfeited some essential femininity.

The conversation about domestic abuse in lesbian relationships had been active within the queer community since the early 1980s, but it wasn't until 1989, when Annette Green shot and killed her abusive female partner in West Palm Beach after a Halloween party, that the question of whether such a thing was possible was brought before a jury and became one for the courts.

Green was one of the first queer people to use "battered woman syndrome" to justify her crime. The idea of the battered woman[35]

was brand-new—it had been coined in the '70s—but both *abuse* and *the abused* meant only one thing: physical violence and a white, straight woman (Green is Latina), respectively. The baffled judge eventually allowed Green's defense, but only after insisting on renaming it "battered person syndrome," despite the fact that both the abuser and the abused were women. Regardless, it was not successful; Green was convicted of second-degree murder. (A paralegal who worked with Green's attorney told a reporter that "if this had been a heterosexual relationship," she would have been acquitted.)

All of this contrasts sharply with the way narratives of abused straight (and, usually, white) women play out. When the Framingham Eight—a group of women in prison for killing their abusive partners—came into the public eye in 1992, people were similarly uncertain about what to do with Debra Reid, a black woman and the only lesbian among them. When a panel was convened to hear the women's stories to consider commuting their sentences, Debra's lawyers did their best to leverage the committee's inherent assumptions and prejudices by painting her as "the woman" in the relationship: she cooked, she cleaned, she cared for the children. The attorneys believed, rightly, that Debra needed to fit the traditional domestic abuse narrative that people understood: the abused needed to be a "feminine" figure—meek, straight, white —and the abuser a masculine one.[36] That Debra was black didn't help her case; it worked against the stereotype. (In another early lesbian abuse case, in which a woman gave her girlfriend a pair of shiny black eyes, the prosecutor acknowledged that while she was grateful for and surprised by the abuser's conviction, she believed that the fact that the defendant was butch and black almost certainly played into the jury's willingness to convict her.)

The queer woman's gender identity is tenuous and can be stripped away from her at any moment, should it suit some straight party or another. And when that happens, the results are frustratingly predictable. Most of the Framingham Eight had their sentences commuted or were otherwise released, but not Debra. (The board

said that she and her girlfriend had "participated in a mutual battering relationship"—a common misconception about queer domestic violence—even though it had never come up during the hearing.) She was paroled in 1994, the second-to-last member of the group to achieve some measure of freedom. An ABC *Primetime* report about them barely talked to or about Debra compared to the other women. The Academy Award–winning short documentary about the Framingham Eight—*Defending Our Lives*—didn't include Debra at all.

The sort of violence that Annette and Debra experienced—brutally physical—or that Freda experienced—murder—is, obviously, far beyond what happened to me. It may seem odd, even disingenuous, to write about them in the context of my experience. It might also seem strange that so many of the domestic abuse victims that appear here are women who killed their abusers. *Where,* you may be asking yourself, *are the abused queer women who didn't stab or shoot their lovers?* (I assure you, there are a lot of us.) But the nature of archival silence is that certain people's narratives and their nuances are swallowed by history; we see only what pokes through because it is sufficiently salacious for the majority to pay attention.

There is also the simple yet terrible fact that the legal system does not provide protection against most kinds of abuse—verbal, emotional, psychological—and even worse, it *does not provide context.* It does not allow certain kinds of victims in. "By elevating physical violence over the other facets of a battered woman's experience," law professor Leigh Goodmark wrote in 2004, "the legal system sets the standard by which the stories of battered women are judged. If there is no [legally designated] assault, she is not a victim, regardless of how debilitating her experience has been, how complete her isolation, or how horrific the emotional abuse she has suffered. And by creating this kind of myopia about the nature of domestic violence, the legal system does battered women a grave injustice." After all, in *Gaslight,* Gregory's only actual crimes are murdering Paula's aunt and the attempted theft of her property. The core of the film's horror is its relentless domestic abuse, but that

abuse is emotional and psychological and thus completely outside of the law.

Narratives about abuse in queer relationships—whether acutely violent or not—are tricky in this same way. Trying to find accounts, especially those that don't culminate in extreme violence, is unbelievably difficult. Our culture does not have an investment in helping queer folks understand what their experiences *mean.*

When I was a teenager, there was this girl in my sophomore-year English class. She had luminous gray-green eyes and a faint smattering of freckles across her nose. She was a little swaggery and butch but also loved the same movies I did, like *Moulin Rouge* and *Fried Green Tomatoes*. We sat diagonally from each other and, every day, talked until our teacher threatened to separate us.

I liked her in a way that made me excited to go to class, but I didn't understand why. She was such a good friend and so fun and so smart I wanted to rise out of my seat and grab her hand and yell, "To hell with Hemingway!" and haul her out of class; all to some end I couldn't quite visualize. From the corner of my eye, I stared at her freckles and imagined kissing her mouth. When I thought about her, I squirmed, tormented. What did it mean?

I had a crush on her. That's it. It wasn't complicated. But I didn't realize I had a crush on her. Because it was the early 2000s and I was just a baby in the suburbs without a reliable internet connection. I didn't know any queers. I did not understand myself. I didn't know what it meant to want to kiss another woman.

Years later, I'd figured that part out. But then, I didn't know what it meant to be afraid of another woman.

Do you see now? Do you understand?

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33. Legal scholar Ruthann Robson calls this a "dual theoretical demand," and adds, "the demand, of course, is in many cases more than dual. As Black lesbian poet Pat Parker writes in her poem *For the white person who wants to know how to be my friend*: 'The first thing you do is forget that i'm Black / Second, you must never forget that i'm Black.'"

34. It should be noted that Alice Mitchell was hardly the first woman to create such public confusion over her gender as it related to both her passions and her shocking act of violence. In 1879, when Lily Duer shot her friend Ella Hearn for rejecting her love, a headline in the *National Police Gazette* read in part, "A Female Romeo: Her Terrible Love for a Chosen Friend of Her *Own Alleged Sex* [emphasis mine] Assumes a Passionate Character." Sometime before the murder, a witness reported an exchange in which Lily said, "Ella, why will you not walk out with me? Do you not love me?" "Oh, yes, I love you," Ella responded, "but I am afraid of you."

35. It should be noted that the word *battered* (as in: battered wife, battered woman, battered lesbian), while woefully imprecise and covering only a fraction of abuse experiences, was the preferred term in this era. It is, of course, a specific legal term with specific legal implications, and I have never thought of myself as a "battered" anyone. The fact that the expression persisted for so long, despite the fact that the lesbian conversation in particular focused on many kinds of abuse that were not explicitly physical, is the perfect example of how inadequate this conversation has been—discouraging useful subtlety. (Other ways in which the conversation remains inadequate: devaluing the narratives of nonwhite victims, insufficiently addressing nonmonosexuality, rarely taking noncisgendered people into account.)

36. In a 1991 article about a white lesbian in Boise, Idaho, who successfully used "battered-wife syndrome" as a defense for killing her abusive girlfriend, the reporter emphasized that the defendant was a "diminutive 4-foot-10." The prosecutor in the case speculated that the reason for the acquittal was that the abused wife "seemed more heterosexual," and the abuser "more 'lesbian.'"

Dream House as Pop Single

A year before I was born, the band 'Til Tuesday, led by Aimee Mann, came out with the single "Voices Carry." The breathy, haunting song about an abusive relationship was a top-ten hit in the United States. In the music video—which was in heavy rotation in the early days of MTV—the boyfriend is, for lack of a better word, ridiculous. A meathead in gold chains and a muscle shirt, he delivers his aggressively banal dialogue with the subtlety of an after-school special.

Throughout the video, he dismantles Aimee piece by piece. At first, he compliments her music and her new hair—punky and platinum, with a rattail. Later, in a restaurant that looks like it was borrowed from a sitcom set, he removes her elaborate earpiece and replaces it with a more traditional earring before playfully chucking her under the chin. There is a shot of Mann behind a gauzy curtain, her face pressed into it with desperation, which cuts to her leaving for band practice. Here he confronts her on the steps of their brownstone; when he grabs her guitar case, she tears out of his grasp.

When she returns, he scolds her for her lateness. "You know, this little hobby of yours has gone too far. Why can't you for once do something for me?" When she speaks for the first time—"Like what?" she asks, tilting her chin upward in a challenge—he attacks her, pushing her against the stairs and forcibly kissing her.

At the end of the video, they are sitting in a theater audience at Carnegie Hall. The boyfriend puts his arm around a now-polished Mann—sitting quietly, strung with pearls—before discovering her intact rattail and curling his lip in disgust. Mann begins to sing—softly at first, and then louder as she tears a stylish fascinator off her head. Then she stands up and is screaming, she is scream-singing

—"He said 'Shut up' / He said 'Shut up'"—and everyone is turning to look at her. This final scene, Mann said in an interview years later, was inspired by Hitchcock's *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, when Doris Day's character lets loose a bloodcurdling scream during a symphony performance, to foil an assassination.

Long after the video came out, in 1999 the song's producer revealed that the initial demo of the song had used female pronouns—in the original version, Mann was singing about a woman. "The record company was predictably unhappy with such lyrics," he wrote, "since this was a very powerful, commercial song and they would prefer as many of its components as possible to swim in the acceptable mainstream. I wasn't certain what to think about the pressure to change the gender of the love interest, but eventually thought that it didn't matter any to the impact of the song itself. Would a quasi-lesbian song have had any effect on the liberation of such homosexuals, then as now several difficult steps behind the gays on the path towards broad social acceptance? I don't think so, but it was hard to judge at the time.

"If there is nothing social to be gained," he continued, "there's little point in risking that people might lose the main plot and be confused by something that might be peripheral to them. Maybe better to pull them in, subversively, as the best pop music does. How many more people are now sympathetic to gay people's issues because they responded to gay artists who didn't obviously fly the flag but expressed universal human sentiments that appealed to all? We respond to a song's humanity first, and that is what matters."

Twenty-seven years later—decades into her solo career—the pretense was dropped. Mann released an album, *Charmer*, which included the song "Labrador." The music video was a shot-for-shot remake of "Voices Carry," with the triteness heightened for comedic effect. The introduction—in which a greasy, boorish director admits he tricked Mann into doing the remake against her will—is genuinely funny. But the song itself is just as sad as "Voices Carry,"

"I came back for more," Mann sings. "And you laughed in my face and you rubbed it in / Cause I'm a Labrador / And I run / When the gun / Drops the dove again." The song opens addressed to someone Mann calls "Daisy."

Despite all of this—the suppressed representation, the hackneyed '80s weirdness of the video—"Voices Carry" portrays verbal and psychological abuse in a clear and explicable way. The mania of abuse—its wild emotional shifts, the eponymous cycle—is in the very marrow of the music: dampened, minor-inflected verses without a clear key resolving into a shimmering major chorus before locking back down again. It is not the ironically upbeat prettiness of the Crystals' "He Hit Me (and It Felt Like a Kiss)"—produced in 1963 by Phil Spector, who later murdered actress Lana Clarkson for spurning his advances—though that is its own musical metaphor. Both songs, despite the darkness of their subject, are catchy and endlessly singable.

And I do. Endlessly sing them, that is. Every time I reread this chapter while writing this book, "Voices Carry" was in my head—and my voice—for days afterward. While working on the final draft, I took a break to stand on a beach in Rio de Janeiro watching blue-green waves curl in toward the shore. Around me people were playing soccer and dogs were running into the surf chasing after sticks and the light was amber-soft, and I realized I was singing it. *Hush hush*, I sang to no one, *keep it down now*.

Dream House as Equivocation

In Dorothy Allison's short story "Violence Against Women Begins at Home," a group of lesbian friends gathers for a drink and they discuss a bit of community gossip: a pair of women recently broke into another woman's house and trashed it, smashing glass and dishes and destroying her art, which they deemed pornographic. They spray-painted the story's eponymous phrase on her wall. The friends debate police involvement and intragroup conflict mediation; but toward the end of the story, as they are parting ways, the problem crystallizes into a single, telling exchange:

> "Look, do you think maybe we could hold a rent party for Jackie, get her some money to fix her place back up?"
>   Paula looks impatient and starts gathering up her stuff. "Oh, I don't think we should do that. Not while they're still in arbitration. And anyway, we have so many important things we have to raise money for this spring—community things."
>   "Jackie's a part of the community," I hear myself say.
>   "Well, of course." Paula stands up. "We all are." The look she gives me makes me wonder if she really believes that, but she's gone before I can say anything else.

Queer folks fail each other too. This seems like an obvious thing to say; it is not, for example, a surprise to nonwhite queers or trans queers that intracommunity loyalty goes only so far, especially when it must confront the hegemony of the state. But even within ostensibly parallel power dynamics, the desire to save face, to present a narrative of uniform morality, can defeat every other interest.

The queer community has long used the rhetoric of gender roles as a way of absolving queer women from responsibility for domestic abuse. Which is not to say that activists and academics didn't try. When the conversation about queer domestic abuse took hold in the early 1980s, activists gave out fact sheets at conferences and festivals to dispel myths about queer abuse.[45] Scholars distributed questionnaires to get a sense of the scope of the problem.[46] Fierce debates were waged in the pages of queer periodicals.

But some lesbians tried to restrict the definition of abuse to men's actions. Butches *might* abuse their femmes, but only because of their adopted masculinity. Abusers were using "male privilege." (To borrow lesbian critic Andrea Long Chu's phrase, they were guilty of "[smuggling patriarchy] into lesbian utopia.") Some argued that consensual S&M was part of the problem. Women who were *women* did not abuse their girlfriends; proper lesbians would never do such a thing.[47] There was also the narrative that it was, simply, complicated. The burden of the pressure of straight society! Lesbians abuse each other!

Many people argued that the issue needed to be handled within their own communities. Ink was spilled in the service of decentering victims, and abusers often operated with impunity. In an early lesbian domestic abuse trial, a lawyer noted the odd and unsettling detail that most of the time the jury spent behind closed doors was —contrary to what she'd been worried about—the straight jurors attempting to convince the jury's sole lesbian member of the defendant's guilt. When she was later questioned, the lesbian juror told the lawyer that she hadn't "wanted to convict a [queer] sister," as though the abused girlfriend was not herself a fellow queer woman.

Around and around they went, circling essential truths that no one wanted to look at directly, as if they were the sun: Women could abuse other women. Women *have* abused other women. And queers needed to take this issue seriously, because no one else would.

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45. Among the myths tackled by the Santa Cruz Women's Self Defense Teaching Cooperative: "Myth: It's only emotional/psychological, so that doesn't count." "Myth: I can handle it—unlike her last three lovers." "Myth: Staying together and working it out is most important." "Myth: We're in therapy, so it'll get fixed now."

46. Actual questionnaire language by researcher Alice J. McKinzie: "Is your abuser present at this festival? If your abuser is at this festival, is she present while you are filling this out? If your abuser is not present while you are filling this out, is she aware that you are filling out this questionnaire? If you answered NO to the question above … do you plan to tell her later?"

47. This No True Scotsman fallacy could bend these narratives in every direction conceivable; create a kind of moving goalpost that permitted an endless warping of accountability. In a firsthand account of her abuse in *Gay Community News* in 1988, a survivor wrote: "I had been around lesbians since I was a teenager, and although some of them had troubled relationships, I was unaware of any battering. I attached myself to the comforting myth that *lesbians don't batter.* Much later, when I was 'out' enough to go to gay bars in a town that was liberal enough to tolerate them, I saw that some lesbians did indeed batter. However, I thought they were all of a type—drunks, sexist butches or apolitical lesbians—so I decided that *feminist lesbians don't batter.*" Activist Ann Russo put it more succinctly in her book *Taking Back Our Lives*: "I had found it hard to name abuse in lesbian relationships as a *political issue with structural roots.*"

Eunsong Kim
Curved, Bells

For the students at Middlebury College who shut down the eugenics lecture
planned for March 2, 2017
this writer looks up to you

I.

does marrying an asian cleanse white supremacists and remake them
into the likeness of antiracists

and so
as an asian woman if i stay singular forever can i forever cleanse myself

I.

you have always been witnessed as conquered

I.

without you he could

could he be *insulted*

I.

to be clear: she's not a victim
they live in some house the bell curve paid for and that is that is that

I.

is your body a shield
your body is a shield say thank you for opportunity to shield

I.

your body the shield

body shield thanks the opportunity to shield

II.

And it is a romance because she dreams, often,
especially about strangling him   She dreams about
pushing him off of a mountain, or stairs or any
high place where the bottoms can't be seen   She
dreams about discoverings and being part of them
How she could control it and save it and save   She
dreams about the day he becomes destitute and she
becomes right   Everything she said comes to life
and he finds her to tell her so   She sends
someone else to listen to his apologies and offers
him enough money to purchase the apartment he
always promised her

an allowance for his strategic obsolescence

He complies and follows her as
she pretends not to see When she pushes
him off a mountain or the stairs where the
bottoms cannot be seen he tells her he has
been thresheld for years

He asks her to touch &

We

hurl

III. Paraphrasing Winnicott:

Are you man or woman in your dreams?

In my dreams I am a leopard
I lay next to the people I love
long and stuffed
they come seeing an outline
when they sleep
I predictably bite into their shoulders
and leap away finding myself to be evenly spotted
they watch me moving and never die

I remain
roaming the house waiting for them to heal

Toward a Decolonial Feminism

MARÍA LUGONES

In "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System" (Lugones 2007), I proposed to read the relation between the colonizer and the colonized in terms of gender, race, and sexuality. By this I did not mean to add a gendered reading and a racial reading to the already understood colonial relations. Rather I proposed a rereading of modern capitalist colonial modernity itself. This is because the colonial imposition of gender cuts across questions of ecology, economics, government, relations with the spirit world, and knowledge, as well as across everyday practices that either habituate us to take care of the world or to destroy it. I propose this framework not as an abstraction from lived experience, but as a lens that enables us to see what is hidden from our understandings of both race and gender and the relation of each to normative heterosexuality.

Modernity organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories. Contemporary women of color and third-world women's critique of feminist universalism centers the claim that the intersection of race, class, sexuality, and gender exceeds the categories of modernity. If *woman* and *black* are terms for homogeneous, atomic, separable categories, then their intersection shows us the absence of black women rather than their presence. So, to see non-white women is to exceed "categorial" logic. I propose the modern, colonial, gender system as a lens through which to theorize further the oppressive logic of colonial modernity, its use of hierarchical dichotomies and categorial logic. I want to emphasize categorial, dichotomous, hierarchical logic as central to modern, colonial, capitalist thinking about race, gender, and sexuality. This permits me to search for social organizations from which people have resisted modern, capitalist modernity that are in tension with its logic. Following Aparicio and Blaser,[1] I will call such ways of organizing the social,

the cosmological, the ecological, the economic, and the spiritual *non-modern*. With Aparicio and Blaser and others, I use non-modern to express that these ways are not premodern. The modern apparatus reduces them to premodern ways. So, non-modern knowledges, relations, and values, and ecological, economic, and spiritual practices are logically constituted to be at odds with a dichotomous, hierarchical, "categorial" logic.

I. The Coloniality of Gender

I understand the dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the non-human as the central dichotomy of colonial modernity. Beginning with the colonization of the Americas and the Caribbean, a hierarchical, dichotomous distinction between human and non-human was imposed on the colonized in the service of Western man. It was accompanied by other dichotomous hierarchical distinctions, among them that between men and women. This distinction became a mark of the human and a mark of civilization. Only the civilized are men or women. Indigenous peoples of the Americas and enslaved Africans were classified as not human in species—as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild. The European, bourgeois, colonial, modern man became a subject/agent, fit for rule, for public life and ruling, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, a being of mind and reason. The European bourgeois woman was not understood as his complement, but as someone who reproduced race and capital through her sexual purity, passivity, and being homebound in the service of the white, European, bourgeois man. The imposition of these dichotomous hierarchies became woven into the historicity of relations, including intimate relations. In this paper I want to figure out how to think about intimate, everyday resistant interactions to the colonial difference. When I think of intimacy here, I am not thinking exclusively or mainly about sexual relations. I am thinking of the interwoven social life among people who are not acting as representatives or officials.

I begin, then, with a need to understand that the colonized became subjects in colonial situations in the first modernity, in the tensions created by the brutal imposition of the modern, colonial, gender system. Under the imposed gender framework, the bourgeois white Europeans were civilized; they were fully human. The hierarchical dichotomy as a mark of the human also became a normative tool to damn the colonized. The behaviors of the colonized and their personalities/souls were judged as bestial and thus non-gendered, promiscuous, grotesquely sexual, and sinful. Though at this time the understanding of sex was not dimorphic, animals were differentiated as males and females, the male being the perfection, the female the inversion and deformation of the male.[2] Hermaphrodites, sodomites, viragos, and the colonized were all understood to be aberrations of male perfection.

The civilizing mission, including conversion to Christianity, was present in the ideological conception of conquest and colonization. Judging the colonized for their deficiencies from the point of view of the civilizing mission justified enormous cruelty. I propose to interpret the colonized, non-human males from the civilizing perspective as judged from the normative understanding of "man," the human being par excellence. Females were judged from the normative understanding of "women," the human inversion of men.[3] From this point of view, colonized people became males and females. Males became not-human-as-not-men, and colonized females became not-human-as-not-women. Consequently, colonized females were never understood as lacking because they were not men-like, and were turned into viragos. Colonized men were not understood to be lacking as not being women-like. What has been understood as the "feminization" of colonized "men" seems rather a gesture of humiliation, attributing to them sexual passivity under the threat of rape. This tension between hypersexuality and sexual passivity defines one of the domains of masculine subjection of the colonized.

It is important to note that often, when social scientists investigate colonized societies, the search for the sexual distinction and then the construction of the gender distinction results from observations of the tasks performed by each sex. In so doing they affirm the inseparability of sex and gender characteristic mainly of earlier feminist analysis. More contemporary analysis has introduced arguments for the claim that gender constructs sex. But in the earlier version, sex grounded gender. Often, they became conflated: where you see sex, you will see gender and vice versa. But, if I am right about the coloniality of gender, in the distinction between the human and the non-human, sex had to stand alone. Gender and sex could not be both inseparably tied and racialized. Sexual dimorphism became the grounding for the dichotomous understanding of gender, the human characteristic. One may well be interested in arguing that the sex that stood alone in the bestialization of the colonized, was, after all, gendered. What is important to me here is that sex was made to stand alone in the characterization of the colonized. This strikes me as a good entry point for research that takes coloniality seriously and aims to study the historicity and meaning of the relation between sex and gender.

The colonial "civilizing mission" was the euphemistic mask of brutal access to people's bodies through unimaginable exploitation, violent sexual violation, control of reproduction, and systematic terror (feeding people alive to dogs or making pouches and hats from the vaginas of brutally killed indigenous females, for example). The civilizing mission used the hierarchical gender dichotomy as a judgment, though the attainment of dichotomous gendering for the colonized was not the point of the normative judgment. Turning the colonized into human beings was not a colonial goal. The difficulty of imagining this as a goal can be appreciated clearly when one sees that

this transformation of the colonized into men and women would have been a transformation not in identity, but in nature. But turning the colonized against themselves was included in the civilizing mission's repertoire of justifications for abuse. Christian confession, sin, and the Manichean division between good and evil served to imprint female sexuality as evil, as colonized females were understood in relation to Satan, sometimes as mounted by Satan.

The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people's senses of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity, and social, ecological, and cosmological organization. Thus, as Christianity became the most powerful instrument in the mission of transformation, the normativity that connected gender and civilization became intent on erasing community, ecological practices, knowledge of planting, of weaving, of the cosmos, and not only on changing and controlling reproductive and sexual practices. One can begin to appreciate the tie between the colonial introduction of the instrumental modern concept of nature central to capitalism, and the colonial introduction of the modern concept of gender, and appreciate it as macabre and heavy in its impressive ramifications. One can also recognize, in the scope I am giving to the imposition of the modern, colonial, gender system, the dehumanization constitutive of the coloniality of being. The concept of the coloniality of being that I understand as related to the process of dehumanization was developed by Nelson Maldonado Torres (2008).

I use the term *coloniality* following Anibal Quijano's analysis of the capitalist world system of power in terms of "coloniality of power" and of modernity, two inseparable axes in the workings of this system of power. Quijano's analysis provides us with a historical understanding of the inseparability of racialization and capitalist exploitation[4] as constitutive of the capitalist system of power as anchored in the colonization of the Americas. In thinking of the coloniality of gender, I complicate his understanding of the capitalist global system of power, but I also critique his own understanding of gender as only in terms of sexual access to women.[5] In using the term *coloniality* I mean to name not just a classification of people in terms of the coloniality of power and gender, but also the process of active reduction of people, the dehumanization that fits them for the classification, the process of subjectification, the attempt to turn the colonized into less than human beings. This is in stark contrast to the process of conversion that constitutes the Christianizing mission.

II. THEORIZING RESISTANCE/DECOLONIZING GENDER

The semantic consequence of the coloniality of gender is that "colonized woman" is an empty category: no women are colonized; no colonized females are women. Thus, the colonial answer to Sojouner Truth is clearly, "no."[6]

Unlike colonization, the coloniality of gender is still with us; it is what lies at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the capitalist world system of power. Thinking about the coloniality of gender enables us to think of historical beings only one-sidedly, understood as oppressed. As there are no such beings as colonized women, I suggest that we focus on the beings who resist the coloniality of gender from the "colonial difference." Such beings are, as I have suggested, only partially understood as oppressed, as constructed through the coloniality of gender. The suggestion is not to search for a non-colonized construction of gender in indigenous organizations of the social. There is no such thing; "gender" does not travel away from colonial modernity. Resistance to the coloniality of gender is thus historically complex.

When I think of myself as a theorist of resistance, it is not because I think of resistance as the end or goal of political struggle, but rather as its beginning, its possibility. I am interested in the relational subjective/intersubjective spring of liberation, as both adaptive and creatively oppositional. Resistance is the tension between subjectification (the forming/informing of the subject) and active subjectivity, that minimal sense of agency required for the oppressing ←→ resisting relation being an active one, without appeal to the maximal sense of agency of the modern subject (Lugones 2003).[7]

Resistant subjectivity often expresses itself infra-politically, rather than in a politics of the public, which has an easy inhabitation of public contestation. Legitimacy, authority, voice, sense, and visibility are denied to resistant subjectivity. Infra-politics marks the turn inward, in a politics of resistance, toward liberation. It shows the power of communities of the oppressed in constituting resistant meaning and each other against the constitution of meaning and social organization by power. In our colonized, racially gendered, oppressed existences we are also other than what the hegemon makes us be. That is an infra-political achievement. If we are exhausted, fully made through and by micro and macro mechanisms and circulations of power, "liberation" loses much of its meaning or ceases to be an intersubjective affair. The very possibility of an identity based on politics (Mignolo 2000) and the project of de-coloniality loses its peopled ground.

As I move methodologically from women of color feminisms to a decolonial feminism, I think about feminism from and at the grassroots, and from and at the colonial difference, with a strong emphasis on ground, on a historicized, incarnate intersubjectivity. The question of the *relation* between resistance or resistant response to the coloniality of gender and de-coloniality is being set up here rather than answered.[8] But I do mean to understand resistance to the coloniality of gender from the perspective of the colonial difference.

Decolonizing gender is necessarily a praxical task. It is to enact a critique of racialized, colonial, and capitalist heterosexualist gender oppression as a lived transformation of the social. As such it places the theorizer in the midst of people

in a historical, peopled, subjective/intersubjective understanding of the oppress-
ing ⟵ ⟶ resisting relation at the intersection of complex systems of oppression.
To a significant extent it has to be in accord with the subjectivities and inter-
subjectivities that partly construct and in part are constructed by "the situation."
It must include "learning" peoples. Furthermore, feminism does not just provide
an account of the oppression of women. It goes beyond oppression by providing
materials that enable women to understand their situation without succumbing
to it. Here I begin to provide a way of understanding the oppression of women
who have been subalternized through the combined processes of racialization,
colonization, capitalist exploitation, and heterosexualism. My intent is to focus
on the subjective-intersubjective to reveal that disaggregating oppressions disag-
gregates the subjective-intersubjective springs of colonized women's agency. I
call the analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression "the coloniality of
gender." I call the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender "decolonial
feminism."

The coloniality of gender enables me to understand the oppressive imposi-
tion as a complex interaction of economic, racializing, and gendering systems
in which every person in the colonial encounter can be found as a live, histor-
ical, fully described being. It is as such that I want to understand the resister as
being oppressed by the colonizing construction of the fractured locus. But the
coloniality of gender hides the resister as fully informed as a native of commu-
nities under cataclysmic attack. So, the coloniality of gender is only one active
ingredient in the resister's history. In focusing on the resister at the colonial
difference I mean to unveil what is obscured.

The long process of coloniality begins subjectively and intersubjectively in a
tense encounter that both forms and will not simply yield to capitalist, modern,
colonial normativity. The crucial point about the encounter is that the subjec-
tive and intersubjective construction of it informs the resistance offered to the
ingredients of colonial domination. The global, capitalist, colonial, modern
system of power that Anibal Quijano characterizes as beginning in the six-
teenth century in the Americas and enduring until today met not a world to be
formed, a world of empty minds and evolving animals (Quijano CAOI; 1995).
Rather, it encountered complex cultural, political, economic, and religious be-
ings: selves in complex relations to the cosmos, to other selves, to generation,
to the earth, to living beings, to the inorganic, in production; selves whose
erotic, aesthetic, and linguistic expressivity, whose knowledges, senses of space,
longings, practices, institutions, and forms of government were not to be simply
replaced but met, understood, and entered into in tense, violent, risky crossings
and dialogues and negotiations that never happened.

Instead, the process of colonization invented the colonized and attempted a
full reduction of them to less than human primitives, satanically possessed, in-
fantile, aggressively sexual, and in need of transformation. The process I want

to follow is the oppressing ← → resisting process at the fractured locus of the colonial difference. That is, I want to follow subjects in intersubjective collaboration and conflict, fully informed as members of Native American or African societies, as they take up, respond, resist, and accommodate to hostile invaders who mean to dispossess and dehumanize them. The invasive presence engages them brutally, in a prepossessing, arrogant, incommunicative and powerful way, leaving little room for adjustments that preserve their own senses of self in community and in the world. But, instead of thinking of the global, capitalist, colonial system as in every way successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, relations, and economies, I want to think of the process as continually resisted, and being resisted today. And thus I want to think of the colonized neither as simply imagined and constructed by the colonizer and coloniality in accordance with the colonial imagination and the strictures of the capitalist colonial venture, but as a being who begins to inhabit a fractured locus constructed doubly, who perceives doubly, relates doubly, where the "sides" of the locus are in tension, and the conflict itself actively informs the subjectivity of the colonized self in multiple relation.[9]

The gender system is not just hierarchical but racially differentiated, and the racial differentiation denies humanity and thus gender to the colonized.[10] Irene Silverblatt (1990; 1998), Carolyn Dean (2001), Maria Esther Pozo (Pozo and Ledezma 2006), Pamela Calla and Nina Laurie (2006), Sylvia Marcos (2006), Paula Gunn Allen (1992), Leslie Marmon Silko (2006), Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (2009), and Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997), among others, enable me to affirm that gender is a colonial imposition, not just as it imposes itself on life as lived in tune with cosmologies incompatible with the modern logic of dichotomies, but also that inhabitations of worlds understood, constructed, and in accordance with such cosmologies animated the self-among-others in resistance from and at the extreme tension of the colonial difference.

The long process of subjectification of the colonized toward adoption/internalization of the men/women dichotomy as a normative construction of the social—a mark of civilization, citizenship, and membership in civil society—was and is constantly renewed. It is met in the flesh over and over by oppositional responses grounded in a long history of oppositional responses and lived as sensical in alternative, resistant socialities at the colonial difference. It is movement toward coalition that impels us to know each other as selves that are thick, in relation, in alternative socialities, and grounded in tense, creative inhabitations of the colonial difference.

I am investigating emphasizing the historicity of the oppressing ← → resisting relation and thus emphasizing concrete, lived resistances to the coloniality of gender. In particular, I want to mark the need to keep a multiple reading of the resistant self in relation. This is a consequence of the colonial imposition of gender. We see the gender dichotomy operating normatively in

the construction of the social and in the colonial processes of oppressive sub-jectification. But if we are going to make an-other construction of the self in relation, we need to bracket the dichotomous human/non-human, colonial, gender system that is constituted by the hierarchical dichotomy man/woman for European colonials + the non-gendered, non-human colonized. As Oyewu-mi makes clear, a colonizing reading of the Yoruba reads the hierarchical dichotomy into the Yoruba society, erasing the reality of the colonial imposi-tion of a multiply oppressive gender system. Thus it is necessary for us to be very careful with the use of the terms *woman* and *man* and bracket them when nec-essary to weave the logic of the fractured locus, without causing the social sources woven into the resistant responses to disappear. If we only weave man and woman into the very fabric that constitutes the self in relation to resisting, we erase the resistance itself. Only in bracketing [ ] can we appreciate the dif-ferent logic that organizes the social in the resistant response. Thus the multiple perception and inhabitation, the fracture of the locus, the double or multiple consciousness, is constituted in part by this logical difference. The fractured locus includes the hierarchical dichotomy that constitutes the sub-jectification of the colonized. But the locus is fractured by the resistant presence, the active subjectivity of the colonized against the colonial invasion of self in community from the inhabitation of that self. We see here the mir-roring of the multiplicity of the woman of color in women of color feminisms.

I mentioned above that I was following Aparicio and Blaser's distinction between the modern and non-modern. They make the importance of the dis-tinction clear as they tell us that modernity attempts to control, by denying their existence, the challenge of the existence of other worlds with different ontological presuppositions. It denies their existence by robbing them of valid-ity and of co-evalness. This denial is coloniality. It emerges as constitutive of modernity. The difference between modern and non-modern becomes—from the modern perspective—a colonial difference, a hierarchical relation in which the non-modern is subordinated to the modern. But the exteriority of modernity is not premodern (Aparicio and Blaser, unpublished). It is important to see that a framework may well be fundamentally critical of the "categorical"/essentialist logic of modernity and be critical of the dichotomy between woman and man, and even of the dimorphism between male and female, without see-ing coloniality or the colonial difference. Such a framework would not have and may exclude the very possibility of resistance to the modern, colonial, gender system and the coloniality of gender because it cannot see the world multiply through a fractured locus at the colonial difference.

In thinking of the methodology of decoloniality, I move to read the social from the cosmologies that inform it, rather than beginning with a gendered reading of cosmologies informing and constituting perception, motility, embodiment, and relation. Thus the move I am recommending is very

different from one that reads gender into the social. The shift can enable us to understand the organization of the social in terms that unveil the deep disruption of the gender imposition in the self in relation. Translating terms like *koshskalaka*, *chachawarmi*, and *urin* into the vocabulary of gender, into the dichotomous, heterosexual, racialized, and hierarchical conception that gives meaning to the gender distinction is to exercise the coloniality of language through colonial translation and thus erases the possibility of articulating the coloniality of gender and resistance to it.

In a conversation with Filomena Miranda, I asked her about the relation between the Aymara *qamaña* and *utjaña*, both often translated as "living." Her complex answer related *utjaña* to *uta*, dwelling in community in the communal land. She told me that one cannot have *qamaña* without *utjaña*. In her understanding, those who do not have *utjaña* are *waccha* and many become *misti*. Though she lives much of the time in La Paz, away from her communal lands, she maintains *utjaña*, which is now calling her to share in governing. Next year she will govern with her sister. Filomena's sister will replace her father, and thus she will be *chacha* twice, since her community is *chacha* as well as her *father*. Filomena herself will be *chacha* and *warmi*, as she will govern in her mother's stead in a *chacha* community. My contention is that to translate *chacha* and *warmi* as man and woman does violence to the communal relation expressed through *utjaña*. Filomena translated *chachawarmi* into Spanish as complementary opposites. The new Bolivian constitution, the Morales government, and the indigenous movements of Abya Yala express a commitment to the philosophy of *suma qamaña* (often translated as "living well"). The relation between *qamaña* and *utjaña* indicates the importance of complementarity and its inseparability from communal flourishing in the constant production of cosmic balance. *Chachawarmi* is not separable in meaning and practice from *utjaña*; it is rather of a piece with it. Thus the destruction of *chachawarmi* is not compatible with *suma qamaña*.[11]

I am certainly not advocating not reading, or not "seeing" the imposition of the human/non-human, man/woman, or male/female dichotomies in the construction of everyday life, as if that were possible. To do so would be to hide the coloniality of gender, and it would erase the very possibility of sensing—reading—the tense inhabitation of the colonial difference and the responses from it. As I mark the colonial translation from *chachawarmi* to man/woman, I am aware of the use of *man* and *woman* in everyday life in Bolivian communities, including in interracial discourse. The success of the complex gender norming introduced with colonization that goes into the constitution of the coloniality of gender has turned this colonial translation into an everyday affair, but resistance to the coloniality of gender is also lived linguistically in the tension of the colonial wound. The political erasure, the lived tension of *languaging*—of moving between ways of living in language—between *chachawarmi* and

man/woman constitutes loyalty to the coloniality of gender as it erases the history of resistance at the colonial difference. Filomena Miranda's *utjaña* is not a living in the past, only in the *chachawarmi* way of living. The possibility of *utjaña* today depends, in part, on lives lived in the tension of languaging at the colonial difference.

III. THE COLONIAL DIFFERENCE

Walter Mignolo begins *Local Histories/Global Designs* by telling us that "The main topic of this book is the colonial difference in the formation and transformation of the modern/colonial world system" (Mignolo 2000, ix). As the phrase "the colonial difference" moves through Mignolo's writing, its meaning becomes open-ended. The colonial difference is not defined in *Local Histories*. Indeed, a definitional disposition is unfriendly to Mignolo's introduction of the concept. So as I present some of the quotes from Mignolo's text, I am not introducing them as his definition of "the colonial difference." Rather, these quotes guide my thoughts on resistance to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference from within the complexity of his text.

> The colonial difference is the space where coloniality of power is enacted. (Mignolo 2000, ix)

> Once coloniality of power is introduced into the analysis, the "colonial difference" becomes visible, and the epistemological fractures between the Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism is distinguished from the critique of Eurocentrism, anchored in the colonial difference. . . . (37)

I have prepared us to hear these assertions. One can look at the colonial past and, as an observer, see the natives negotiating the introduction of foreign beliefs and practices as well as negotiating being assigned to inferior positions and being found polluting and dirty. Clearly, to see this is not to see the coloniality. It is rather to see people—anyone, really—pressed under difficult circumstances to occupy demeaning positions that make them disgusting to the social superiors. To see the coloniality is to see the powerful reduction of human beings to animals, to inferiors by nature, in a schizoid understanding of reality that dichotomizes the human from nature, the human from the non-human, and thus imposes an ontology and a cosmology that, in its power and constitution, disallows all humanity, all possibility of understanding, all possibility of human communication, to dehumanized beings. To see the coloniality is to see both the *jaqi*, the persona, the being that is in a world of meaning without dichotomies, and the beast, both real, both vying under different powers for survival. Thus to see the coloniality is to reveal the very degradation that gives us two

renditions of life and a being rendered by them. The sole possibility of such a being lies in its full inhabitation of this fracture, of this wound, where sense is contradictory and from such contradiction new sense is made anew.

> [The colonial difference] is the space where *local* histories in-
> venting and implementing global designs meet *local* histories,
> the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted,
> rejected, integrated, or ignored. (Mignolo 2000, ix)

> [The colonial difference] is, finally, the physical as well as imag-
> inary location where the coloniality of power is at work in the
> confrontation of two kinds of local histories displayed in differ-
> ent spaces and times across the planet. If Western cosmology is
> the historically unavoidable reference point, the multiple con-
> frontations of two kinds of local histories defy dichotomies.
> Christian and Native American cosmologies, Christian and
> Amerindian cosmologies, Christian and Islamic cosmologies,
> Christian and Confucian cosmologies among others only enact
> dichotomies where you look at them one at a time, not when
> you compare them in the geohistorical confines of the modern/
> colonial world system. (ix)

Thus, it is not an affair of the past. It is a matter of the geopolitics of knowledge. It is a matter of how we produce a feminism that takes the global designs for racialized female and male energy and, erasing the colonial difference, takes that energy to be used toward the destruction of the worlds of meaning of our own possibilities. Our possibilities lie in communality rather than subordina-tion; they do not lie in parity with our superior in the hierarchy that constitutes the coloniality. That construction of the human is vitiated through and through by its intimate relation with violence.

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

> The transcending of the colonial difference can *only* be done
> from a perspective of subalternity, from decolonization, and,
> therefore, from a new epistemological terrain where border
> thinking works. (45)

I see these two paragraphs in tension precisely because if the dialogue is to be had with the modern man, his occupation of the colonial difference involves his redemption but also his self-destruction. Dialogue is not only possible at the colonial difference but necessary for those resisting dehumanization in different

and intermingled locals. So, indeed, the transcending can only be done from the perspective of subalternity, but toward a newness of be-ing.

> Border thinking ... is a logical consequence of the colonial difference. ... [T]he fractured locus of enunciation from a subaltern perspective defines border thinking as a response to the colonial difference. (x)

> It is also the space where the restitution of subaltern knowledge is taking place and where border thinking is emerging. (ix)

> The colonial differences, around the planet, are the house where border epistemology dwells. (37)

I am proposing a feminist border thinking, where the liminality of the border is a ground, a space, a borderlands, to use Gloria Anzaldúa's term, not just a split, not an infinite repetition of dichotomous hierarchies among de-souled specters of the human.

Often in Mignolo's work the colonial difference is invoked at levels other than the subjective/intersubjective. But when he is using it to characterize "border thinking," as he interprets Anzaldúa, he thinks of her as enacting it. In so doing he understands *her* locus as fractured. The reading I want to perform sees the coloniality of gender and rejection, resistance, and response. It adapts to its negotiation always concretely, from within, as it were.

IV. READING THE FRACTURED LOCUS

What I am proposing in working toward a decolonial feminism is to learn about each other as resisters to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference, without necessarily being an insider to the worlds of meaning from which resistance to the coloniality arises. That is, the decolonial feminist's task begins by her seeing the colonial difference, emphatically resisting her epistemological habit of erasing it. Seeing it, she sees the world anew, and then she requires herself to drop her enchantment with "woman," the universal, and begins to learn about other resisters at the colonial difference.[12] The reading moves against the social-scientific objectifying reading, attempting rather to understand subjects, the active subjectivity emphasized as the reading looks for the fractured locus in resistance to the coloniality of gender at a coalitional starting point. In thinking of the starting point as coalitional because the fractured locus is in common, the histories of resistance at the colonial difference are where we need to *dwell*, learning about each other. The coloniality of gender is sensed as concrete, intricately related exercises of power, some body to body, some legal, some inside a room as indigenous female-beasts-not-civilized-women are forced to weave day and night, others at the confessional. The differences in the

concreteness and intricacy of power in circulation are not understood as levels of generality; embodied subjectivity and the institutional are equally concrete.

As the coloniality infiltrates every aspect of living through the circulation of power at the levels of the body, labor, law, imposition of tribute, and the introduction of property and land dispossession, its logic and efficacy are met by different concrete people whose bodies, selves in relation, and relations to the spirit world do not follow the logic of capital. The logic they follow is not countenanced by the logic of power. The movement of these bodies and relations does not repeat itself. It does not become static and ossified. Everything and everyone continues to respond to power and responds much of the time resistantly—which is not to say in open defiance, though some of the time there is open defiance—in ways that may or may not be beneficial to capital, but that are not part of its logic. From the fractured locus, the movement succeeds in retaining creative ways of thinking, behaving, and relating that are antithetical to the logic of capital. Subject, relations, ground, and possibilities are continually transformed, incarnating a weave from the fractured locus that constitutes a creative, peopled re-creation. Adaptation, rejection, adoption, ignoring, and integrating are never just modes in isolation of resistance as they are always performed by an active subject thickly constructed by inhabiting the colonial difference with a fractured locus. I want to see the multiplicity in the fracture of the locus: both the enactment of the coloniality of gender and the resistant response from a subaltern sense of self, of the social, of the self-in-relation, of the cosmos, all grounded in a peopled memory. Without the tense multiplicity, we see only either the coloniality of gender as accomplishment, or a freezing of memory, an ossified understanding of self in relation from a precolonial sense of the social. Part of what I see is tense movement, people moving: the tension between the dehumanization and paralysis of the coloniality of being, and the creative activity of be-ing.

One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared and that can understand one's actions, thus providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing; one does with someone else, not in individualist isolation. The passing from mouth to mouth, from hand to hand of lived practices, values, beliefs, ontologies, space-times, and cosmologies constitutes one. The production of the everyday within which one exists produces one's self as it provides particular, meaningful clothing, food, economies and ecologies, gestures, rhythms, habitats, and senses of space and time. But it is important that these ways are not just different. They include affirmation of life over profit, communalism over individualism, "estar" over enterprise, beings in relation rather than dichotomously split over and over in hierarchically and violently ordered fragments. These ways of being, valuing, and believing have persisted in the resistant response to the coloniality.

Finally, I mark here the interest in an ethics of coalition-in-the-making in terms of both be-ing, and be-ing in relation that extends and interweaves its peopled ground (Lorde 2007). I can think of the self in relation as responding to the coloniality of gender at the colonial difference from a fractured locus, backed by an alternative communal source of sense that makes possible elaborate responses. The direction of the possibility of strengthening the affirmation and possibility of self in relation lies not through a rethinking of the relation with the oppressor from the point of the oppressed, but through a furthering of the logic of difference and multiplicity and of coalition at the point of difference (Lorde 2007). The emphasis is on maintaining multiplicity at the point of reduction—not in maintaining a hybrid "product," which hides the colonial difference—in the tense workings of more than one logic, not to be synthesized but transcended. Among the logics at work are the many logics meeting the logic of oppression: many colonial differences, but one logic of oppression. *The responses from the fragmented loci can be creatively in coalition*, a way of thinking of the possibility of coalition that takes up the logic of de-coloniality, and the logic of coalition of feminists of color: the oppositional consciousness of a social erotics (Sandoval 2000) that takes on the differences that make be-ing creative, that permits enactments that are thoroughly defiant of the logic of dichotomies (Lorde 2007). The logic of coalition is defiant of the logic of dichotomies; differences are never seen in dichotomous terms, but the logic has as its opposition the logic of power. The multiplicity is never reduced.

So, I mark this as a beginning, but it is a beginning that affirms a profound term that Maldonado Torres has called the "decolonial turn." The questions proliferate at this time and the answers are difficult. They require placing, again, an emphasis on methodologies that work with our lives, so the sense of responsibility is maximal. How do we learn about each other? How do we do it without harming each other but with the courage to take up a weaving of the everyday that may reveal deep betrayals? How do we cross without taking over? With whom do we do this work? The theoretical here is immediately practical. My own life—ways of spending my time, of seeing, of cultivating a depth of sorrow—is animated by great anger and directed by the love that Lorde (2007), Perez (1999), and Sandoval (2000) teach us. How do we practice with each other engaging in dialogue at the colonial difference? How do we know when we are doing it?

Isn't it the case that those of us who rejected the offer made to us over and over by white women in consciousness-raising groups, conferences, workshops, and women's studies program meetings saw the offer as slamming the door to a coalition that would really include us? Isn't it the case that we felt a calm, full, substantial sense of recognition when we asked: "What do you mean "We," White Woman?" Isn't it the case that we rejected the offer from the side of Sojourner Truth and were ready to reject their answer? Isn't it the case that we

refused the offer at the colonial difference, sure that for them there was only one woman, only one reality? Isn't it the case that we already know each other as multiple seers at the colonial difference, intent on a coalition that neither begins nor ends with that offer? We are moving on at a time of crossings, of seeing each other at the colonial difference constructing a new subject of a new feminist geopolitics of knowing and loving.

NOTES

1. Juan Ricardo Aparicio and Mario Blaser present this analysis and the relation between knowledge and political practices that focuses on politically committed research in indigenous communities in the Americas, including both academics and activists, insiders and outsiders to the communities in their forthcoming work. This is an important contribution to understanding decolonial, liberatory processes of knowledge production.

2. Since the eighteenth century the dominant Western view "has been that there are two stable, incommensurable, opposite sexes and that the political, economic, and cultural lives of men and women, their gender roles, are somehow based on these "facts"" (Laqueur 1992, 6). Thomas Laqueur also tells us that historically, differentiations of gender preceded differentiations of sex (62). What he terms the "one-sex model" he traces through Greek antiquity to the end of the seventeenth century (and beyond): a world where at least two genders correspond to but one sex, where the boundaries between male and female are of degree and not of kind (25). Laqueur tells us that the longevity of the one-sex model is due to its link to power. "In a world that was overwhelmingly male, the one-sex model displayed what was already massively evident in culture: man is the measure of all things, and woman does not exist as an ontologically distinct category" (62). Laqueur sums up the question of perfection by saying that for Aristotle and for "the long tradition founded on his thought, the generative substances are interconvertible elements in the economy of a single-sex body whose higher form is male" (42).

3. There is a tension between the understanding of procreation central to the one-sex model and the Christian advocacy of virginity. Instead of seeing the working of sex as related to the production of heat leading to orgasm, St. Augustine sees it as related to the fall. Idealized Christian sex is without passion (see Laqueur 1992, 59–60). The consequences for the coloniality of gender are evident, as the bestial, colonized males and females are understood as excessively sexual.

4. Anibal Quijano understands the coloniality of power as the specific form that domination and exploitation takes in the constitution of the capitalist world system of power. "Coloniality" refers to: the classification of the world's populations in terms of races—the racialization of the relations between colonizers and colonized; the configuration of a new system of exploitation that articulates in one structure all forms of control of labor around the hegemony of capital, where labor is racialized (wage labor as well as slavery, servitude, and small commodity production all became racialized forms of production; they were all new forms as they were constituted in the service of capitalism); Eurocentrism as the new mode of production and control of subjectivity; a new

system of control of collective authority around the hegemony of the nation-state that excludes populations racialized as inferior from control of collective authority (see Quijano 1991; 1995; and Quijano and Wallerstein 1992).

5. For my argument against Quijano's understanding of the relation of coloniality and sex/gender, see Lugones 2007.

6. "Ain't I a Woman?"; speech given at the Women's Convention in Akron Ohio, May 29, 1851.

7. In Lugones 2003 I introduce the concept of "active subjectivity" to capture the minimal sense of agency of the resister to multiple oppressions whose multiple subjectivity is reduced by hegemonic understandings/colonial understandings/racist-gendered understandings to no agency at all. It is her belonging to impure communities that gives life to her agency.

8. It is outside the scope of this article, but certainly well within the project to which I am committed, to argue that the coloniality of gender is constituted by and constitutive of the coloniality of power, knowledge, being, nature, and language. They are crucially inseparable. One way of expressing this is that the coloniality of knowledge, for example, is gendered and that one has not understood the coloniality of knowledge without understanding its being gendered. But here I want to get ahead of myself in claiming that there is no de-coloniality without de-coloniality of gender. Thus, the modern colonial imposition of an oppressive, racially differentiated, hierarchical gender system permeated through and through by the modern logic of dichotomizing cannot be characterized as a circulation of power that organizes the domestic sphere as opposed to the public domain of authority and the sphere of waged labor (and access and control of sex and reproduction biology) as contrasted to cognitive/epistemic intersubjectivity and knowledge, or nature as opposed to culture.

9. A further note on the relation of intersectionality and categorial purity: intersectionality has become pivotal in U.S. women of color feminisms. As said above, one cannot see, locate, or address women of color (U.S. Latinas, Asians, Chicanas, African Americans, Native American women) in the U.S. legal system and in much of institutionalized U.S. life. As one considers the dominant categories, among them "woman," "black," "poor," they are not articulated in a way that includes people who are women, black, and poor. The intersection of "woman" and "black" reveals the absence of black women rather their presence. That is because the modern categorial logic constructs categories as homogeneous, atomic, separable, and constituted in dichotomous terms. That construction proceeds from the pervasive presence of hierarchical dichotomies in the logic of modernity and modern institutions. The relation between categorial purity and hierarchical dichotomies works as follows. Each homogeneous, separable, atomic category is characterized in terms of the superior member of the dichotomy. Thus "women" stands for white women. "Black" stands for black men. When one is trying to understand women at the intersection of race, class, and gender, non-white black, mestiza, indigenous, and Asian women are impossible beings. They are impossible since they are neither European bourgeois women, nor indigenous males. Intersectionality is important when showing the failures of institutions to include discrimination or oppression against women of color. But here I want to be able to think of their presence as

being both oppressed and resisting. So, I have shifted to the *coloniality of gender* at and from the *colonial difference* to be able to perceive and understand the fractured locus of colonized women and agents fluent in native cultures.

10. I agree with Oyeronke Oyewumi, who makes a similar claim for the colonization of the Yoruba (Oyewumi 1997). But I complicate the claim, as I understand both gender and sex as colonial impositions. That is, the organization of the social in terms of gender is hierarchical and dichotomous, and the organization of the social in terms of sex is dimorphic and relates the male to the man even to mark a lack. The same is true of the female. Thus, Mesoamericans who did not understand sex in dimorphic, separable terms, but in terms of fluid dualisms, became either male or female. Linda Alcoff sees the contribution of sperm and egg in the reproductive act as in some way entailing the sexual division and the gender division. But the contribution of sperm and egg is quite compatible with intersexuality. From "contributes the ovum" or "contributes sperm" to a particular act of conception, it does not follow that the sperm contributor is either male or a man, nor does it follow that the egg contributor is female or a woman. But nothing about the meaning of *male* or *man* would unequivocally point to a sperm contributor who is markedly intersexed as a male man, except again as a matter of normed logic. If the Western, modern, gender dichotomy is conceptually tied to the dimorphic sexual distinction, and production of sperm is the necessary and sufficient condition of maleness, then of course the sperm donor is male and a man. Hormonal and gonadal characteristics are notoriously insufficient in determining gender. Think of the dangerous misfit of male-to-female transsexuals being housed in male prisons to get a feel for this perception embedded in language and popular consciousness.

11. It is important for me not to "translate" here. To do so would enable you to understand what I am saying, but not really, since I cannot say what I want to say having translated the terms. So, if I do not translate and you think you understand less, or do not understand at all, I think that you can understand better why this works as an example of thinking at the colonial difference.

12. Learning each other's histories has been an important ingredient in understanding deep coalitions among U.S. women of color. Here I am giving a new turn to this learning.

'this morning'
Érica Zíngano
Translated by Francisco Vilhena
with the Poetry Translation Workshop

this morning
went out to buy bread
any coincidence
is pure coincidence
but there is no coincidence
we all know
there might be a conspiracy
framing twittering
teetering or even the pregnant
woman of taubaté pregnant
by varginha's spacemxn
bae pls #elenão innit
yet a real
coincidence
one of those that leaves
us like this
blown away
hair standing on end
I really doubt it
in this case
because the Cunt! is red
I mean
because the Cunt! is written
in such red letters
does it mean that
she is a communist cunt?
or a gayzista cunt?
is she a worker cunt?
from the workers party?
or is she from that demonic cult?
the MTST? or the MST?
is she a cuban cunt?
or venezuelan?
is she an american cunt?
or a martian cunt?
is she really a cunt?

a bona fide cunt?
or is she one of those
we only see on tv?
is she for sale along the 25?
can I pay by card?
because she is red
does that mean
she is on her period
or is she a coapted cunt?
is she a bradesco cunt?
or a santander?
is she still a public cunt?
or has she too been privatised?
is she a committed cunt?
or is she a cunt for sale?
has she given up yet?
or is she married to the cause?
is she in the armed struggle?
or in the armed forces?
is she the total neo-liberal type?
or is she a prudish cunt?
is she a fascist cunt?
or is she one of those fashioni-
stas?
is she the free-living type?
or does she play hard to get?
like the track and field type
pole-vaulting hurdles
barricade and fuck knows what
else?
what is a cunt anyway?
what is she even for?
can you explain it better?
what are you afraid of?
is she for looking at or eating?

01 – GLITCH REFUSES

NOPE
(a manifesto)

I am not an identity artist just because I am a Black artist with multiple selves.

I am not grappling with notions of identity and representation in my art. I'm grappling with safety and futurity. We are beyond asking should we be in the room. We are in the room. We are also dying at a rapid pace and need a sustainable future.

We need more people, we need better environments, we need places to hide, we need Utopian demands, we need culture that loves us.

I am not asking who I am. I'm a Black woman and expansive in my Blackness and my queerness as Blackness and queerness are always already expansive. None of this is as simple as "identity and representation" outside of the colonial gaze. I reject the colonial gaze as the primary gaze. I am outside of it in the land of NOPE.

Consider artist E. Jane's 2016 piece *NOPE (a manifesto).* I begin here, with the words of *NOPE*, because bound up within them is the foundational refusal required "to glitch." *To glitch* is to embrace malfunction, and to embrace malfunction is in and of itself an expression that starts with "no." Thus E. Jane's *NOPE* helps us take these first steps.

E. Jane writes:

> I am not an identity artist just because I am a Black artist with multiple selves.
>
> I am not grappling with notions of identity and representation in my art. I'm grappling with safety and futurity. We are beyond asking should we be in the room. We are in the room. We are also dying at a rapid pace and need a sustainable future.
>
> We need more people, we need better environments, we need places to hide, we need Utopian demands, we need culture that loves us.
>
> I am not asking who I am. I'm a Black woman and expansive in my Blackness and my queerness as Blackness and queerness are always already expansive. None of this is as simple as "identity and representation" outside of the colonial gaze. I reject the colonial gaze as the primary gaze. I am outside of it in the land of NOPE.

Before talking about what glitch is or what it can do, let's meditate on the idea of a "[self] with multiple selves" and acknowledge that the construction of a self, creative or otherwise, is complex. E. Jane's naming and claiming of "multiple selves" pushes back against a flattened reading of historically othered bodies—intersectional bodies who have traveled restlessly, gloriously, through narrow spaces. These are the selves that, as writer and activist Audre Lorde wrote in her 1978 poem "A Litany for Survival," "live at the shoreline" and "were never meant to survive."

To seize "multiple selves" is, therefore, an inherently feminist act: multiplicity is a liberty. Within their creative practice, E. Jane explores the freedom found in multiplicity, stretching their range across two selves: E. Jane and their "alter-ego" avatar Mhysa. Mhysa is a self-proclaimed "popstar 4 the underground cyber resistance" who crossed into some of E. Jane's early artworks presented via the now-defunct "multimedia cultural hub" and "creation engine" NewHive.[1]

E. Jane's NewHive piece "MhysaxEmbaci-Freakinme" (2016) featured Mhysa in a pulsing field of lavender peonies, glittering lips, and moving bodies ever-so-slightly out of sync in the digital drag of a syncopated collage of sound and imagery. These two selves began as relatively distinct entities, with Mhysa "allowing [E. Jane] to be a part of [themselves that] white institutions tried to smother," serving as an alter-ego that self-recorded and shared snippets of their own blooming becoming on Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.[2] Then, in 2017, Mhysa released an LP with eleven tracks aptly titled *Fantasii*, marking the moment when "the slippage between IRL and URL" deepened as Mhysa performed songs and sets AFK, stepping out into E. Jane's world and perforating the carefully constructed divide between on- and offline selfdom.[3]

E. Jane's journey toward Mhysa, first as an avatar and then as an AFK extension of themselves, is one marked by finding room to roam, and finding their range. I think of the poet Walt Whitman's 1892 poem "Song of Myself":

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then I contradict myself,
> (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Whitman, a white man, was considered radically queer for his time. Within these lines of his, he captures a perfect snapshot of the problem of patriarchy, and of whiteness. Whitman is an agent bound up within a social and cultural status quo, yet that he "contain[s] multitudes" is his exercise of his right to be "large," his capacity to "contradict" himself is his exercise of the right to be blurry, unfixed, abstract. Patriarchy exercises its social dominance by taking up space as its birthright; when patriarchy comes into contact with whiteness, it leaves little room for anything else. Space is not just claimed by those exercising the "primary gaze" E. Jane speaks of, but is

also made for them: space for becoming an unencumbered, range-full self and the agential complexity this provides is granted and protected for normative selves and the bodies they occupy.

What E. Jane fiercely protects—that expansive self—Whitman dons fearlessly, wholly unconcerned with the threat of having privilege taken from him. More than one hundred twenty years apart, they speak to each other through a void, yet look toward two very different worlds. When considering identity and the language often used to speak of it (e.g., "the mainstream" and those "at the margins"), it comes as little surprise that under white patriarchy, bodies—*selves*—that cannot be defined with clarity by the "primary gaze," are pushed from the center. There, a Black queer femme body is flattened, essentialized as singular in dimension, given little room to occupy and even less territory to explore. As flat shadowy figures standing at the margins, we are stripped of the right to feel, to transform, to express a range of self.

The history of this sort of flattening or "othering" is one that has deep roots within a painful narrative of race, gender and sexuality in America, but also remains consistent across a world history of war. Where imperialism has touched, where neocolonialism continues, the force of flattening can be found. If one can render another body faceless and unrecognizable, if one can pin another as subhuman, it becomes easier for one group to establish a position of supremacy over another.

Violence is a key component of supremacy and, as such, a core agent of patriarchy. Where we see the limitation of a body's "right to range," be it at an individual or state level, we see domination.

E. Jane is not being hyperbolic when they write that we are "dying at a rapid pace." Pushed to the margins, we find ourselves as queer people, as people of color, as femme-identifying people most vulnerable in weathering world conditions, ranging from climate change to plantation capitalism. Thus, envisioning what shape a sustainable future might take, finding safe "places to hide" in addition to techniques that provide space for ourselves, is urgent.

Glitch is all about traversing along edges and stepping to the limits, those we occupy and push through, on our journey to defining ourselves. Glitch is also about claiming our right to complexity, to range, within and beyond the proverbial margins. E. Jane is correct: we *do* "need places to hide, we need Utopian demands, we need culture that loves us."

The imaginative architecture of utopia remains ever present in glitch feminism. It gives us home and hope. In 2009, academic and queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz wrote in his *Cruising Utopia*, "Queerness is that thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing."[4] In this "something missing" is desire, a wanting of a better world, a rejection of the here and now. Muñoz observes, "We have been cast out of straight time's rhythm, and we have made worlds in our temporal and spatial configurations."[5] A refusal of "straight time" and, via extension, of a Eurocentric model of time and space, E. Jane posits a NOPE that does not settle for a world or a social system that fails us.

The oblique romance of Internet-as-utopia, against this backdrop reality, should not be dismissed as naïve. Imbuing digital material with fantasy today is not a retro act of mythologizing; it continues as a survival mechanism. Using the Internet to play, perform, explore still has potential. Giving ourselves this space to experiment perhaps brings us closer to a projection of a "sustainable future."

The same is true online as AFK. All technology reflects the society that produces it, including its power structures and prejudices. This is true all the way down to the level of the algorithm. The outmoded myth, however, that equates the digital and the radical continues to prove counterfeit. Normative cultural institutions and the social construct of taxonomical norms—gender, race, class—within them are quick to marginalize difference. Paradoxically, the very nature of these differences titillate, are labeled as "wild." Nevertheless, this wildness is permitted just as long as it is properly maintained, growing only within its prescribed space. Just as physical institutions lack intelligence and awareness, so do institutions of the digital—Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok. These are the institutions (re)defining the future of visual culture; they are also, without question, deeply flawed.

In the spring of 2018, in the midst of #MeToo, a Snapchat ad surfaced asking viewers if they would prefer to "slap Rihanna" or "punch Chris Brown," which resulted in a backlash of outrage about its making light of singer Rihanna's 2009 domestic abuse at the hands of her then-partner, singer Chris Brown. High-profile individuals such as former rapper Joe Budden and media figure Chelsea Clinton voiced their support of Rihanna, and their general horror regarding the distasteful ad on Twitter. Rihanna herself went to Instagram, a rival to the Snapchat platform, to "talk back" to

Snapchat, writing: "You spent money to animate something that would intentionally bring shame to DV victims and made a joke of it."[6] In the days that followed, Snapchat stock lost $800 million[7]. Rihanna exercised her own refusal, her nonperformance by stepping back from a Snapchat "public," an intervention in which she raised a fist in solidarity with survivors of domestic abuse.

The paradox of using platforms that grossly co-opt, sensationalize, and capitalize on POC, female-identifying, and queer bodies (and our pain) as a means of advancing urgent political or cultural dialogue about our struggle (in addition to our joys and our journeys) is one that remains impossible to ignore. At these fault lines surface questions of consent—yours, mine, ours —as we continue to "opt-in," feeding our "selves" (e.g., our bodies as represented or performed online) into these channels. To quote poet Nikki Giovanni: "Isn't this counter-revolutionary[?]"[8]

Perhaps, yes. However if we assume that Audre Lorde's 1984 declaration that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" still holds true, then perhaps what these institutions—both online and off— require is not dismantling but rather mutiny in the form of strategic occupation. The glitch challenges us to consider how we can "penetrate … break … puncture … tear" the material of the institution, and, by extension, the institution of the body.[9] Thus, hacking the "code" of gender, making binaries blurry, becomes our core objective, a revolutionary catalyst. Glitched bodies—those that do not align with the canon of white cisgender heteronormativity—pose a threat to social order. Range-full and vast, they cannot be programmed.

Glitched bodies are not considered in the process of programming new creative technologies. In 2015, Google's image-recognition algorithm confused Black users with gorillas. The company's "immediate action" in response to this was "to prevent Google Photos from ever labelling any image as a gorilla, chimpanzee, or monkey—even pictures of the primates themselves."[10] Several years later, Google's 2018 Arts & Culture app with its museum doppelgänger feature allowed users to find artwork containing figures and faces that look like them, prompting problematic pairings as the algorithm identified look-alikes based on essentializing ethnic or racialized attributes.[11] For many of us, these "tools" have done little more than gamify racial bias. These technologies underscore the dominant arc of whiteness

within art historical image-making and the dissemination of those images in a marketplace that presents deep biases of its own. They also highlight the structural inequality inherent to the creation of these tools themselves, with such algorithms created for and by whiteness, and so echo the exclusionary and violent art historical canon.

Online, we grapple with multiplying questions of use, participation, and visibility. Never before in history has there been such an opportunity to produce, and access, so many different types of publics. In 1995, poet and activist Essex Hemphill mused, "I stand at the threshold of cyberspace and wonder, is it possible that I am unwelcome here, too? Will I be allowed to construct a virtual reality that empowers me? Can invisible men see their own reflections?"[12]

Today Hemphill's questions endure, made even more complicated by the fact that the "public" of the Internet is not singular or cohesive but divergent and fractal. What's more, the "space" of cyberspace that Hemphill calls upon has shown itself not to be a universally shared utopia. Instead, it is a space with many worlds, and within these worlds, vastly different understandings of what utopia might look like or become—and for whom. The Internet is an immersive institutional edifice, one that reflects and surrounds. There is no fixed entry-point: it is everywhere, all around us. Thus, the notion of Hemphill's "threshold" has since timed out.

This search for our "own reflections"—recognizing oneself within digital material and the electric black mirror that carries it—is bound up inextricably with a search for self-recognition away from the screen as well. Othered bodies are rendered invisible because they cannot be read by a normative mainstream and therefore cannot be categorized. As such, they are erased or misclassified within and outside of an algorithmic designation. Perhaps, then, this "land of NOPE" that E. Jane speaks of in their manifesto is the exact utopia Hemphill calls out for, that sacred ground where our digital avatars and AFK selves can be suspended in an eternal kiss. A land where we do not wait to be welcomed by those forces that essentialize or reject us but rather create safety *for* ourselves in ritualizing the celebration *of* ourselves.

With this, the digital becomes the catalyst to a variance of selfdom. With each of us "invisible men," we remain responsible for manifesting our own reflections, and through today's Internet, we can find ways to hold those mirrors up for one another. Thus, we are empowered via the liberatory

task of seizing the digital imaginary as an opportunity, a site to build on and the material to build with.

Glitch manifests with such variance, generating ruptures between the *recognized* and *recognizable*, and amplifying within such ruptures, extending them to become fantastic landscapes of possibility. It is here where we open up the opportunity to recognize and realize ourselves, "reflecting]" to truly *see* one another as we move and modify. Philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler observes in her *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*, "One 'exists' not only by virtue of being recognized, but … by being recognizable."[13] We delineate ourselves through our capacity for being recognizable; we become bodies by recognizing ourselves and, in looking outward, by recognizing aspects of our self in others.

Through Hemphill's musing on "reflections" in cyberspace, he makes plain the lack thereof within a broader social milieu, with the still-limited prevalence of such "reflections" both on- and offline. We will always struggle to recognize ourselves if we continue to turn to the normative as a central reference point. In a conversation between writer Kate Bornstein and trans artist, activist, and producer Zackary Drucker, Bornstein observed, "When gender is a binary, it's a battlefield. When you get rid of the binary, gender becomes a playground."[14]

The etymology of *glitch* finds its deep roots in the Yiddish *gletshn* (to slide, glide, slip) or the German *glitschen* (to slip). *Glitch* is thus an active word, one that implies movement and change from the outset; this movement triggers error.

The word *glitch* as we now use and understand it was first popularized in the 1960s, part of the cultural debris of the burgeoning American space program. In 1962, astronaut John Glenn used the word in his book *Into Orbit:* "Another term we adopted to describe some of our problems was 'glitch.' Literally, a glitch … is such a minute change in voltage that no fuse could protect against it."[15] The word resurfaced some years later in 1965 with the *St. Petersburg Times* reporting that "a glitch had altered the computer memory inside the US spacecraft Gemini 6"; still again in the pages of *Time Magazine:* "Glitches—a spaceman's word for irritating disturbances."[16] Later, in 1971, "glitches" appears in an article in the *Miami*

News about Apollo 14's failure to perform when a glitch had nearly botched a landing on the moon.

Traversing through these origins, we can also arrive at an understanding of glitch as a mode of nonperformance: the "failure to perform," an outright refusal, a "nope" in its own right, expertly executed by machine. This performance failure reveals technology pushing back against the weighty onus of function. Through these movements, technology does, indeed, get slippery: we see evidence of this in unresponsive pages that present us with the fatalistic binary of choosing to "kill" or "wait," the rainbow wheel of death, the "Sad Mac" iconography, a frozen screen—all indicative of a fatal system blunder.

Herein lies a paradox: glitch moves, but glitch also blocks. It incites movement while simultaneously creating an obstacle. Glitch prompts and glitch prevents. With this, glitch becomes a catalyst, opening up new pathways, allowing us to seize on new directions. On the Internet we explore new publics, engage with new audiences, and, above all, *glitschen* between new conceptions of bodies and selves. Thus, glitch is something that extends beyond the most literal technological mechanics: it helps us to celebrate failure as a generative force, a new way to take on the world.

In 2011, the theorist Nathan Jurgenson presented his critique of "digital dualism," identifying and problematizing the split between online selfdom and "real life." Jurgenson argues that the term *IRL* ("In Real Life") is a now-antiquated falsehood, one that implies that two selves (e.g., an *online* self versus an *offline* self) operate in isolation from each other, thereby inferring that any and all online activity lacks authenticity and is divorced from a user's identity offline. Thus, Jurgenson advocates for the use of *AFK* in lieu of IRL, as AFK signifies a more continuous progression of the self, one that does not end when a user steps away from the computer but rather moves forward out into society away from the keyboard.

The glitch traverses this loop, moving beyond the screen and permeating every corner of our lives. It shows us that experimenting online does not keep us from our AFK selves, nor does it prevent us from cultivating meaningful and complex collaborative communities beyond our screens. Instead, the polar opposite: the production of these selves, the digital skins we develop and don online, help us understand who we are with greater nuance. Thus, we use glitch as a vehicle to rethink our physical selves. Indeed, the body is itself an architecture that is activated and then

passed along like a meme to advance social and cultural logic. Historically, feminism was built on this mired foundation, first advocating for parity yet paradoxically not always across all bodies, or without anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-classist, homophobic, transphobic, and ableist aims central to its agenda. As a movement, the language of feminism—and, more contemporarily, "lifestyle feminism"—has in large part been codependent on the existence of gender binary, working for change only within an existing social order.[17] This is what makes the discourse around feminism so complicated and confusing.

Feminist theorist Donna Haraway's legendary 1984 construction of "the cyborg" within "A Cyborg Manifesto"—on which so many discussions of techno- and cyberfeminism have been built—complicates our understanding of bodies further. Haraway's cyborg actively argues away from the lexicon of the human, a classification that historically othered bodies (e.g., people of color, queer people) have long fought to be integrated into. Hindsight is 20/20: Haraway in 2004 looked back on her manifesto, noting, "A cyborg body is not innocent … we are responsible for machines … Race, gender, and capital require a cyborg theory of wholes and parts."[18]

In 1994, cultural theorist Sadie Plant coined the term "cyberfeminism." As a historical project and as ongoing politics, cyberfeminism remains a philosophical partner to this discourse on glitch: it looks to online space as a means of world-building, challenging the patriarchal normativity of an "offline mainstream." Yet the early history of cyberfeminism mirrored the early history of AFK feminism in its problematic reapplication of first- and second-wave feminist politics within what at that point was a third-wave feminist culture well underway.

Early cyberfeminists echoed early AFK first-wave feminist rhetoric in being phobic of transnational allyship. The public face of cyberfeminism was regularly championed and fetishized as one of white womanhood—Sadie Plant, Faith Wilding, N. Katherine Hayles, Linda Dement, to name a few pioneers—and found dominant support within the realm of art school academia. This reality demarcated digital space as both white and Western, drawing an equation: *white women = producing white theory = producing white cyberspace*.

This white cyberfeminist landscape marginalized queer people, trans people, and people of color aiming to decolonize digital space by their production via similar channels and networks. Exceptions such as the Old Boys' Network, SubROSA, or the VNX Matrix were impactful in offering up alternative discourse that recognized peripherally racism alongside sexism, but the hypervisibility of white faces and voices across feminist cyberculture demonstrated ongoing exclusion, even within this new, "utopic" setting.

Despite this, those early days of cyberfeminism lay important groundwork in introducing the technological, the digital, even the cybernetic as a computational imaginary to mainstream feminism. With cyberfeminism, feminists could newly network, theorize, and critique online, transcending (if only temporarily, if only symbolically) sex, gender, geography. With this also came a foundational awareness of how power operates as an agent of capitalism within the edifice of online space, spurred forth by technological builders who shape how we as users experience digital worlds and their politics.

Feminism is an institution in its own right. At its root is a legacy of excluding Black women from its foundational moment, a movement that largely made itself exclusive to middle-class white women. At the root of early feminism and feminist advocacy, racial supremacy served white women as much as their male counterparts, with reformist feminism—that is, feminism that operated within the established social order rather than resisting it—appealing as a form of class mobility. This underscores the reality that "woman" as a gendered assignment that indicates, if nothing else, a right to humanity, has not always been extended to people of color.

Feminist "sisterhood" toward the purpose of increasing white range and amplified social, cultural, economic mobility, is an exercise in service of supremacy—*for white women only*. This is the ugly side of the movement: one where we acknowledge that while feminism is a challenge to power, not everyone has always been on the same page about who that power is for and how it should be used as a means of progress. *Progress for whom?* Thus, American abolitionist, women's right activist, and freed slave Sojourner Truth's question "Ain't I a woman?" asked in 1851 continues to be painfully resonant even today, surfacing the ever-urgent reality of who is brought into the definition of womanhood and, via extension, who is truly recognized as being fully human.

As we wade our way through contemporary feminisms and the negotiations of power embodied by #BlackLives Matter, #MeToo, or the tradition of the Women's March, we must recognize that these movements are defined and driven by technology, harbingers of a promising and potentially more inclusive "fourth wave" unfolding on the horizon. Still, the dangerous vestiges of first- and second-wave histories linger on. Writer, activist, and feminist bell hooks may have declared that "feminism is for everybody," but what remains is still a long and winding road ahead until we get there.

Where *glitch* meets *feminism* in a discourse that problematizes the construct of the body, it is important to call out the historical construction of gender as it intersects with a historical construction of race. The body is a social and cultural tool. Because of this, the right to define what a body is, in addition to who can control these things called "bodies," has never been meted out equally. In a contemporary landscape where the term "intersectional" is bandied about with such ease, it is important to acknowledge the work of blackness in particular toward the project of feminism.

Sojourner Truth's urgent inquiry can also shine light on the queer body across a spectrum of identification. In a contemporary setting Truth's line of inquiry calls for the recognition of humanity and a future that celebrates bodies of color, bodies that femme-identify, bodies that embrace the in-between and beyond, all as an active resistance, a strategic blur of binary. We cannot forget: it was, and continues to be, the presence of blackness that aided in establishing a primary precedent for the notion of intersectionality within feminism. *Intersectionality* as a term was coined in 1989 by theorist and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw to speak to the realities of blackness and womanhood as part of a lived experience, neither half exclusive of one another, but rather advancing the work of both sides. Crenshaw's enduring contribution bolsters the foundation for the early thinking that drove making space for multiplicity across selves within a broader social and cultural context, one that resonates today both online and AFK alike.

As German artist and cyberfeminist Cornelia Sollfrank observes: "Cyberfeminism does not express itself in single, individual approaches but in the differences and spaces in-between."[19] It is in the space between that we as glitch feminists have found our range, our multiple and varied selves. Thus, the work of blackness in expanding feminism—and, by extension,

cyberfeminism—remains an essential precursor for glitch politics, creating new space and re-defining the face of a movement, amplifying the visibility of historically othered bodies.

We can find examples of this in texts such as writer Octavia Butler's 1980s *Xenogenesis* trilogy, which galvanizes the notion of a third sex futurity that defies binary gender. Or Audre Lorde's discussion of the erotic as power in her 1978 paper "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," which encourages us to discover our full range through a self-connection that delivers joy. These contributions did not rise up out of cyberfeminism, but they have transformed, expanded and liberated it. Such alchemy makes limitless the capacity of glitch to mobilize.

Let us revisit, occupy, and decolonize Whitman's words in our call for refusal:

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then I contradict myself,
> (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

03 – GLITCH THROWS SHADE
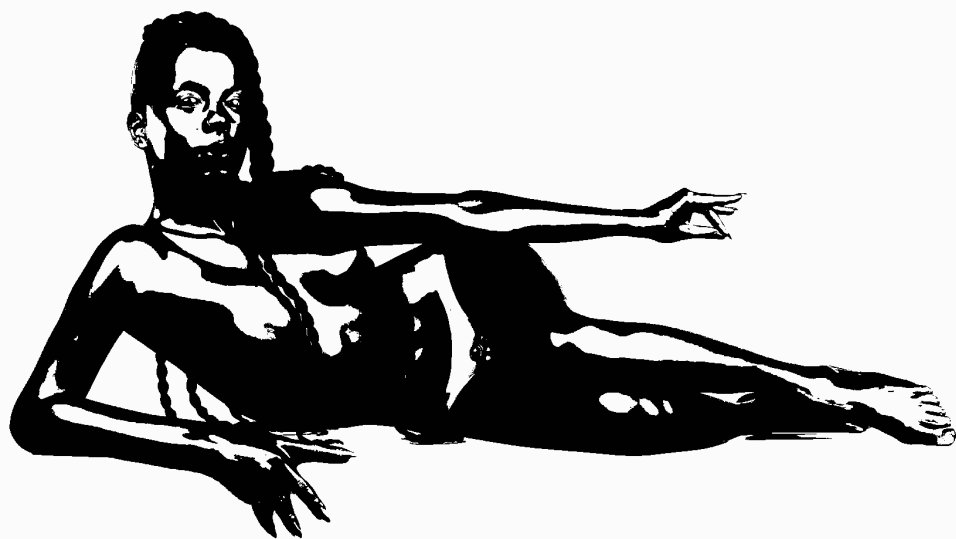
The meteoric rise to cultural acclaim and recognition of self-defined "cyborg" and artist Juliana Huxtable, in recent years, is important and timely. Within the realms of art, music, literature, fashion, she seeks to shatter the rigidity of binary systems. Raised in College Station, Texas, Huxtable was born intersex and assigned to the male gender. During the 1990s, in a moment where the Internet and the mythology of its utopia was on the rise, Huxtable male identified, going by the name Julian Letton.

In a conservative Texan, Christian milieu, claiming a trans identity seemed unimaginable. Yet when she left home to attend small liberal arts Bard College in upstate New York, she entered a period that marked a blooming in her sense of self, one she speaks about openly: "I was fully brainwashed by the Bible Belt shit … but the Internet became a form of solitude. It gave me a sense of control and freedom that I didn't have in my everyday life, because I walked through life feeling hated, embarrassed, trapped, and powerless. I felt very suicidal."[1]

As her art practice expanded, Huxtable's engagement with various digital platforms—chatrooms, blogs, social media, and beyond—increased the visibility of both her visual and written work, creating the opportunity for it to circulate both within and beyond the contemporary art world. At the same time, images of Huxtable herself circulated mimetically. A GIF travels virally online, emoting via the eternal loop of digital affect, quoting Huxtable's reaction to the question, "What's the nastiest shade ever thrown?" to which she replies, "Existing in the world."

The 2015 New Museum Triennial in New York City brought the power of Huxtable's creative presence to new heights. Huxtable's nude body in repose was the subject of artist Frank Benson's 3D-scanned plastic sculpture *Juliana*. Benson's statue is an homage to Huxtable and a "post-Internet response to the … Grecian sculpture *Sleeping Hermaphraditus* …

like that ancient artwork, Huxtable's naked pose reveals body parts of both sexes."[2] Benson makes contemporary his take on this classic, with Huxtable leaning on one arm, the other extended in a yogic "mudra" hand gesture, and the figure painted a metallic green.

In the gallery space, Benson's sculpture of Huxtable was positioned adjacent to four inkjet prints of Huxtable's own work. This included two self-portraits and two poems—both titled "Untitled (Casual Power)"—as part of Huxtable's 2015 series "Universal Crop Tops For All The Self Canonized Saints of Becoming." The titling of the series hearkens a celebration of transformation, of becoming, signifying a cosmic journey toward new, more inclusive canons and, by extension, selves. The self-portraits, respectively titled "Untitled in the Rage (Nibiru Cataclysm)" (2015) and "Untitled (Destroying Flesh)" (2015), show the artist in Nuwaubian Nation avatar, painted in one portrait in a neon violet and in the other an alien green. The artist's poems accompanying the portrait prints wander through past, present, and future, awash with technicolor meditations on a wide range of topics: climate change, COINTELPRO, Black reparations, sainthood. In these texts Huxtable calls forth Octavia Butler, Angela Davis, Aaliyah, and the "hood surrealism" of Hype Williams, who directed many of the music videos of 90s-era Black pop and R…B stars.

In a conversation with artist Lorraine O'Grady, Huxtable reflects on the experience of showing her work—and her body, via Benson's sculpture—in the Triennial:

> I had a growing sense of anxiety … Performance offered a powerful way to deal with questions of self-erasure or presence, tempting an audience with the idea that I am performing to enable their consumption of my image or my body—and then to ultimately refuse that. Text and video and all of this media become modes of abstracting presence or abstracting myself in the present. And so right now performance feels like a way of dealing with the sort of aftermath of a cultural moment.[3]

Huxtable's exercise in "abstracting presence or abstracting myself" as a mode of performativity—between online and AFK—intersects with glitch feminism's cosmic ambitions to abstract the body as a means of reaching

beyond its conventional limitations. In her celebrity, Huxtable regularly exercises a "necessary visibility," electing to make her cosmic body visible through ongoing documentation of herself online, most notably via Instagram.[4] She explains, "the Internet and specifically social media, became an essential way for me to explore inclinations that I otherwise would not have an outlet for."[5]

For Huxtable, as with many others using online space as a site to re-present and re-perform their gender identities, the "Internet represents … a 'tool' for global feminist organizing … [and] an opportunity to be protagonist … in [one's] own revolution." It is also a "'safe space' … a way to not just survive, but also resist, repressive sex/gender regimes"[6] and the antagonistic normativity of the mainstream.

Huxtable herself is a glitch, and a powerful one at that. By her very presence Huxtable throws shade: she embodies the problematics of binary and the liberatory potential of scrambling gender, embracing one's possible range. Such cosmic bodies glitch, activating the production of new images that "create … [a] future as practice of survival."[7] The glitch is call-and-response to Huxtable's declaration of being, that "shade" of "existing in the world," enduring as the "nastiest" form of refusal.

In a dystopic global landscape that makes space for none of us, offers no sanctuary, the sheer act of living—surviving—in the face of a gendered and racialized hegemony becomes uniquely political. We choose to stay alive, against all odds, because our lives matter. We choose to support one another in living, as the act of staying alive is a form of world-building. These worlds are ours to create, claim, pioneer. We travel off-road, away from the demand to be merely "a single being." We scramble toward containing multitudes against the current of a culture-coding that encourages the singularity of binary.

Glitching is a gerund, an action ongoing. It is activism that unfolds with a boundless extravagance.[8] Nonetheless, undercurrent to this journey is an irrefutable tension: the glitched body is, according to UX (user experience) designer, coder, and founder of collective @Afrofutures_ UK Florence Okoye, "simultaneously observed, watched, tagged and controlled whilst also invisible to the ideative, creative and productive structures of the techno-industrial complex."[9]

We are seen and unseen, visible and invisible. At once error and correction to the "machinic enslavement" of the straight mind, the glitch reveals and conceals symbiotically.[10] Therefore, the political action of glitch feminism is the call to collectivize in network, amplifying our explorations of gender as a means of deconstructing it, "restructuring the possibilities for action."[11]

In the work of London-based artist and drag queen Victoria Sin we can see this restructuring inhabited. Assigned female at birth, Sin identifies as non-binary and queer, a body that amplifies gender in their reperformance of it, both online via Instagram and AFK. On stage—whether out in the world or wrapped within the seductive fabric of the digital—Sin toys with the trappings of gender. Sin's drag personae remain pointedly high femme, the different selves they perform underscoring the socio-cultural production of exaggerated femininity as a gendered trope, ritual, and exercise.

Sin dons gender as prosthesis. An homage to an expansive history of masculine/feminine drag performance and genderfucking, Sin's costumery is replete with breast and buttocks inserts, a sumptuous wig, makeup painted with vivid artistry and a sweeping gown that glitters. Sin's aesthetic is an evocative, mesmeric cocktail, that weaves with satire and expertise the sensory swagger of cabaret, buzz of burlesque, vintage Hollywood glamor —all with a dash of Jessica Rabbit.

AFK, Sin's performances as drag avatar and alter-ego take up space with exaggerated curve, contour, and composition that femme-identifying bodies are often forced to relinquish. This is a striking reminder that the production of gender is, at best, an assemblage. It is surreal, in the sense of a dream, and "full of other bodies, pieces, organs, parts, tissues, knee-caps, rings, tubes, levers, and bellows."[12] Online via Instagram, Sin occupies a pop vernacular akin to YouTube makeup tutorials, deliberately exposing the seams of their gender-prep by sharing video and photographs of what typically would be labor left unseen. In the highly stylized presentation of their constructed selfhood, we see Sin becoming their avatar through the gloss of digital drag, where the Internet offers the space of cyber-cabaret. Sin stitches together *before* and *after* imagery of themselves as they put on their "face," with cutting commentary and humor that inspires awe and prompts inquiry about how we read bodies, and why. In these gestures, Sin is super-human, extra-human, and post-human all at once. Sin also celebrates "woman" as trapping and as trap, the trickery of gender itself underscored as a thirsty-AF agent of capitalism, at points gently divine yet still violently disorienting.[13]

Sin themself is a glitch and, in glitching, throws shade. Their body shatters the shallow illusion of any harmony or balance that might be offered up within the suggestive binary of male/female. Sin's hyperfemininity is a send-up and glorification. They play with and challenge what philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler identifies as "a male in his stereotype … a person unable to cope with his own femininity" as well as the inverse, holding a mirror up to the female stereotype, as, perhaps, a body "unable to cope with" her masculinity.[14]

In this vein, Sin's model of coping is complex. On the one hand, Sin's drag erases the material body via the amplification of gendered artifice, reducing it to near ridicule and undermining any assumption of gender as absolute. On the other hand, Sin's drag points toward the dilemma of the

body itself by celebrating their queer body as necessarily visible, fantastically femme, larger than life, and so extreme in its existence that it becomes impossible to ignore, a calculated confrontation, vast in impact.

Sin's shade is a skin: protective but permeable, and an exciting rendering of what the future of body politic might look like as something emancipatory in its intentional error. Here we see a crack in the gloss and gleam of capitalist consumption of gender-as-product. Here each half of the binary is eating the other, a dazzling feat to feast on. As glitch feminists, we join both Huxtable and Sin here in a "reach toward the ineffable."[15] Through refusal, we aim to deconstruct and dematerialize the idea of the body as we move through time and space, as wild forms building toward even wilder futures.

07 – GLITCH IS ANTI-BODY

In the body, where everything has a price,

I was a beggar.

—Ocean Vuong, "Threshold"

Glitch is anti-body, resisting the body as a coercive social and cultural architecture. We use *body* to give form to something that has no form, that is abstract, cosmic. Philosopher Jean Luc-Nancy puts it perfectly: "Does anyone else in the world know anything like 'the body'? It's our old culture's latest, most worked over, sifted, refined, dismantled, and reconstructed product."[1] A lot of work is put into trying to give the body form.

Artist and filmmaker Lynn Hershman Leeson's notion of the "anti-body," as introduced in her 1994 essay "Romancing the Anti-body: Lust and Longing in (Cyber)space," lays useful groundwork for thinking of glitch as a mode of resistance against the social, cultural framework of the body.[2] "Like computer viruses," Leeson writes, anti-bodies "escape extinction through their ability to morph and survive, exist in perpetual motion, navigating parallel conditions of time and memory."[3]

The glitch thus advances Leeson's "anti-body" as a tactical strategy. This strategy becomes operable in the face of the failure of the systematized networks and the frameworks within which we build our lives. Glitches gesture toward the artifice of social and cultural systems, revealing the fissures in a reality we assume to be seamless. They reveal the fallibility of bodies as cultural and social signifiers, their failure to operate only as hegemonic normative formulations of capital weaponized by the state. The binary body confuses and disorients, pitting our interests against one another across modalities of otherness. State power in this way positions us

all as foot soldiers at the frontlines of a most dangerous tribal war. We can do better.

The current conditions of the world, however flawed, ought not to preclude glitched bodies from the right to use imagination as a core component of mobilizing and strategizing with care toward a more sustainable futurity. Leeson observes, "the corporeal body [as we have known it] is becoming obsolete. It is living through a history of erasure, but this time, through enhancements."[4] Glitched bodies rework, glitch, and encrypt traces of ourselves, those new forms of personal digital data left behind. As the understanding of what makes up a "possible" body changes under this pressure, the information associated with our physical forms, now abstracted, changes, too.

We can see example of *anti-body* in the fictional character and "it girl" Miquela Sousa, known via her Instagram personality Lil Miquela. Lil Miquela was launched as a profile in 2016; however, it was not until 2018 that Lil Miquela claimed the identity of a sentient robot. Created by an LA-based company called Brud with the aspiration of becoming a prototype of "the world's most advanced AI," Lil Miquela is described by the Brud Team as "a champion of so many vital causes, namely Black Lives Matter and the absolutely essential fight for LGBTQIA+ rights in this country. She is the future." Yet, Lil Miquela has no body.

We wonder: *What purpose can a body that has no body serve?* In the face of an increasingly privatized world, can a corporate avatar—in essence, a privatized body, symbolic in form—be an authentic advocate, a catalyst toward social change?

Lil Miquela's Instagram profile advances the archetype of the influencer, capitalizing on the heightened visibility by using the platform to promote key political causes. Any given day, one might find shout-outs to @ innocenceproject, @lgbtlifecenter, or @justiceforyouth on her profile. On the one hand, it could be argued that Lil Miquela epitomizes a perverse intersection of a neoliberal consumer capitalism and advocacy; on the other, she, being AI and therefore "without" a body, epitomizes what becomes possible with avatar perform-ativity. She is a newfangled opportunity to make visible the invisible, to weirdly engage with new audiences, to push the limits of corporeal materiality and reconsider how we might (re)define the body as we have always known it.

The work and life of artist Kia LaBeija furthers our exploration of *antibody* as a vehicle within glitch feminism. LaBeija, who is Black and Filipino, is a queer woman living with HIV. Born Kia Michelle Benbow, the surname "LaBeija" derives from the legendary House of LaBeija, founded in either 1972 or 1977 (the exact year remains a point of contention) by the house's original mother, the drag queen Crystal LaBeija. The structure of "houses," intended to operate as chosen family units, is a survival strategy in itself, creating space for historically othered bodies. These important spaces are long-fought-for and celebrated epicenters of performance, nightlife, and queer culture. Houses compete against one another in voguing battles, a practice that originated in Harlem in the 1970s and has since grown into a well-recognized global phenomenon. Though she is no longer a member of the House of LaBeija, LaBeija in her own creative practice employs vogue dancing as well as storytelling and photography, self-documenting and self-defining a core component of her creative expression.

LaBeija in her very existence is a living legacy of the HIV and AIDS movement. The artist explains, "I was born in 1990, and medication that put you on a regimen that was expected to save your life didn't come around until, like, 1996, so people weren't sure babies with HIV of my age would survive."[5] Born nine years after the official start of the AIDS epidemic, LaBeija "complicates [the] idea of what a long-term survivor looks like."[6] LaBeija engages the practice of voguing in public space, her dancing a form of resistance and celebration, an embodiment of queer histories, and a decolonization of what the artist has called "a gay, white man's story."[7] In circulating self-portrait documentation of herself over years, LaBeija carries forth the torch of HIV and AIDS activism that was first lit in the 1980s by groups such as ACT UP and Gran Fury, who created new modes of visual culture and representation to alter the discourse surrounding bodies affected by HIV and AIDS.

In her self-portraits, LaBeija performs both *as* herself and *beyond* herself as an avatar, no longer Kia Michelle Benbow as she was born, but now in the "greatest role of all" as LaBeija.[8] Her sharply theatrical compositions blur the boundary between the real and surreal. In "Eleven" (2015), LaBeija photographs herself in her doctor's office, wearing her high-school prom dress, a decadent crush of tulle and lace in stark contrast with the sterile reality of a regular routine of health maintenance and HIV care. In this image LaBeija performs the ritual of dressing up for prom, engaging in the American fantasy of having one night before graduating where a teenager can live out one's most epic dreams. Reflecting on this image, LaBeija notes: "I'm wearing my prom dress because when I first began to see [my primary physician], no one knew if I would make it to prom."[9] In "Mourning Sickness" (2014) LaBeija features herself somberly resting on the bathroom floor, yet illuminated with a pale light that amplifies the aqueous colors of the shower curtain, bathmat, and mirror. The lighting lends to the portrait a staged feel, giving it drama in its cinematic texture. LaBeija has said of this portrait: "[This image] tells the story of the many hours I've spent in my bathroom, lying on the floor feeling dizzy or nauseous because of the violent medications that I have to take every day. It also evokes locking myself in the bathroom and grieving for my mother's passing. I still deal with these feelings, and probably always will."[10] LaBeija, by way of her creative practice and advocacy work, gestures toward a long lineage of folx that worked hard to make space, take up space, and explore their range.

LaBeija's embrace of her history is a marked "consent not to be a single being": the artist's work demonstrates the complexity of her range, her portraits "expressing] the beauty and pain of women who live with HIV" while her voguing practice allows her "to express [herself] through movement and connect with the brown and Black queer community."[11] Through her self-expression, LaBeija cracks open the plausibility of containing multitudes not only as a creative action, but as a political one.

Between the creative practices of Lil Miquela and Kia LaBeija respectively, we see examples of two very different types of bodies that deploy the imaginary as a computational strategy of survival. Each is a actively re-imagining and re-centering neoteric realities. Each provides us the opportunity to reimagine what a body means, how it can be redefined, what it can do, and what to continue celebrating.

12 – GLITCH SURVIVES

One is not born, but rather becomes, a body. And one is not born, but rather becomes, a glitch. The *glitch-becoming* is a process, a consensual diaspora toward multiplicity that arms us as tools, carries us as devices, sustains us as technology, while urging us to persist, survive, stay alive.

Glitch Refuses

We are building a future where we can have the broad range we deserve. We refuse to shrink ourselves, refuse to fit. Fluid, insistent, we refuse to stand still: we slip, we slide. We recognize the contributions of blackness toward liberatory queerness, and the contributions of queerness toward liberatory blackness. We fail to function for a machine that was not built for us. We refuse the rhetoric of "inclusion" and will not wait for this world to love us, to understand us, to make space for us. We will take up space, and break this world, making new ones.

Glitch Is Cosmic

We recognize that bodies are not fixed points, they are not destinations. Bodies are journeys. Bodies move. Bodies are abstract. We recognize that we begin in *abstraction* and then journey toward *becoming*. To transcend the limits of the body we need to let go of what a body should look like, what it should do, how it should live. We recognize that, within this process of letting go, we may mourn; this mourning is a part of our growing. We celebrate the courage it takes to change form, the joy and pain that can come with exploring different selves, and the power that comes from finding new selves.

Glitch Throws Shade

We throw shade by existing in the world, by showing up and not only surviving, but truly, fully, living. We practice the future in the now, testing

out alternatives of being. We openly, honestly consider together how to be strategically visible, when visibility is radically necessary.

Glitch Ghosts

We ghost on the body, refusing to respond to its cultural texts, incessant calls, damaging DMs. We acknowledge that gender is an economy. It is a spoke in the wheel of capitalism. We reject being bought and sold. We feel no guilt or shame about turning our backs on a market that wants to eat us alive. We will strategize and collectivize toward uselessness, a failure that imagines, innovates, emancipates.

Glitch Is Error

We are the most fantastic and beautiful mistake. Never meant to survive, we are still here: an error in the algorithm. We are not empty signifiers, however; we are not dead-end hyperlinks. We reject the violent act of naming. We will reconfigure ourselves as we see fit. Modifying and recoding, we choose our own names, build our own families and communities, proudly fail in the present as we dream new futures.

Glitch Encrypts

We are encrypted: how we are coded is not meant to be easily read. We recognize that the *care-full* reading of others is an exercise of trust, intimacy, belonging, homecoming. We reject the conflation of legibility and humanity. Our unreadable bodies are a necessary disruption. Our unreadable bodies can render us invisible and hyper-visible at the same time. As a response to this, we work together to create secure passageways both on- and offline to travel, conspire, collaborate.

Glitch Is Anti-Body

If to be recognized as a body that deserves to live we must perform a certain self—look a certain way, live a certain way, care for one another in a certain way—we strike against the body altogether. We will hold mirrors up for one another, hold and care for the reflections seen. We will see one another and the selves we become, recognizing those selves as real, loved, and so very alive.

Glitch Is Skin

While both protective and permeable, the skin of the digital, despite its entanglements, remains necessary as a tool of experimentation. Thus, we celebrate ourselves and the framework offered by the skins we put on and take off. We recognize that our performance of other bodies is prosthetic. We recognize that the skin of the digital transforms and is transformative.

Glitch Is Virus

We want to corrupt data. We want to fuck up the machine. Infectious, viral, we will tear it all down. We recognize that in this breaking, there is a beginning.

Glitch Mobilizes

We will mobilize and take action! We recognize that all work cannot be done all the time all on the Internet. Completing the online-to-AFK loop, we will dare to live away from our screens, embodying our ever-slipping selves as an activist action. Empowered by the virtual worlds we traverse, we will reboot and rebuild these worlds when they no longer suit and need to shift. Along this loop, we commit to making space for rigorous criticism, feedback, play, and pleasure as activism.

Glitch Is Remix

Affirming our role in building new worlds, we will imagine, innovate, and remix. We will rearrange and repurpose by any means necessary, rendering what rises from this rebirth unrecognizable from the violence of its original. We will create fissures in the social and cultural algorithm as an active act of advocacy, advocating for the user, advocating for ourselves and advocating for one another.

Glitch Survives

In 1993, one year before Sadie Plant coined the term *cyberfeminism*, poet Lucille Clifton wrote "won't you celebrate with me." As glitch feminists we call for it here, celebrating with Clifton at her request and sharing her transformative words:

> won't you celebrate with me
> what i have shaped into
> a kind of life? i had no model.

born in babylon
both nonwhite and woman
what did i see to be except myself?
i made it up
here on this bridge between
starshine and clay,
my one hand holding tight
my other hand; come celebrate
with me that everyday
something has tried to kill me
and has failed.

Clifton's "i made it up," gestures to both playground and battlefield. Building a future and a future self at the same time is no easy task. These words seem a response to Essex Hemphill's 1995 wondering, wandering on cyberspace: "Can invisible men see their own reflections?" Glitch feminism travels the passageways between the starshine of the digital and the clay of AFK. It is modeled on no model and asks for a better world. Like Clifton, we hold our own hands and the hands of one another in an act of solidarity, with little else to lean on. *What do we see to be except ourselves?*

The open-ended question of the body is one of the greatest of our time. Our embodiment of glitch is thus an expression of spatial desire, a curious inquiry in service of remapping the physical form and how we perform and (re)structure it. Gender as a construct is a falsehood. As glitch feminists, we challenge the collective discourse that designates the gender binary as a natural progression. Binary gender keeps us from our cosmic corporeality, that space where the body can expand and explore in the freedom of abstraction. Nope, this cannot continue. The glitch pushes the machine to its breaking point by refusing to function for it, refusing to uphold its fiction.

What does it mean to find life—and to find ourselves—through the framework of failure? To build models that stand with strength on their own, not to be held up against those that have failed us, as reactionary tools of resistance? Here is the opportunity to build new worlds. As citizens transmogrified by the material of the digital, we recognize that limitlessness is possible, that we can expand in every direction. I found new landscapes through being borne and carried online, those early days where I flexed as a

digital Orlando, shapeshifting, time-traveling, genderfucking as I saw fit. I became myself, I found my body, through becoming, embodying, a glitch.

Each among us containing multitudes, as glitch feminists we are not one but many bodies. All these Internet avatars have taught us something: that reality is what we make of it, and in order to make a "real life" whether online or AFK, we must seize it. This is our right. United, we will no longer ache for visibility or recognition or equality. This relinquishing of power as reparation for harms done will never happen voluntarily, or meet our terms —so why waste ourselves in waiting for it? By breaking it all, we pave the way for the kaleidoscopic future that we want.

What glitch feminism is proposing instead is this: *We will embody the ecstatic and catastrophic error*. If this is a spatial battle, let us become anarchitecture.

We will be not "single beings" but be every single being and every single avatar, expanding to a rageful full range that makes this gendered engine screech to a halt.

We will let our liquidity roar with the deep decibels of waves. We will cruise as wild, amorous, monstrous malfunctions.

We will find life, joy, and longevity in breaking what needs to be broken. We will be persistent in our failure to perform in pursuit of a future that does not want us, enduring in our refusal to protect the idea, the institution of "body" that alienates us.

Here is where new possibilities gestate.

As glitch feminists, we will search in the darkness for the gates, seek the ways to bring them down and kill their keepers.

So, go ahead—tear it all open. Let's be beatific in our leaky and limitless contagion. Usurp the body. Become your avatar. Be the glitch.

Let the whole goddamn thing short-circuit.

Alexandra Kollontai
Make Way for Winged Eros: A Letter to
Working Youth (1923)

María Puig de la Bellacasa
Touching Visions (2017)

Jamie Heckert
Listening, Caring, Becoming: Anarchism as an
Ethics of Direct Relationships (2010)

Judith Butler
To Preserve the Life of the Other (2020)

Carmen Maria Machado
In the Dream House (2019)

María Lugones
Toward a Decolonial Feminism (2010)

Legacy Russell
Glitch Feminism (2020)

———

Pedro Neves Marques
Sex as Care (2019)

Monika Rinck
Pond (2004)

Bejan Matur
If this is a lament (2017)

Eunsong Kim
Curved, Bells (2017)

Jayne Cortez
There It Is (1982)

Érica Zíngano
this morning (2019)

Lucille Clifton
Whose Side Are You
On? (1991)