EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST ISSUE

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The institution of official platforms that call for, collect, and publish works in burgeoning fields of inquiry is a crucial step in the legitimization and promotion of research in those areas. For instance, the 1982 founding of *Hypatia* instituted a forum crucial for the shaping of the discipline of feminist philosophy itself, and also for those who research and teach in this field. While journals like *PhiloSOPHIA*, *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* (IJFAB), *Radical Philosophy,* and, more recently, *Critical Philosophy of Race* and *Latina Critical Feminism* are contributing to the sedimentation of fields such as feminist philosophy, critical philosophy of race, and Latina feminism etc., to this day there is not a platform explicitly devoted to the publication of pieces that engage the critical turn in phenomenology. Inspired by the institutional changes brought about by the establishment of these journals, we decided to found what we are now proud to call *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology*.

The journey of its founding and the publication of its first issue required numerous conversations about the scope of the journal, its target audience, the kinds of publications that we hoped to solicit, and, perhaps most importantly, what we took "critical phenomenology" to be and to be doing. By founding this journal, we endorse and promote a specific kind of phenomenological inquiry or method: a method already being deployed by contemporary feminist thinkers like Lisa Guenther and Mariana Ortega. These scholars, inspired by the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Frantz Fanon, and Gloria Anzaldúa among others, conceive of critical phenomenology as a process of inquiry that, grounded in the specificity of the phenomenon it seeks to describe, remains "on its way"—in terms of both its description of the phenomenon and its methodological presuppositions.

Given our indebtedness to feminist phenomenology and feminist phenomenologists, the reflection on the resonances between feminist phenomenology and critical phenomenology is essential to the delineation of the contours of the field of critical phenomenology. Our designation of the term critical phenomenology is not meant to mark a limit or an inadequacy in what is now widely recognized and accepted as feminist phenomenology proper, but rather, to suggest that feminist phenomenology and philosophies of social and political critique are already inherently implicated with

one another (this topic is taken up by Bonnie Mann in the article featured in this issue). Critical phenomenology understands that feminist phenomenology exists within broader structures of power that shape, condition, and determine experience. And all critical phenomenology is inherently—if not explicitly—feminist insofar as it attends to experiences of difference and differences in experience. The founding of *Puncta* is motivated by the hope that having a specific outlet for critical phenomenology will help to establish it as its own field, and to invite scholars to engage their phenomenological work in a way that attends to those differences.

Inspired by Roland Barthes' concept *punctum*, we take *Puncta* here to indicate critical phenomenology's continuity with and divergence from the traditions of both classical and feminist phenomenology. In the movement from *punctum* to *puncta*, we move from one point to many; we move from phenomenology to a phenomenological approach that continuously questions its own practices, methods, and assumptions, and is thus revealed as always already multiple.

In his phenomenological investigations of photographs, Barthes introduced the punctum and studium as two elements of an image that may grab the interest of a viewer. The studium refers to everything in the image that is average, cultural, that reveals itself to the viewer because of their participation in a shared body of knowledge. Through attendance to the studium, intellectual inquiries can exalt an image from bearing merely personal interest to a general interest through the image's instantiation as an indexical counterpart to a historical period. Phenomenology's attendance to the complex forces constitutive of lived experience makes it well-suited to reveal and critique the studium. While the studium situates the viewer comfortably in relation to the image, it is not what holds one's interest. Intellectual exercises and phenomenological inquiries that are self-satisfied with the studium still bear a sovereign, disinterested gaze over the objects of perception.

The punctum is a "sharp point" that disturbs or disrupts the studium. It is a small detail that draws us away from the image's acquired cultural significance and towards something else that exceeds the historical frame, namely, the singularity of the body that the image makes seen—the fragile, finite body of the referent. What is revealed in the detail is not strictly an object but a feeling—an affective connection to others that the natural attitude holds at a distance. It is no longer the case that this image is interesting on a merely intellectual level; it touches me by cutting and wounding me. This affective connection entails that the phenomenologist will, like the objects of their inquiry, be left exposed and transformed by the encounter.

Puncta reveal what is at stake in a critical phenomenology. When the phenomenologist is not another transcendental subject that gazes sovereignly over the objects of perception, but one that makes themselves exposed, that desires not merely to gaze but to be gazed at in turn and be transformed by what is seen, then that phenomenologist makes possible an encounter with the life that exceeds its historical context and cannot be reduced to the conditions of its existence. The punctum is, quite literally, the *point*—of a phenomenology that aims to be critical, that is, a phenomenology for which the call made infamous in Marx's thesis still resounds. The goal is not merely to describe the world, but to change it (and to be changed by it).

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As the previous reflections indicate, the definition of critical phenomenology as a discipline in its own right remains one of the most difficult questions at stake in this intellectual inquiry, and is the topic of this inaugural issue. Stated broadly: If phenomenology is a descriptive practice, then critical phenomenology questions the conditions of the possibility of a phenomenological description and, in so doing, modifies the scope, content, and method of said description. Our objects of inquiry are always moving, and are never static. They are the institutions, structures, and social conditions which inform our daily lives. Critical phenomenology moves *with* these phenomena; understands that the structures of experience are *structured and experienced in a multitude of ways,* and we thus consider our project as calling on phenomenological analyses of race, gender, class, etc.

At a methodological level, critical phenomenology challenges the assumption that a "pure" phenomenological description (and the complete suspension of the natural attitude it requires) is possible and that phenomenological conclusions can be arrived at with certainty; it asks what the *epoché* or initial shift from the natural attitude consists in, and if or how the subject position of the phenomenologist is relevant to phenomenological description. Importantly, taking these issues seriously demands that critical phenomenology reconsiders the way it investigates and approaches the phenomena it seeks to describe; it invites the development of what Merleau-Ponty would call an *indirect* phenomenological description.

But if the "essences" of phenomena are revealed as being "impure," structured by socio-political institutions, if phenomenological conclusions cannot be certain, or if the *epoché* does not completely suspend the values and assumptions of the natural attitude, then this broadens the scope of the conditions of the possibility of phenomenology: insofar as those conditions include particular social contexts, phenomenology ceases to be a strictly *a priori* and value-neutral discipline. Under these conditions, critical phenomenology concerns itself with the norms and values that shape both the natural attitude of the phenomenologist and the phenomena she seeks to describe, thereby taking on a normative dimension.

As critical phenomenologists, then, we question both phenomenology's role as "pure" methodology, and the underlying assumptions of the methodology itself. We engage in a double critical matrix which seeks to engage phenomenology as a social and political *practice* over and against methodology, as well as engage in the consistent practice of questioning the assumptions and import of the method(s) themselves. In this sense, the task of critical phenomenology in elucidating these phenomena and its own approach to them is never finished. Critical phenomenology is an ongoing process of exposing the structures of structures, and of challenging exhaustive understanding through a commitment to tailor methodology to the shape-shifting objects of inquiry. In critiquing phenomenology, then, we can say that critical phenomenology takes up the task of social critique.

Despite its distinct elements—and analogously to its relation with feminist phenomenology—this conception of critical phenomenology does not constitute a historical break with phenomenology. Phenomenology has repeatedly questioned its own origin and possibility. It has also been questioned and challenged by others: Since we cannot

perform a complete suspension of the natural attitude, critics have argued, phenomenology as a discipline fails, falling into solipsism and subjectivism, which is to say that it never attains to a rigorous science. In other words, given the impossibility of a complete reduction, there can be no pure phenomenological description of experience as such.

However, listening to phenomenology itself, i.e., to its "failures," teaches us that what is most important about the phenomenological method is that it can neither be reduced to a first-person view nor arrive at a purely descriptive account of reality. (These are some of the themes guiding Gayle Salamon's essay featured in this issue.) Husserl himself seems to have come to the recognition that a phenomenological investigation cannot stop at static phenomenology, i.e., at a phenomenology that investigates the intentional structures of consciousness (e.g., temporality or noetic-noematic constitution). In fact, as Husserl suggests, static phenomenology serves as a leading clue to genetic phenomenology, which attempts to uncover the genesis of meaning and sense.

Unlike static phenomenology, genetic phenomenology is a phenomenology of *facticity*: the focus of its investigation are the types and typicalities that we experience in the lifeworld, and how these types or typicalities came/come to be. This is to say that genetic phenomenology seeks to make explicit the necessary structures that are constitutive of the institution of stylized persons, identities, etc. This is done via what Husserl calls the imaginative or eidetic method, a technique in which we imaginatively change or vary the different characteristics of a phenomenon that appears to us. Through doing this, Husserl argues, we can arrive at what is invariant, i.e., the eidetic structures of the phenomenon we study.

Through the distinction between static and genetic phenomenology, phenomenology reveals its own impossibility as a pure descriptive practice. In fact, we, as phenomenologists, can only perform the eidetic variation from within an intersubjective world. It is true that the goal of Husserl's eidetic variation is to remove the object of our analysis "from all factualness [so that it becomes] the pure '*eidos*'" (Husserl 1999, 70). However, the subject (the monad) who performs an eidetic variation has "a surrounding world, which is continuously 'existing for [them]'" (Husserl 1999, 68). This means that the monad's situatedness in an intersubjective world is crucial to genetic phenomenology. Intuiting essences via the eidetic reduction "depends on a freely and arbitrarily producible multiplicity of variants attaining coincidence, on an open infinity" (Husserl 1973, 342). But, we are only able to imaginatively vary a multiplicity of possibilities because they have been, prior to the eidetic analysis, given to us through our lived experience. That is, it is only though our bodily situatedness, our relation with others, and our cultural life-world that we can experience these possibilities as contingent, factual determinations of the objects that we are eidetically analyzing. Significantly, this means that the process by which we intuit an essence cannot be entirely abstracted from the particularities of concrete existence. Genetic phenomenology is inherently intersubjective: in performing an eidetic reduction, we cannot drop away and rise above the sedimented layers of our concrete life-world.

For us, the intersubjective and situated nature of phenomenology, in sum, the impossibility of a complete reduction, does not entail leaving behind phenomenology. Rather, it means that phenomenology carries with it a *responsibility*: phenomenology is, to quote Merleau-Ponty, "implicated in the movement [of Being] and does not view it from above" (1968, 90).

If we recognize this, i.e., the situatedness of genetic phenomenology, we realize that "phenomenology does not only describe essences, and in particular social essences, but participates in the ethical becoming of the social structures or essences that the phenomenologist describes" (Steinbock 1995, 14-15). Just as static phenomenology serves as a leading clue into genetic phenomenology, we suggest that genetic phenomenology —in both its failures and its insights—serves as a leading clue into a *critical phenomenology.* Critical phenomenology is thus continuous with the historical origins of phenomenology, but it is not *nascent* in Husserlian phenomenology. To make that claim would only reify a conception of phenomenology as allegiant to a Husserlian "foundation" which may not exist as a singular method. Critical phenomenology is defined by not taking for granted such a foundation. That said, a critical phenomenologist need not reject the Husserlian ideals of pure phenomenological description or a complete suspension of the natural attitude. Rather, for a defender of those ideals, critical phenomenology calls for a robust defense of these possibilities and thereby encourages debate on the proper scope and object of phenomenology and the methodological and political responsibilities of the phenomenologist. For those who believe that phenomenological description is never neutral and always situated or value-laden, critical phenomenology calls for a plausible alternative conception of the discipline. We hope that within this journal, through vigorous debate and a shared concern with the enabling conditions of phenomenology, such a conception may be formulated and found.

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We are happy to feature four invited submissions by Lisa Guenther, Kym Maclaren, Bonnie Mann, and Gayle Salamon, all of whom respond to the questions motivating our inaugural issue. Both Salamon and Maclaren offer a response to the question "What is critical phenomenology?" by exploring the productive relationship between critical theory and phenomenology. Salamon does this by tracing the history of the term critical phenomenology. Maclaren further explores the productive relationship between critical theory and phenomenology en route to her analysis of intimacy. Focusing on the phenomena of shame and long-term solitary confinement, Mann and Guenther take up that question by *performing* the work of critical phenomenology. Mann also offers suggestions regarding critical or, as she calls it, feminist phenomenology's relation to the tradition—both of classical phenomenology and feminist philosophy. Guenther shows how the work of critical phenomenology is already at play in the practices of resistance among prisoners in the Security Housing Unit of Pelican Bay State Prison in California.

Driving Salamon's article "What's Critical About Critical Phenomenology?" is the question "what does critical theory bring to phenomenological inquiry?" To answer this question, she traces the origin of the term "critical phenomenology" back to Donn Welton and Hugh Silverman's 1987 text, *Critical and Dialectical Phenomenology*. Here, classical phenomenology is contrasted with critical phenomenology, which Salamon describes as "rooted in the classical tradition at the same time as it somehow moved beyond those boundaries, in terms of either content or method or discipline" (8). In conversation with Merleau-Ponty, Salamon points to how phenomenology in fact must be a *double* reflection that critically examines not only various kinds of knowledge, but also itself as critical practice. Simultaneously challenging a view of phenomenology as "too

trapped inside first-person perspective to be able to offer any purchase on ethical or political struggles" and that of critical theory as too structurally focused, too 'high-altitude' … to be able to offer any insight into the intimate textures of lived experience," Salamon shows us how phenomenology, at its best, was always critical—just as good critical theory has always been attuned to or at least motivated by personal experience (11).

Maclaren's "Intimacy as Transgression and the Problem of Freedom" continues to reflect on the relation between critical theory and phenomenology in its relation to freedom. Problematically, she suggests, critical theory is geared toward a version of emancipation that upholds a neoliberal, Cartesian model of agency, where freedom means freedom *from* the various institutions which are understood to be external to the subject. Phenomenology, too, is directed toward the subject's freedom, but makes explicit that various institutions (both personal and socio-political) "transgress into our experience and constitute the very manner in which we perceive … the possibilities we find available … and the positions that we … assume" (19). Maclaren fleshes this insight out via a critical phenomenology of intimacy. In concrete intimacy, she argues, partners are co-intentionalities constituting a shared reality, which is sustained by mutual transgressions, and sustains in turn the genuine becoming of both partners. What this means is that each of the partners is, in a real way, responsible for the other. Neither is fully free to be themselves but experiences a freedom that is grounded on a dispossession of themselves through the other's transgressions.

Whereas Maclaren's paper focuses more on our interpersonal relations, each of which gives us access to a site of transgressions more primordial than even the most natural of institutions, Mann's "The Difference of Feminist Phenomenology: The Case of Shame" shifts critical phenomenology's focus to the material institutions that structure both our experiences and the phenomenological tradition itself. Refusing to see feminist phenomenology as a mere application of traditional, "reverent" phenomenology, Mann argues that the practice of feminist phenomenology changes the very meaning of phenomenology itself.
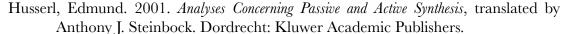
Drawing out the methodology of Simone de Beauvoir's phenomenology, Mann details phenomenology's feminist transformation. With Beauvoir, we come to understand the phenomenological *epoché* not as a complete bracketing of prejudices, but as a slow reorientation of our embodied consciousness that requires working through prejudices by actively taking up other perspectives. At the same time, phenomenology itself becomes an oscillating movement between the micro-level of intense concrete experiences and the macro-level of general experience. Mann argues that this movement brings us to "a consciousness burdened by material interests, experience shaped by situation, and "ontology entangled with ethical failure and political injustice" (57). Through the insightful analysis of shame that follows—in which Mann puts Beauvoir's critical, feminist phenomenology to work—Mann proposes two modalities of shame defined by different temporal structures. Whereas unbounded shame closes off the future and undoes the self, ubiquitous shame pervades the lives of women and promises the possibility of a future redemption while always threatening to collapse into unbounded shame.

Just as Mann thematizes feminist phenomenology as process of orientation or oscillation, in "Unmaking and Remaking the World in Long-Term Solitary Confinement," Guenther offers a vision of critical phenomenology as transformative prac-

tice. In her discussion of resistance practices among prisoners in the Security Housing Unit of Pelican Bay State Prison in California, Guenther analyses the "weaponized architecture of solitary confinement" that becomes an apparatus of torture by imposing isolation on inherently relational, sentient, and social beings. Drawing on Elaine Scarry, Guenther argues that this imposed isolation—insofar as "the world … is a web of relations whose meaning is grounded in praxis and in Being-with Others—is an "unmaking of the world." Through an improbable effort of communication through the concrete walls, the prisoners were able to force open a space of emerging solidarity and shape a sense of community, and an understanding of themselves as what Guenther calls a "prisoner class," which became a tool for political engagement and resistance. That is, "[t]he embodied social practice of speaking across both the material barriers of institutionalized racism is already a 'remaking of the world' and a form of resistive architecture" (84). In the midst of these conditions, prisoners have transformed spaces of isolation into spaces of resistance. Resistant transformative practices are, Guenther suggests, "the work of critical phenomenology" (80).

Through their phenomenological interrogations of social institutions, lived experiences, and phenomenology itself, these articles shed light not only on the critical potential of phenomenology, but also on phenomenology's demand for responsible critique. We hope that you, the reader, find in this inaugural issue resources for further thought and critique.

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WHAT'S CRITICAL ABOUT CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY?

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> "Philosophy is everywhere, even in the 'facts,'
> and it nowhere has a private realm
> which shelters it from life's contagion."
> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Signs*

> "The problem that I study in *Visible and Invisible*
> is the same as that of dialectics and Marxism.
> It is the problem of openness."
> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Unpublished Note[*]

Several decades ago, Donn Welton and Hugh Silverman published *Critical and Dialectical Phenomenology* (1987), a volume of collected papers from the annual meetings of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy in 1984 and 1985. The term "critical phenomenology" appears once in the book, and does not serve as the name of an altogether new kind of phenomenology so much as it offers adjectival modification of the old kind; Welton distinguishes between "classical" phenomenology, and phenomenology that is "more dialectical and critical" (xv).[1] Critical phenomenology, then, or at least "a more dialectical and critical phenomenology," names something that was being practiced at SPEP in the 1980s: a philosophy that understood itself to be rooted in the classical phenomenological tradition at the same time as it somehow moved beyond those boundaries in terms of content, method, or discipline.

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[*] I am grateful to David Morris for sharing this quotation and relating some of its attributional history. Morris cited it in his paper "Merleau-Ponty and Mexica Ontology: Time as Templacement," which he delivered at the 2017 Merleau-Ponty Circle in Albuquerque, NM. Renaud Barbaras transcribed many of Merleau-Ponty's notes from the period of time Merleau-Ponty was working on *The Visible and the Invisible*. Barbaras's student Franck Robert filled in and revised the transcription, which was an appendix to Barbaras's thesis. That thesis emerged as a book, *Phénoménologie et Ontologie*, but without the transcribed appendix. The version quoted here is based on a review and corrections of a selection of these notes by David Morris with the assistance of Juliette Corsy. The note is on p. 226 of Bibliothèque Nationale de France VIII.2 of Merleau-Ponty's notes located between two other unpublished notes dated 1959. It is also discussed by Mariana Larison in *L'Être en forme: Dialectique et phénoménologie dans la dernière philosophie de Merleau-Ponty* (2016, 50).

[1] Welton characterizes Thomas Busch's contribution to the volume as "dialectical and critical phenomenology," in which Busch describes Sartre's move away from the emphasis on "unfettered freedom" in *Being and Nothingness* toward an interest in "the problem of ambiguity and conditioned existence" (1987, xv) in *The Critique of Dialectical Reason*. However, he also uses the term to name the collective work of the volume itself. The full sentence reads: "In many respects Thomas Busch finds in Sartre that same turn from a classical to a more dialectical and critical phenomenology that is at least adumbrated by all the authors in this volume" (xv).

Other than that volume, there had been little that travels under the name of "critical phenomenology" within Continental philosophy until recently, with Lisa Guenther's *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives* in 2013 and Michael Marder's *Phenomena-Critique-Logos*: *the Project of Critical Phenomenology* in 2014.[2] In framing the project of critical phenomenology, Guenther defines it thusly:

> By critical phenomenology I mean a method that is rooted in first-person accounts of experience but also critical of classical phenomenology's claim that the first-person singular is absolutely prior to intersubjectivity and to the complex textures of social life. The critical edge of this approach emerges through an engagement with the work of Frantz Fanon, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Emmanuel Levinas [. . .] I have sought to develop a method of critical phenomenology that both continues the phenomenological tradition of taking first-person experience as the starting point for philosophical reflection and also resists the tendency of phenomenologists to privilege transcendental subjectivity over transcendental intersubjectivity. (2013, xiii, xv)

For Guenther, an emphasis on intersubjectivity is what makes phenomenology critical. She utilizes classical phenomenology's advocacy of a first-person perspective at the same time as she resists the kind of transcendental idealism that would fix subjectivity into an individual and atomized subject, a singular subject surrounded by a world that it has constituted. This is a common critique of phenomenology: that its methods are insufficient for describing the relation of self to world, despite having this as its explicit goal. Phenomenology risks becoming a method whereby the world is collapsed back into consciousness (the charge of solipsism frequently leveled against Husserl) or of articulating a relation between self and world in which the two are indistinguishable, with the effect that the world turns out also to be self (a frequent critique of Merleau-Ponty's work).[3] Some of Merleau-Ponty's own formulations can easily confirm such readings, such as his pronouncement in *Phenomenology of Perception* (2012) that "I am the absolute source" [*je suis la source absolue*] (xxii). He attempts there to describe a realignment of knowledge that might unseat the dominion of science and objective

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[2] The sole exception that I can find is Max Velmans's "Heterophenomenology versus Critical Phenomenology." Velmans is a psychologist who advances critical phenomenology as a philosophy of mind, contra Daniel Dennett, "in which first- and third-person accounts of the mind are treated as being complementary and mutually irreducible" (2007, 227). Guenther's project is more concerned with offering a critical phenomenology of the effects of solitary confinement, while Marder is reflecting on the category of phenomenology itself, which he understands to be necessarily critical in that it reflexively raises the question of its own meaning. Marder suggests that "critique is the name for the relation between phenomena and logos" (2014, 2) which is "not superadded to but rather is endemic to phenomenology" (10).

[3] See Merleau-Ponty's "The Philosopher and His Shadow," and the short, final chapter of *The Visible and the Invisible*, "Preobjective Being, The Solipsist World." Husserl's own references to solipsism and the "solipsistic reduction," particularly in the fifth Cartesian meditation, would seem to confirm such worries. David Carr, however, suggests that Husserl uses solipsism in an experimental way in order to acknowledge the other even though I have no access to his or her experience. See: Carr, "The 'Fifth Meditation' and Husserl's Cartesianism"; Irigaray's discussion of Merleau-Ponty's "labyrinthine solipsism" in "The Invisible of the Flesh" (1993, 157); Merleau-Ponty's own comments on the untenability of the phenomenology of the subject in *The Visible and the Invisible*, in which he moves away from the philosophy of consciousness that characterized *Phenomenology of Perception* toward a philosophy of Being.

perspective, but appears to replace it with a transcendental subject from whom everything emerges, inviting the charge, advanced by Levinas among others, of a subjectivism that cannot see otherness. Moving as it does between idealism and realism, Merleau-Ponty's work in the *Phenomenology* sought to find a way out of the snare of dualistic thinking in which so much of Western philosophy has found itself tangled. In his own assessment, he was not quite able to free himself from the dualism of subject/object relations in *Phenomenology of Perception*, and his late work tried to radically reconfigure that attempt.

Levinas was foremost among those who challenged Merleau-Ponty's philosophy on the grounds that it fails to engage alterity, that it is not responsive to the otherness of the other, that it advances a perceiving subject who in looking toward the world finds only reflections of itself. Scott Marratto has recently argued, contra Levinas's critique that otherness is subsumed into sameness within Merleau-Ponty's theorizations of vision, that Merleau-Ponty's accounts of expression and vision "establish, on the one hand, the possibility of encountering otherness, and on the other hand, the possibility of recognizing the genuine *alterity* of the other" (2017, 243; italics in original). There is an openness at the heart of being, in Merleau-Ponty's words, and that openness rests on a prior relation to alterity. In the preface to *Phenomenology of Perception,* Merleau-Ponty's characterizations of method are a call for philosophy to turn back on itself: a turning back in which it interrogates itself. Yet this turning is somehow not the same as reflective analysis. This turning back allows us to see the ways in which human beings are subjects "destined to the world," in Merleau-Ponty's words (2012, xxiv); the world and those who inhabit it are opaque to reflective analysis, transformed into a "problem" by the cogito, but are precisely that which is disclosed by the phenomenological method, which he describes as the means by which we can arrive to, rather than shut out, the world:

> Because we are through and through related to the world, the only way for us to catch sight of ourselves is by suspending this movement, by refusing to be complicit with it (or as Husserl often says, to see it *ohne mitzumachen* [without taking part]), or again, to put it out of play. This is not because we renounce the certainties of common sense and of the natural attitude—on the contrary, these are the constant theme of philosophy—but rather because, precisely as the presuppositions of every thought, they are "taken for granted" and they pass by unnoticed, and because we must abstain from them for a moment in order to awaken them and to make them appear. Perhaps the best formulation of the reduction is the one offered by Husserl's assistant Eugen Fink when he spoke of a "wonder" before the world. Reflection does not withdraw from the world toward the unity of consciousness as the foundation of the world; rather, it steps back in order to see transcendences spring forth and it loosens the intentional threads that connect us to the world in order to make them appear; it alone is conscious of the world because it reveals the world as strange and paradoxical. (xxvii)

Here, "reflection" is what lets us feel the grip our certainties and presuppositions have on our perception of the world, and when we notice but do not engage with those certain-

ties, the world itself is allowed to emerge around us. What is revealed by the reduction as Merleau-Ponty conceives it is not a knowledge of essences, not the revelation of transcendental structure. While phenomenology is concerned with both essences and transcendental structures, the true purpose of our engagement with them for Merleau-Ponty is not system-building but an instrumental way into the world in which we are already dissolved. What results is not a certainty, but a rupture, a making-strange of the world, one which "can teach us nothing except the unmotivated springing forth of the world" (xxvii). The world does not dissipate or disappear as the intentional threads that bind us to it slacken, rather, we feel it newly "springing forth" as our constituting consciousness is replaced with receptive being. Our stance of certainty is transformed into one of wonder, and our relation to the world is one of *felt openness*.[4] Rupture describes our relation to the world once our structures of knowing are held in abeyance, and also our relation to our habits of perception which are similarly dis-oriented once we step back from the natural attitude.

Very soon after warning us about the dangers of reflective analysis and his vow to eschew explanation, Merleau-Ponty makes this move at the end of the preface, fundamentally recasting philosophy as reflective and reflexive: "It will be necessary that philosophy direct toward itself the very same interrogation that it directs toward all forms of knowledge. It will thus be indefinitely doubled; it will be, as Husserl says, an infinite dialogue or meditation" (2012, xxxv). Thus the project of phenomenology is an open and unfinished one, whose goal is also an opening. "Man" is not at the center of the world like the spadix in the lily. He is instead inevitably open to it because he is of a piece with it, comprised of it, and the value of the reduction is that it might allow him to see the world in its springing forth, not merely in its conformation with his knowledge of it. This turning-back is the opposite of mastery, and it brings not verification but strangeness. The phenomenologist does not find what she was already seeking. She feels herself folded into the undifferentiated presence of the world once she suddenly cannot recognize it.

In "The Masked Philosopher," Foucault speaks of curiosity as a modality of critical thought, a modality that in its operation bears a startling resemblance to the phenomenological reduction. Through curiosity, critical thought "evokes the care one takes for what exists and what might exist" (Foucault, quoted in Rabinow 1997, xxi). With this invocation of care, Foucault reminds us of the stakes of critique, and that power is never reducible nor intimately proximate to the individual. He continues in his description of all that is called up by curiosity: "a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it; a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off our familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way" (xxi). Foucault's curiosity is here twin to Eugen Fink's "wonder" before the world, a faculty that when we are able to exercise it, when we engage our "determination" to see the world anew, renders that which surrounds us as suddenly strange and odd.

The caricature of phenomenology as a philosophy that is too subjective and too trapped inside first-person perspective to be able to offer any purchase on ethical or political struggles sees its mirror opposite in the caricature of critical theory as too structurally focused, too "high-altitude," to borrow from Merleau-Ponty, to be able to offer any insight into the intimate textures of lived experience. But as I hope to at least gesture

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[4] See also Eugen Fink's comments on wonder in "The Problem of Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology." See Bruzina, *Edmund Husserl and Eugen Fink* (2004, 348).

toward here, neither of these formulations is sufficiently attentive to either methodology. The world is always at stake in my phenomenological perceptions. When I reach, it is into the world and toward alterity that I am reaching. And critical theory's anchor in structural considerations can be motivated by the most urgently personal of concerns.

"Untimeliness and Punctuality" (2005) is an essay by Wendy Brown in which she considers critical theory as "a hope rather than a luxury in dark times" (5). She reminds us that the first gesture of critique is not dismissal or a turning away but a moving closer with attention, care, curiosity. It can also have the effect of disorienting us, if exactly by showing us how much is at stake in our considerations, including ourselves. But disorientation is not its primary result. Critical theory, Brown says, is necessarily attuned to its times and engaged with politics, but it cannot be merely negation. It is "bound not only to speak to the times but also to affirm them…critical theory focused on political life is not negation, destruction, or nihilism; rather, critical theory aims to render crisis into knowledge, and to orient us in the darkness. Critique that does not affirm life, affirm value, and above all affirm possibilities in the present and the future, while certainly possible, is not making a bid for political power and hence cannot be understood as political" (15).[5] Thus, even in its most political moments, critique is necessarily a project of affirmation and even of "reclamation," in Brown's words. It is a setting-right of the wrongs perpetrated by failures of justice, but a setting-right that may proceed in ways that are untimely, a cycle of rupture and repair whose temporality is unsettled by the force of critique.

Returning to the question that centrally concerns this paper: when asking what a critical phenomenology is, we might maintain that it reflects on the structural conditions of its own emergence, and in this it is following an imperative that is both critical in its reflexivity and phenomenological in its taking-up of the imperative to describe what it sees in order to see it anew. In this, what is critical about critical phenomenology turns out to have been there all along.

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A familiar trope in literary studies today is the characterization of critique as a way of thinking whose time has passed, and critical theory as a paranoid style of reading that has exhausted itself. In *The Limits of Critique* (2005), Rita Felski, for instance, understands critique as synonymous with suspicion, paranoia, and negation, and has asserted that after decades of critique, we are living in a postcritical age, one in which criticism has spent itself, and new modes of reading must be found. The most paradoxical thing about this way of describing critique—and Felski's book here joins Eve Sedgwick's writing in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (2003) on paranoid and reparative reading—is that even as it makes a strident and even moral call for a different kind of reading practice, it itself proceeds by assessing its object and finding it suspicious, bankrupt, duplicitous. That is: when it grounds its demand for the abandonment of critique in a diagnosis of critique as suspicious, paranoid, skeptical, and asymmetrical, such a work shows itself to be more "critical" than the critical theory it lampoons. What seems to elude the practitioners of these attacks on critique is that these attacks are comprised of nothing other than criticism, and criticism of a very particular kind, one well-captured by Penelope Deutscher's observation of "that interesting gesture of wanting what can't be supplied

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[5] I thank A.B. Huber for reminding me of this passage.

from a theory understood as having failed to provide it" (2017, 6). But not all critiques of critique are quite so cartoonish. Indeed, not all calls for new reading practices within literary studies understand these practices to be opposed to critique; some proponents of "surface reading," for instance, understand such modes of reading to themselves be forms of critical practice, ones that proceed by way of description.[6]

Moving to dismiss critique on the grounds that it has outlived its usefulness requires one to overlook a vast swath of current work in critical theory engaged with questions of violence, racial injustice, gender inequality, and a host of other urgent political issues.[7] Critical theory, in the broadest sense, offers a supplement to phenomenology in particular and to philosophy in general through its engagement with matters such as these, which philosophy has too often dismissed as to the side of "real" philosophical concerns. What future promise might be offered by the intertwining of these two apparently "outmoded" styles of thought, phenomenology and critique? We can have a better sense of an answer if we return to the question of what critique can do, a question that Judith Butler has repeatedly taken up.

Butler asks "whether a passage through a transcendental form of argumentation can lead to political and social consequence" when thinking about critique, noting its origin in Kant and the transformations it undergoes when taken up by Foucault to think about power, knowledge, and the subject (2009, 776). Butler reminds us that for Kant, critique is a way of calling into question the self-legitimation of philosophy, and that critique operates with two questions that light the way toward inquiry: *in what way* and *by what right*? Through Kant and Foucault, she defines critique as "the operation that seeks to understand how delimited conditions form the basis for the legitimate use of reason in order to determine what can be known, what must be done, and what may be hoped— the three aims of critique as Kant formulated them" (787). Critique, for Foucault, is ultimately indistinguishable from the production of the self. Here we would seem to be at a far distance indeed from the comparatively more pedestrian aims of phenomenological description. And yet, beneath the determination of delimited conditions, beyond the epistemological limit-seeking often understood to comprise critique, Butler finds at its heart an openness: "The notion of critique is bound up with what we still call open inquiry, even though we understand that what makes an inquiry open is something that circumscribes and binds the inquiry and so determines a limit to its operation" (776).

Utilizing Merleau-Pontian phenomenology and critique together is not without its dangers. There are plenty of points at which the two methods appear as divergent, if not incompossible, and there may be some perversity on insisting on the possibility of their pairing. When, in the preface of the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty speaks of truth and error, he does so with the cheerful confidence that in our experience of the world, we are *already* apprehending truth. "We are in the truth," he writes, "and evidentness is 'the experience of truth'" (2012, xxx). When we are asking after the nature of our perceptions, or the essence of perception itself, we are not contending that this or that perception is true, "but rather that perception is defined as our access to the

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[6] See Stephen Best and Sharon Marcus, "Surface Reading" (2009); Love, "Close but not Deep: Descriptive Ethics and the Literary Turn" (2010) and "Close Reading and Thin Description" (2013); and Best, Marcus, and Love, "Building a Better Description" (2016).

[7] Exemplary of the abundance of such work within contemporary critical theory is Amy Allen's series "New Directions in Critical Theory" with Columbia University Press and the series "Reinventing Critical Theory," edited by Gabriel Rockhill and Yannik Thiem with Rowman and Littlefield.

truth" (xxx). This smacks of the presentism of which phenomenology is often accused, and would seem to orient phenomenology in opposition to critique, which might ask how that truth came to be true in the first place, what structures of power undergird and what forms of knowledge secure its legitimation. Is Merleau-Ponty advocating a form of naiveté in which anything I perceive must be true? Does not this kind of epistemological privilege assume a subject that is not being imperiled or crushed by the "truth" that he or she stands before? These are fair questions, and ones that may not be fully satisfied with the resources that classical phenomenology has to offer.

Looking at critique with careful eyes, however, leads us to three fundamentally significant resonances with the critical and phenomenological enterprises. First is the suggestion that critique, like phenomenology, is an attempt to move beyond a kind of dualism, a "move beyond the outside-inside alternative" (Foucault 1997, 315) in order to push into "the frontiers" of what is known. Second is the insistence that what at first appears to be a purely negative endeavor, a finding of limit, is incomplete if, upon finding that limit, it comes to a stop. Just as the reduction is not a means to banish or negate the world, but rather the condition through which it can more fully emerge, critique is not a cataloguing of the limitations of the present situation, as Wendy Brown reminds us. "We are not talking about a gesture of rejection," Foucault states firmly, in a refutation of those characterizations of critique that view it as merely negation, unproductive, sterile (315). The critique that Foucault calls for transforms its questions into a positive mode. As he describes it:

> [I]f the Kantian question was that of knowing [*savoir*] what limits knowledge [*connaissance*] must renounce exceeding, it seems to me that the critical question today must be turned back into a positive one: In what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory, what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent, and the product of arbitrary constraints? The point, in brief, is to transform the critique conducted in the form of necessary limitation into a practical critique that takes the form of a possible crossing-over [*franchissement*]. (315)

And it is in that crossing-over, that gesture of opening, where the phenomenological and critical projects find what is arguably their strongest resonance. Surprisingly enough, for critique—just as for phenomenology—that opening is revealed through the work of description. To read critique as an unmasking, or the paranoid excavation of what is "really" going on behind superficial appearances, is to altogether mistake the relation between the apparent and the real. As Foucault puts it: "the role of philosophy is not to discover what is hidden, but to make visible precisely what is visible, that is to say, to make evident what is so close, so immediate, so intimately linked to us, that because of that we do not perceive it. Whereas the role of science is to reveal what we do not see, the role of philosophy is to let us see what we see" (Foucault, quoted in Davidson 1997, 2).[8] For all Foucault's resistance to phenomenology, the centrality of this fundamental phenomenological insight to his own method is manifest and significant.

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[8] Davidson cites Foucault's "La Philosophie analytique de la politique," part of his untranslated *Dits et écrits* (1978). Davidson hears in this passage a "tone reminiscent of Wittgenstein, but without mentioning his name" (1997, 2); I myself, perhaps not unsurprisingly, hear an echo of Merleau-Ponty's language in this passage.

Foucault's view of truth, like Merleau-Ponty's, is resolutely non-idealist. When he states that "[truth is a thing of this world," he is, like Merleau-Ponty, insisting that truth is not hidden (Foucault 1980, 131). But truth for Foucault cannot be thought without attending to the constraints that produce it. That truth is of this world means that it is not ideal or transcendental, but also, crucially, that it is always saturated with power relations: "Truth isn't outside power, or lacking in power" (131). It is here that the joining of the critical and the phenomenological might be most urgent: if phenomenology offers us unparalleled means to describe what we see with utmost precision, to illuminate what is true, critique insists that we also attend to the power that is always conditioning that truth.

Notwithstanding the parsing of these categories, what can we say about works that might be counted as critical phenomenology, or that name themselves thusly? How might a newly enlivened kind of scholarship emerge from these two forms of thinking, both of which have been dismissed as outmoded or irrelevant? Guenther, you will recall, names Fanon, Merleau-Ponty, and Levinas as her primary interlocutors. She even dubs them as "postphenomenologists," as a way of naming their critical potential, despite the fact that they all reside uncontroversially within the phenomenological tradition, thus ensuring that the relationship between phenomenology and critical phenomenology is not one of inside and outside, but perhaps of crossing over, where each lends its insights to the other. Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) uses the spatial orientations of phenomenology to think about queerness, and also uses queer reading practices to reexamine phenomenology's own presuppositions. Or we might think of Johanna Oksala's (2016) recent work, in which she combines phenomenology and Foucauldian critical theory to rethink the relations among feminism, ontology, and relations of power. Or, still more expansively, the phenomenology of listening offered by Jill Stauffer's *Ethical Loneliness: The Injustice of Not Being Heard* (2015), in which she uses Levinas to teach us to re-hear the testimony of survivors of violence and traumatic injustice. How can we use phenomenology to think about the urgent dilemmas of our present moment, including those subjects that phenomenology itself failed to adequately address? To my mind, Amy Allen's book *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (2016) is a model of theoretical work that uses the conceptual tools and frameworks within critical theory to challenge its own complicity in perpetuating unjust structures of power and inequality.[9] And Allen, too, invokes the power of openness, using it to name a kind of epistemic humility that is required for the decolonization of critical theory. She calls for an open-ended dialogue with alterity within critical theory and proposes that "such an openness and open-endedness require what Chakrabarty characterizes as an openness 'to the possibility of our thought systems … being rendered finite by the presence of the other'" (210). The new work currently emerging in phenomenology offers every reason to hope that it, too, might be on the cusp of its own decolonization and reflexive self-consideration, and that it might yet be capacious enough to simultaneously encompass the revelation of its limitations as well as the expansion of its reach.

Describing the reaction of readers encountering phenomenology for the first time, Merleau-Ponty says that many philosophers upon encountering it did not exactly have the experience of coming up on a new philosophy, but rather of finding a thing for

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[9] See in particular Amy Allen's discussion of Adorno, Foucault, and the postcolonial in *The End of Progress* (2016, 198-203).

which they had long been waiting (2012, xxi). It is an essential rather than an accidental feature of phenomenology that it constantly renews itself in a deliberately suspended state between a present, intimate expression and the open field in which all of its not-yet-arrived and unpredictable iterations will emerge, inexhaustibly. If it is true that, as Merleau-Ponty said, "phenomenology has remained for so long in a nascent state, as a problem and as a promise," then surely this is no less true presently for critical phenomenology (xxi). If phenomenology is still a problem and a promise, this sets before the budding critical phenomenologist a task less taxonomical than speculative, that in viewing the world and describing it with all possible precision, we might see the world and all the objects and others within it open, and reveal themselves to be more varied and more mysterious than our imaginations could have conjured, or our schemas of knowledge contain. And we can reflexively consider our own philosophical legacies, including their omissions and their missteps, not to dismiss those older forms of thinking and ways of understanding but to constantly renew them and expand their capacities.

Openness, Merleau-Ponty says, is the problem he was immersed in when working on *The Visible and the Invisible* (1968). It is the problem that would occupy him through the writing of that unfinished work, the problem that was shared with dialectics and Marxism. The problem and the promise of openness may still be the source from which phenomenology's richest possibilities spring forth, even in these dark times.

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INTIMACY AS TRANSGRESSION AND THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM

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> "Could one conceive of a love that would not be an encroachment [*empiètement*] on the freedom of the other? . . . There is a paradox in accepting being loved by a person without wanting to have any influence on her freedom. . . . To consent to love or be loved is to consent also to influence someone else, to decide to a certain extent on behalf of the other."
> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Primacy of Perception*[*]

> "The revolution begins at home."
> Cherríe Moraga & Gloria Anzaldúa,
> *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*

Strange it might seem to write about intimacy in the context of critical phenomenology—especially when, as is the case here, no particular analysis will be given of the economic, political, or legal institutions that shape our intimacy, or of the ways in which sexist, heterosexist, racist or colonialist norms might operate within intimate relationships. After all, as a contribution to critical theory, broadly construed, should a critical phenomenology not be aiming at the emancipation of humans from systems of oppression and domination through critical reflection upon the real effects of society's institutions and practices?[1] And is intimacy not something that is affected by these greater systemic forces of oppression, without being in itself an institution or practice that strips us of freedom? Feminists have long called upon us to recognize that "the personal is political," but the implication seems generally to be that, if we can just free our intimate relations and home life from the oppressive norms and unjust institutions that currently structure them, we will secure a realm of mutual freedom that can serve as a refuge from, or even a site of resistance to, society and its oppressive forces.[2] It ought not to be intimacy that we interrogate, on this view, but the systemic forces that fetter it.

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[*] I have altered the translation of this passage slightly, substituting "accepting being loved by someone" for "accepting love from someone" to translate "*accepter d'être aimé de quelqu'un*."

[1] Max Horkheimer characterizes the goal of the Frankfurt School's critical theory as "[hu]man's emancipation" from situations of domination and oppression (1972, 246). This goal, he argues, substantially differentiates critical theory from theory as understood by Descartes and the scientific-philosophical tradition that is inspired by him.

[2] This phrase is sometimes attributed to Carol Hanisch, on the basis of her essay entitled "The Personal is Political." But Hanisch claims on her website (http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html) that she did not give the essay this title, and that it may have been the editors of the book it was in: Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt's *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation* (1970). In any case, the idea behind this phrase has circulated far and wide in the field of feminist thought and activism, since before this publication as well as after it.

My intention, however, is to challenge this vision of intimacy, and to argue that, especially in our intimate relations, we are always inevitably involved in imposing what I will call a form of "unfreedom" upon our intimate others. I am not concerned, then, with systems of oppression that can be transformed and eradicated; I am interested, rather, in a form of "unfreedom" that enables all oppression, and which would remain even if we were able to free ourselves from systemic forms of oppression. My project is nonetheless one aimed at producing greater freedom, agency and becoming for individuals. But this greater freedom will come not through emancipation, or the releasing of an individual freedom (or an intimate relationship of mutual freedom) from its fetters. It will come rather through owning up to the unfreedom that we inevitably impose upon our intimate others, and learning, precisely through an acknowledgment of that inevitable imposition of unfreedom, how to care for others, ourselves and our relationships in ways that ultimately promote, rather than hinder, others' freedom. It is this acknowledgment and learning that will enable the cultivation, within intimate relationships, of forms of agency that can stand up to and transform systems of oppression.

At the root of this challenge to our understanding of intimacy is a challenge to the idea that critical theory is concerned with emancipation—at least insofar as emancipation implies a neoliberal, Cartesian model of agency. Judith Butler describes "an emancipatory model of agency":

> . . . according to [this] view of agency, a subject is endowed with a will, a freedom, an intentionality . . . [where] 'freedom' and 'the will' are treated as universal resources to which all humans qua humans have access. The self who is composed of such faculties or capacities is thus thwarted by relations of power which are considered external to the subject herself. (Benhabib et al. 1995, 136)

On this account, the subject is free, emancipated, when her actions and thoughts are "the consequence of her 'own will' rather than of custom, tradition, or social coercion" (Mahmood 2011, 11).[3] Against this view of the subject, and the corresponding understanding of emancipation, critical phenomenology offers an alternative. Phenomenology takes note of the way in which institutions, practices, and other workings of power do not merely constrain us from the outside, but more profoundly, transgress into our experience and constitute the very manner in which we perceive the world and ourselves, the possibilities that we find available or not within our situation, and the positions that we feel ourselves legitimately able to assume.[4] If, however, one's ex-

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[3] This is Saba Mahmood's characterization of the neoliberal vision of the free subject. Mahmood's book, *Politics of Piety: the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2011), argues that, for all the good that feminist critiques have done—and they have done great good—some nonetheless fail to adequately understand the agency and experience of women committed to Islam because they are operating with neoliberal assumptions about the nature of freedom and agency (see, for instance, 13-14), or (as in Butler's case) because they operate with a binary logic of subordination versus subversion, which supposes that freedom is realized only in the subversion of social norms. In contrast, Mahmood argues that we need to conceptualize agency "not simply as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of subordination create and enable" (18; italics in original). This conception of agency is aligned with the notion of freedom achieved through unfreedom that I am proposing in this essay.
[4] Frantz Fanon (1967) and Iris Marion Young (1990) offer paradigmatic examples of this, showing, respectively, how racism and sexism come to configure racialized and feminized subjects' experiences of themselves and what is possible.

perience is already infiltrated and configured by the human attitudes, practices, institutions, and artifacts that surround us, then freedom cannot lie in an agency set apart from social workings of power, and resistant to them; freedom must always be developed in and through an agency that is already transgressed by and established within these relations of power; freedom must always develop from within what we might call "unfreedom," and by virtue of it.[5] What distinguishes empowering or emancipating situations from oppressive ones, then, is not the presence or absence of transgressive normative social forces; it is rather the particular character of these transgressive forces. Some transgressions and configurations of experience—some forms of "unfreedom"—will tend to promote freedom; others will tend to hinder it.

In this essay, I propose to focus on one particular, but fundamental, site of transgression and unfreedom: interpersonal relations. Though formal institutions, informal practices, discourses, and even architecture can encroach upon and configure our experiences, the power they have to do this has its origins, I suggest, in our intersubjectivity. The first aim of this paper is thus to make the case that intersubjectivity is inherently transgressive, that one's experience is inevitably infiltrated and informed by other people's behaviors and attitudes. This inevitable encroachment of one person's perspective upon another's—whether those people be strangers to one another, or intimates—I call "ontological intimacy." Others reach into our experience, so that we are influenced by them whether we like it or not. Most others do not have as deep or thoroughgoing an effect on our experience, however, as intimate others do. The second task of this essay is thus to consider what distinguishes concrete, lived forms of intimacy from the "ontological intimacy" that I claim is always present between people, and to explore the responsibilities that intimates have to each other, precisely because we are always, inevitably transgressing upon each other's experience and, as Merleau-Ponty asserts in the epigraph above, deciding to a certain extent on behalf of each other. How might we assume responsibility for the unfreedom we inflict upon others: the ways we shape their agency? How might we engage in these transgressions in ways that promote, rather than hinder, the development of freedom and greater agency? Answering these questions will remind us that the problem of promoting agency and freedom is addressed not only by critically analyzing the public institutions, practices and discourses that shape us, but also by critical insight into and transformation of our most private and intimate relationships. The revolution, as Moraga and Anzaldúa have said, begins at home.

I.
OUR ONTOLOGICAL INTIMACY WITH OTHER PERSONS: TRANSGRESSION AS COEXISTENCE AND DIVERGENCE

Our Cartesian heritage inclines us to think of intimacy in terms of certain beliefs and feelings that one harbors about another person: one feels oneself intimate with another when one believes one knows and is known by the other, or feels together with the other

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[5] The transgression of others' attitudes into our own is essentially what Martin Heidegger is claiming when he speaks, in chapter 4 of *Being and Time*, of the "they" (and claims that authentic being-one's-self is "an existentiell modification of the they"—i.e., that one never leaves behind others' transgression into and configuration of one's perspective) (1962, 168). In his essays "Building, Dwelling, Thinking" (1993a) and "The Question Concerning Technology" (1993b), he also makes cases for how the built environment and modern technology configure our experience.

person and believes that the other feels the same way.[6] Ontologically, these two persons are conceived, in the Cartesian tradition, as essentially separate. There is no direct encounter between them; each is given as an object of consciousness for the other, and thus each consciousness encounters not the other directly, but merely her own representation of that other. The experience of intimacy, we must conclude, lies not in actually *being with* an other, but rather in our representations of her (and of her representations of us). The other is, in other words, kept fundamentally at a distance from us by the interposition—between us—of representations, interpretations, or judgments about the nature of our relations. On the Cartesian account, real, ontological intimacy with another person is impossible; it is only our own judgments and feelings that are intimately present to us.

Against such a Cartesian account, Merleau-Ponty offers a vision of intersubjectivity wherein there is genuine contact between persons. Here, the other is not first and foremost represented by us, but touches us, moves us, inhabits, and is inhabited by us.[7] It is true that, insofar as we have the other as an object, we do interpret the other in our own terms, and, like representations, these interpretations will typically involve some degree of distortion. But, others are not given to us first and foremost as objects: they are rather present more fundamentally as perspectives that sweep us up and orient us towards the world—as what Merleau-Ponty calls "coexistences."[8] Moreover, even our objectifying interpretations are grounded in lived interpretations that are not effected primarily within our own private consciousnesses, as re-presentations therein of someone whose reality lies outside of our consciousness, but are rather enacted in our interactions with others.[9] And those enacted interpretations are not formed unilaterally but are worked out in embodied dialogue with the other, motivated by the ways in which those others are always already at work in pre-reflectively shaping our most basic unreflective experience of the world, and consolidated only insofar as the other assumes

[6] See, for instance, Robert Sternberg's characterization of intimacy as "feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness … It thus includes those feelings that give rise, essentially, to the experience of warmth in a loving relationship" (2006, 185). Such intimacy, he claims, originates in self-disclosure, for intimacy requires "break[ing] down the walls that separate one person from another" (1998, 8). The intimate connection between people is therein viewed as being formed through verbal communication, which conveys private experiences linguistically from one separate individual to another, and produces certain intimate feelings and beliefs therein. For the Cartesian account of the subject that arguably underlies this view, see Descartes 1993, Meditations I-III in *Meditations on First Philosophy*; however, my interest is less in a scholarly assessment of Descartes' own thought, which is nuanced, than with the less nuanced Cartesian assumptions that have come to characterize much of our contemporary philosophical, psychological, and common sense accounts of the self, and what it is to know.

[7] Merleau-Ponty compares his own account to the Cartesian account in *Phenomenology of Perception*: "these two [consciousnesses] are not *cogitationes* enclosed into their immanence, but beings who are transcended by their world and who, consequently can surely be transcended by each other…[in such a way that their perspectives] slip into each other and are gathered together… in a single world in which we all participate as anonymous subjects of perception" (2012, 369/410–411). Henceforth, the 2012 English translation pagination will be followed by (unless otherwise noted) the French pagination.

[8] Though Merleau-Ponty refers often to this coexistence, he elaborates it most thematically in the chapter "Others and the Human World" in the *Phenomenology of Perception*, and in the essay "the Child's Relations with Others." The latter starts with a reflection on how children's perceptions are shaped by their affective relations with their parents, and it proceeds to investigate how the capacity for children to experience both themselves as objects and their parents as objects develops only slowly.

[9] The language of "representation" is largely alien to phenomenology, because the aim is to challenge the notion of a separate inner subjectivity, and to call attention to the primacy of our being in the world, our actual, interpretive and understanding interaction with others. Nonetheless, there is a sense in which representations are still at play: when we step out of an interaction with another person, and think about them, talk about them with another, or gossip about them, we are arguably dealing with our own re-presentations of them (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 378/419).

and confirms the lived interpretation we offer them; they are co-created.[10] Thus, we do not, according to Merleau-Ponty, simply find others at the end of our gazes, as objects of our consciousness. We also, more fundamentally, co-inhabit others' perspectives: we see them, ourselves, and the world through their ways of being towards the world. Or, to say what amounts to the same thing: they are already at work within our ways of being in the world. As Heidegger puts it: we are *Mitsein*, or *being-with* others.[11]

In part, this being-with and mutual inhabitation shows up in the phenomenon of culture or "the social." As Merleau-Ponty says, culture is not an object for us; it is rather "the permanent field" of our existence—or what "we inseparably bear along with us prior to every objectification" (2012, 379/420). To be born in the contemporary age, for instance, is already to live our relation to others and our political state, to knowledge and science, to virtue and honor, to self-actualization, very differently than the ancients did. It is not that the child of the contemporary age thinks or represents these things differently. Even before she can think or objectify them, even before she forms her own interpretations of them, she is informed by the contemporary framework, inhabited by contemporary assumptions, attuned by contemporary social practices in ways that give a certain direction or *sens* to her experience and configure her world in contemporary rather than ancient terms.[12]

But it is not only, or even most basically, in the public realm that we are swept up into this being-with and a mutual inhabitation of perspectives. It is true that assumptions and attunements about who we are and how we ought to live are communicated in part by social institutions, practices, and discourses in the contexts in which we live. The rules, policies and norms into which I am disciplined carry with them, in other words, visions of what it is to be a subject, and my proper relation to self, others, work, knowledge, and so on. But these rules that we live by are themselves communicated to me, for the most part and most powerfully, not by explicit assertions but by the bodily behaviors and embodied attitudes of others:[13]

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[10] As Merleau-Ponty argues, we are able to objectify each other, and withdraw into solipsism and our own personal interpretations or representations of each other, only on the ground of a pre-existing communication with the other. We are fundamentally in contact with, in communication with, others (Merleau-Ponty 2012, 378/419). See also "The Philosopher and his Shadow": "We would not overwhelm them with our importunate comments, we would not stingily reduce them to what is objectively certified of them, if they were not there for us to begin with. Not to be sure with the frontal evidence of a thing, but installed athwart our thought" (1964c, 159). This being with others, this communication, this installation of the other within us, is conceived by Merleau-Ponty not as the result of a linguistic conveying of information about our private mental lives, but rather as "coexistence" or as being drawn in embodied ways into shared perspectives.

[11] See Heidegger, *Being and Time*, especially §§ 25–27.

[12] Merleau-Ponty uses the French term *sens* to communicate a kind of sense or meaning [*sens*] that is not conceptual but unreflectively experienced, and which evokes a direction [*sens*] of interpretation, rather than a fully determinate, unambiguous, or finished meaning. For the idea that our culture is "lived concretely" rather than being an object of our attention (2012, 420/379–80). This is not to say, however, that the ancient worlds are inaccessible to us. As Merleau-Ponty notes, in this same passage, these ancient worlds are "marked on the borders of my own history . . . [and I] find the fundamental structures of history within my own life" which is why historical knowledge is possible.

[13] Merleau-Ponty also suggests that assumptions and attunements are communicated by cultural artifacts and our built environments (2012, 370/411–412). These artifacts and environments solicit us to take them up in certain ways and foreclose other ways of acting—and they thereby draw us into certain prejudices about what matters and how to behave, while also attuning us to certain issues and occluding others. Architect-philosopher Erik Rietveld and Ludger Van Dijk also explore these ideas (Van Dijk and Rietveld, 2017).

> My gaze falls upon a living body performing an action and the objects that surround it immediately receive a new layer of signification. . . . A vortex forms around the perceived body into which my world is drawn and, so to speak, sucked in. . . . The other body is . . . the place of a certain elaboration and somehow a certain "view" of the world. (2012, 369/411)

This other as a view of the world into which I am "sucked" is not, then, an object of my perception so much as a self-effacing intentionality that turns me towards the world and objects in it. An example given by psychiatrist R.D. Laing illustrates this vividly: a parent responds with revulsion and disgust at the worm that her young child shows her (Laing 1971, 102–104). The child's initial orientation in first showing the worm was one of pride and excitement at his discovery. But by virtue of his mother's response he is re-oriented towards the dirtiness of the worm and his own shameful dirtiness. Indeed, through her response, a whole new dimension of reality—a new sense of what to aspire to, a new matrix for making sense of things—is opened up. Where the child had assumed that exploration and discovery were valuable, his mother announces—not so much through what she says as through the focus enacted in those words, and through her gestural recoil—that it is hygiene that really matters. "Clean = good; dirty = bad" (Laing 1990, 104). Here, the stance that "to be good, acceptable, loved, one must be clean" is not noted as an object; it operates rather as an intentionality or directionality that sweeps the child's experience up and carries it along with it towards relevant realities within the world. The parent's stance transgresses into the child's and attunes him in a certain way towards the world of dirtiness and cleanliness. In Merleau-Ponty's words:

> Everything happens as if the other person's intention inhabited my body, or as if my intentions inhabited his body. The gesture I witness sketches out the first signs of an intentional object. This object becomes present and is fully understood when the powers of my body adjust to it and fit over it. The gesture is in front of me like a question, it indicates to me specific . . . points in the world and invites me to join it there. Communication is accomplished when my behavior finds in this pathway its own pathway. I confirm the other person, and the other person confirms me. (191/225)

Through this primordial communication (this mutual inhabitation and confirmation at the behavioral level) what is an object to us is not the other nor the matrix of meaning into which she draws us, but only the things that are put into relief by her orientation.

Before the other herself is an object, then, the other is a co-intentionality: a coexistence towards the world. She is, we might say, a medium for the world: it is through co-inhabiting her directedness towards the world that we establish, with her, the world as a shared reality.

Now, in the particular example that we have given, we can see what could be called a "colonization" of the child's experience by his mother's way of perceiving: her concerns with cleanliness eclipse and in some sense usurp his initial experience of the pride and excitement of discovery. Or, we might say, the child's experience is assimilated into the mother's, and transfigured in its meaning for him. This transgression of one perspective into the other stands in stark contrast with the mental isolation and freedom

assumed by our Cartesian heritage. What we have just described is one person (the child) coming to see with (or according to) the other (the parent). On the Cartesian view, there can be no such seeing with. For the Cartesian, we are locked within our own ways of making sense of the world; we are, as Merleau-Ponty describes it, two "*cogitationes* enclosed into their [respective] immanence" (2012, 410–411/369). We encounter the other's linguistic and bodily behavior only ever as an object in our world, and, as a result, the meaning that behavior has for us can only ever be a result of our own attribution of meaning. What the other intends in her behavior or communication is, for the Cartesian, something to which we do not have access; stuck within our own system of meanings and interpretations, we are also stuck merely making our own sense of the other, irrespective of the sense they intend. Correlatively, then, we always leave the other "free" to think what she will think; and we impede upon her freedom only externally, by virtue of the obstacles we present to her own free decisions. In contrast with this Cartesian understanding of our ontological relations with others, our example of the parent's colonization of her child's way of seeing asserts that we do transgress into and transfigure others' experiences, never leaving them entirely "free" to make their own sense of the world. There is an inevitable violation by us of others' perspectives: a determining and transforming of the meaning of their experience. As we will see, however, this "unfreedom" is not simply opposed to freedom.

Such transgression might seem, at first sight, a negative and constraining phenomenon. Indeed, in the case of the little boy's re-attunement to matters of hygiene, one could argue that it is constraining, for it disconfirms and threatens to shut down his interest in exploration and discovery—interests which are essential to growth and becoming. But, one person's "usurpation" of another's sense-making can also bring benefits and liberations. This is made evident in the phenomenon of learning, as Merleau-Ponty understands it: transgression of one person's experience by another's is a condition of learning. Were it the case that we only ever made sense of the other's gestures and expressions in terms of our own resources, we would never learn anything truly transformative; we would remain imprisoned within our own basic, subjective terms of reference. But in fact we do learn from others. To read a great book, to hear an insightful speech, even to witness a wise teacher or parent in action is to be taken beyond our current sense-making capacities, and drawn into new relations to the world and to ourselves (see, for example, 2012, 184–185/218–219 and 188/222–223). We are carried, through these others' bodily and linguistic expressions, into new realizations—which is to say, into new ways of finding the world configured and correspondingly into a recognition of new dimensions of reality heretofore unknown to us. Others' transgressions of our experience can, then, open up for us new possibilities while also revealing the limitations of our characteristic modes of sense-making. Insight into new, richer dimensions of reality is only possible because we co-inhabit others' perspectives, because we are drawn into their way of perceiving or they transgress into ours.

It is this transgression into another's perspective that I propose to call "ontological intimacy." It is an intimacy because by virtue of it, the other touches and shapes me not just from the outside, but within my most "private," personal experience. It is ontological because it occurs simply by virtue of the kinds of beings we are—intersubjective beings. Let us note, however, that the transgression involved is never a complete usurpation of an individual's perspective. One can coexist with others, co-inhabiting a shared world; but one is never thereby fully reduced to, or taken over by, the other's

perspective. In varying degrees, and due always to the singularity and historicity of our own situation, each individual inevitably maintains some degree of *écart* or divergence from others' perspectives. Transgression thus involves both difference and coexistence—or, as Merleau-Ponty notes, "solitude and communication [are]… two moments of a single phenomenon" (2012, 376/535).

It is perhaps worth precluding a possible misunderstanding here. This divergence or difference, this solitude as the other side of communication, is not, on Merleau-Ponty's account, the result of a true personal will or an untouched individual freedom that maintains itself in the face of—and as resistant to—social forces that threaten it. We are not returning here to a neoliberal, Cartesian notion of the subject. Rather, such divergence and difference arises from the ways in which any individual is, by virtue of her social relations and her personal stage of development, inevitably implicated in and transgressed by competing visions of the world.

Thus, one reason for a person's *écart* from another's perspective lies in her lack of development or preparedness for inhabiting the other's view. A child, for instance, may feel largely unmoved or even bewildered by a poem, song lyric, or discourse about sexual desire: for her life experience and her pre-pubescent body have not yet prepared her for genuine insight, for being drawn into this form of experiencing. Though she may catch onto, and even be vaguely attuned by, the basic gesture of this communication, that which it outlines in the world remains largely mysterious for her. There is significant divergence here even as there is also overlap and coexistence.

Another reason for a person's divergence from others' transgressions into her perspective lies in that person's involvement in relations whose visions of reality conflict with that transgressive configuration of experience. Thus, though an employer's dismissiveness and contempt might reach deeply into an employee's sense of self and place in the world, that employee may also be able to gain a distance from it, insofar as she is also implicated in relationships that validate her as intelligent, competent, worthwhile.[14] It is not her autonomous will and intellect that thus resists total usurpation; it is rather the fact that she finds herself in the context of other relationships reflected and realized in very different ways.[15]

Finally, a person may be able to diverge from, and retrieve herself from, another's usurpation of her perspective if differing reflections of herself have been incorporated

[14] For an extended and insightful reflection on the multiple ways in which we can be implicated in and re-defined by other's ways of being, see Gail Weiss's book *Body Images: Embodiment as Intercorporeality.* Weiss sums up her own argument in the book effectively: "human beings tend to have multiple body images and . . . these body images overlap with one another and are themselves constructed, reconstructed, and deconstructed through a series of ongoing, intercorporeal exchanges" (1999, 165).

[15] In "Between Two Intimacies" (2014), John Russon argues that one's development as an autonomous adult actually requires experiencing the tensions between two different ways of being situated, reflected, and defined in intimate relationships, or, more precisely, between two forms of intimacy: familial, and non-familial. He proposes that the developing individual needs to experience (a) a familial intimacy that fosters a sense of agency and belonging in the world, but also (b) non-familial intimacies that are in tension with the familiar, and that motivate self-definition in and through a transformation of the institutions established in familial intimacy. Here, we can see the importance of multiple interpersonal involvements for personal development, and, more specifically, the importance of having intimate relationships beyond the familial realm.

Advocates for survivors of domestic violence note that one of the primary ways in which abusers maintain power and control over the abused is by isolating the abused from other relationships that might challenge the vision of self and partner maintained within the abusive relationship. See, for instance, Shannon Perez-Darby's "The Secret Joy of Accountability: Self-Accountability as a Building Block for Change" (2016, 109). Perez-Darby is Deputy Director at The Northwest Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian & Gay Survivors of Abuse.

into her habitual sense of self and world. If, for instance, a young woman has grown up in a household with progressive values, such that these have come to be a part of her own habitual embodiment, then even if she is momentarily swept away by conservative values in dialogue with another so that—as the dialogue unfolds—she comes to see the world as the other does, she can nonetheless retrieve herself after the fact by a withdrawal into her own familiar forms of sense-making. Therein, she may find a perspective that sheds a new light on, or puts her in tension with, the perspective that had transgressed into her and momentarily taken her over. Merleau-Ponty calls attention to this capacity for withdrawal and self-retrieval, after having been carried away, through dialogue, into another way of seeing:

> In the experience of dialogue . . . there is a being-shared-by-two [*un être à deux*] . . . We are, for each other, collaborators in perfect reciprocity: our perspectives slip into each other, we coexist through a single world. I am freed from myself in the present dialogue, even though the other's thoughts are certainly his own, since I do not form them, I nonetheless grasp them as soon as they are born or I even anticipate them. And even the objection raised by my interlocutor draws from me thoughts I did not know I possessed such that if I lend him thoughts, he makes me think in return. Only *après coup*—when I have withdrawn from the dialogue and am remembering it—can I reintegrate it into my life, turn it into an episode of my own private history. (2012, 370–371/412)

To speak of transgression or of ontological intimacy is not to deny, then, that there is divergence and difference within that intimacy. Indeed, the simultaneity of this ontological divergence with ontological coexistence is in part what drives us, within the concrete, empirical forms of interaction with others, to pursue further, more intimate relations with others. I encounter someone who (in the ways in which she deals with the world and with others) reveals to me that she perceives what I perceive, that we share an outlook, and thus that she can perceive me in ways that others cannot. I experience already a kind of being with her. And yet, at the same time, the overlap is not perfect; while her perspective coexists with mine, it also thereby orients me towards something more to be perceived, something that I have not yet fully seen—in both myself and the world. While I am with her, in other words, she is also taking me beyond myself. She thereby offers to me—and if I am lucky, I can offer to her—the promise of a deepening relation to self and reality. This promise of greater intimacy, born out of our simultaneous coexistence and difference and thus felt in her transgression of my perspective, draws me towards her.

At the basis of all interpersonal communication and learning, then, is this ontological intimacy or intertwining wherein, on the one hand, one's very sense of the world and oneself is profoundly configured by others, and on the other hand, we feel our difference and divergence from them. Others are both beyond us and within us, inhabiting to a greater or lesser degree our intentionalities while we inhabit, to a greater or lesser degree, theirs.

Note though, that despite making my point primarily though examples of intimate relationships, I am proposing that it is not just in love but in all interpersonal relations that others are intimately present within us, always already 'influencing' us, 'deciding

on our behalf.' We must ask, then, what distinguishes love, or our particular concrete experiences of intimacy from this fundamental, ever-present ontological intimacy?

II.
CONCRETE INTIMACY, MOMENTARY MUTUAL RECOGNITION AND SHARED INTERPERSONAL INSTITUTIONS

I have said that our being is characterized by a fundamental ontological intimacy with others. But precisely because it is fundamental or ontological, this "ontological intimacy" is operative to some extent whether we are encountering a distant stranger or an intimate partner. Audre Lorde describes a childhood experience on the subway: a stranger expresses horror and disgust when Lorde—a black child—sits down beside her. Eventually leaving her seat to avoid contact with the child, the stranger infiltrates Lorde's own experience of herself, leaving her with a sense that she is somehow bad (1984, 147–148).[16] A mature person, with a more established sense of self, or who is wiser to the ways of a racist world, might respond to the stranger with outrage or disdain; but even then, the act of resistance is premised upon transgression. On the one hand, the mature person can resist only because, through others' transgressions into her sense of self, she has incorporated and consolidated a vision of self at odds with the stranger's reaction to her. On the other hand, she is moved to resist because the stranger's response is experienced as a transgression: the stranger's response is only disturbing to the mature person because it is not merely a failing within the stranger, limited to the stranger's mind; it is simultaneously a transgression into and shaping of others' experiences. She is having an effect on how others see and respond to race. If strangers can intimately transgress into our experience like this, however—if it is not just in our intimate relationships that others "get inside" us—then what is there to distinguish intimate relationships from encounters—even alienating, oppressive encounters—with distant others? How ought we to distinguish our concrete experiences of intimacy from ontological intimacy?

What I propose in this section is that there are two interrelated "layers" to concrete intimacy. The two layers are mutual-self-definition in this moment, and shared habits or institutions that endure through time. This notion of layers is indebted to Merleau-Ponty's distinction of the *body at this moment* and the *habitual body* (2002, 95).[17] In the context of accounting for the phenomena of phantom limbs, Merleau-Ponty argues that one's experience is configured both at the level of one's current embodiment and at the level of one's habitual embodiment. This explains how, for the person with the phantom limb, the world can show up as soliciting him as a two-limbed person (this is the habit body at work) and as marking out his deficiency (this is the current body at work). The result in this case is the experience of a limb that is only ambiguously present—neither

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[16] Fanon similarly describes the ways in which prejudiced attitudes shape our sense of self and possibility by speaking of a "historico-racial schema" (1967, 111–112): the idea is that others' perspectives have come to be embodied in our very sense of what is open or not for us to do, what possibilities lie available to us. For more recent work and a reflection on Anzaldúa's writings about racialization, see Florentien Verhage, *Living With(out) Borders* (2014).

[17] I have used Colin Smith's translation of "*corps actuel*" as "body at this moment" rather than Donald Landes' "actual body" because I think Smith's translation better captures the temporal connotation of the French which is its dominant connotation. "Current body" would equally work.

a real arm nor an absent arm, but a phantom arm. The more the habit body prevails, the more the individual experiences himself as two-armed; the more the layer of the current body predominates, the more the individual experiences himself as one-armed. And ultimately, the overcoming of the phantom limb will require the transformation of the old habit body in order to integrate it with the new, current, one-armed body (2012, 82–88/109–116).

Drawing on this conception of layers of embodiment, I am proposing that our intimate relationships involve two layers as well: on the one hand, a taking up and informing of one another in the moment (ideally co-enacted as mutual recognition) and, on the other hand, shared interpersonal institutions, or habitual, enduring, and co-enacted visions of who we are, how to live, and what matters (ideally co-established in a manner that supports mutual recognition and becoming). In each case, there is an intertwining of worlds and identities so that who I am, what I see in the world, and the possibilities I experience are inseparable from who you are, what you see, and the possibilities that you experience. It is, in each layer, as if we shared a common but two-headed body, an "intercorporeity" (e.g., 1964c, 168, where the French word is translated as "intercorpo-reality," 1968, 141). We will see that, like in the individual body, one or the other of these two layers of intercorporeity can predominate, but concrete intimacy is realized in its fullest form when the two work with each other so that the layer of shared institutions supports mutual recognition and growth, and the layer of current mutual recognition can nourish and transform the shared institutions.

Consider the first layer mentioned—that of current, in the moment, mutual self-definition. In the example of Lorde on the subway, or the child with the worm, the adult—through ontological intimacy—defines the child, and the child is drawn into this definition of itself. This co-inhabitation of a way of seeing the child is, however, also experienced as alienating by the child. The adult's transgression into the child's way of experiencing induces an inner conflict, wherein one way of experiencing (e.g., this child is/I am bad and dirty) suppresses another (this child is/I am a successful explorer or basically good). This alienating realization of ontological intimacy is *not* an experience of concrete intimacy.

Concrete intimacy in the moment, in contrast, is marked by a lived sense of connection. We *experience* ourselves as intimately with another, and this happens when we co-exist with the other in the moment, experiencing her as seeing, in the world, what we, too, see, but many others do not. We thereby experience her insight as reaching more deeply into us and our world than others' insights do (and our insight as reaching more deeply into her and her world). Such intimacy in the "at this moment" layer can happen, interestingly, even between strangers, and it can be profound in its moment. Strangers on a subway may, in a moment of shared laughter or in a situation of crisis, find themselves drawn temporarily into coexistence and a common world. To focus on the situation of crisis, living through and responding to an emergency together, facing with each other our human vulnerability and mortality, we may experience the powerful intimacy of being together in touch with a much deeper reality than is sustained by most of our mundane relations.[18] Even if we never see each other again, this experience may remain with us as one in which we felt an unusual and deep connection—in that

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[18] This experience is vividly thematized in J.G. Ballard's novel *Crash*.

moment. Similarly, short-lived erotic encounters (like those we often call "one-night stands") can sometimes involve a deeper intimacy than our more familiar relationships. Without the baggage of a shared past and the expectations that unfold from this, each participant may be open to, and able to go along with, realities and potentials in each other that are typically occluded in her other relationships. Each participant may, indeed, help the other to discover aspects of herself that were heretofore unrealized by her. This experience of being seen not only for who we take ourselves to be, but also for who we had not until now realized we were or could be, is a profound experience of mutual recognition. It tends to stand out from the rest of our mundane life, often highlighting hollowness, disconnection, misrecognition, or loneliness therein.

But there is also another sense of intimacy—another layer—that characterizes enduringly intimate relationships. This is an abiding, shared sense of how to go about living life and being in relationship. It takes the form of shared, interpersonal "institutions" that, often without noticing, we co-enact and co-establish in our behaviors. We might also call these "sedimented patterns" or "dynamics of behavior" or "structures of relating," but "institution"—if we understand this term as Merleau-Ponty does—allows us to see how these patterns of behavior are equally shared ways of orienting ourselves to what really matters and perceiving ourselves in relation to each other and the world beyond us. For Merleau-Ponty, institution does not denote our usual sense of institution—a public establishment or association, like a school or a prison, which is purposefully and formally set up and organized to promote some end. For Merleau-Ponty, institution can be found, for example, in a person's individual development, in an artist's style, in the love that is established between two people, or in a historical event.[19] Institution, in these contexts, means "establishment in an experience . . . of dimensions . . . system of references . . . in relation to which a whole series of other experiences will make sense and will make a sequel, a history" (2010, 8–9/38); it is the founding of a field or frame of reference in terms of which all that appears makes a new sense.

In intimate relationships, shared customs around dinner-making, money-spending, television-watching, and conflict are small or local instances of such interpersonal institutions; and their specific character is manifest in the ways in which these dynamics establish and support a certain identity and position for each member of the relationship. Providing the frame of reference for our interactions, these co-enacted institutions also install shared values and assumptions that, when they are truly shared, allow us to function smoothly together, and to feel at home with each other, like we belong. They allow us to feel *with* each other. Such interpersonal institutions thus found an "intersubjective or symbolic field . . . which is our milieu, our hinge, our jointure" (2010, 6/35).

This instituted layer of intimacy is largely lacking in intimate encounters between strangers. Though a stranger in an erotic one-night encounter may see me deeply and insightfully in that moment, we may experience great difficulties if we attempt to continue that relationship beyond the moment. We may find ourselves unable to live with each other if the routine paths and practices that give meaning to our lives and inform our senses of self diverge too much, and if we are unable to let go of them without losing our sense of self. An enduring intimacy, in other words, involves not only the capacity

[19] Merleau-Ponty, *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the Collège de France* (1954-1955) (2010, 5–113; 33–154 in the French edition). Henceforth, the English translation pagination will be followed by the 2010 French pagination. See also my essay, "The '*entre-deux*' of Emotions" (2017) for an exposition of Merleau-Ponty's use of "institution" and a defense of the claim that the emotion of love is an institution established between two people, through their mutual transgression into each other's experience.

to be with another person within a circumscribed moment, but also the capacity to forge an enduring shared world, or habitual ways of being that are inhabitable by both intimates.

In institution as Merleau-Ponty conceives of it, the dimension or frame of references established is not consciously chosen for some particular purpose: it is the "establishment of a system of distribution of values or of significations . . . which is *practiced* . . . not acquired notionally" (2010, 25/60; italics in original); it is "a non-decisionary project, not chosen" by a constituting subject, but rather established through "productivity of what I am doing in the other and of what he is doing in me" (6/34–35). But the new symbolic field is nonetheless instituted because it offers a lived, unreflective answer to a problem that was merely latent within the previous field of experience:

> [h]uman institution always resumes a prior institution, which has posed a *question*, . . . and which has failed. It reactivates this problem and human institution reunites its givens in [a] totality that is centered otherwise . . . . It is not a state of consciousness . . . and it is not an object of consciousness. The modes of existence of the question and answer are *dimensions* of a field, dimensions in which all of what is lived is distributed, but which are not lived for themselves." (2010, 22–23/58; italics in original)

In other words, an interpersonal institution is the establishment, between two or more people, of an agreed upon way of doing things and of defining each other's positions. *But* the agreement is established not through purposeful reflection and explicit verbal endorsement, but practically and unreflectively through the un-self-conscious development of shared practices and discourses.

These shared practices and discourses, and the interpersonal institutions that they realize, are settled upon precisely because they allow each member a certain position in the world which responds to latent tensions and problems which that member has been experiencing within her life. The institution is co-established as a solution to such tensions. But the solution is typically arrived at largely passively and unreflectively by happening together upon a way of being that works in response to problems experienced by each member rather than by each member self-consciously and purposefully intending this solution. Indeed, neither the solution, nor the tensions and problems which motivate it are typically acknowledged or made explicit. Rather, two or more people simply settle into a way of being together that, in some vague way, seems fitting, satisfying, settling. [20]

The function and nature of shared interpersonal institutions can be further clarified through a couple of examples. John Russon, in his book *Bearing Witness to Epiphany: Persons, Things, and the Nature of Erotic Life* (2009), describes two intimate relationships that

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[20] Napier and Whitaker, in *The Family Crucible* (1978), describe entrenched family systems of interaction that are instances of such "shared interpersonal institutions"; Minuchin likewise describes, in *Psychosomatic Families* (1978), family patterns of mutual self-definition, and the ways in which these can work to make one family member sick. Laing calls such family patterns "social phantasy systems" in *Self and Others* (1971, ch. 2 and ch. 8). And Berne, in *Games People Play* (1964), elaborates particular forms that these institutions can take and the ulterior motives that they serve. Berne calls these institutions "games."

enact in different ways such institutions (Russon calls them "bonds").[21] Considering these will also, in preparation for this essay's final section on freedom, help us to see how the mutual transgressions and coexistence involved can either inhibit each person's own becoming and development, or enrich and support it.

In one intimate relationship, a man and a woman have developed a shared sense of themselves as "rebels, whose nonconformity to the standards of others marks their own greater insight into the way things should be" (Russon 2009, 80). This shared vision constitutes a bond between them, with each affirming and supporting the other in their positioning of self and other. At the same time, this vision of themselves shapes how they see and respond to the rest of the world: any critical reflections from other friends, for instance, can be dismissed, as lacking in insight. This bond between them—this interpersonal institution—thus involves mutual transgression and the transformation of each other's basic orientation. Each lives from the assumption that they are such rebels, and endorses and feels endorsed by the other's perspective on this; they thereby habitually inhabit that perspective together. Each has become part of the other's orienting form of embodiment, then, by virtue of having incorporated the other's perspective into his or her own way of perceiving. What shows up as valuable and as possible within the world is conditioned by this coexistence. This relationship is satisfying, moreover, because this shared institution responds to inchoate, not fully recognized problems that they had each previously felt in their dealings with others—distrust of others, and fears and anxieties about being criticized; it is a kind of solution to those problems. And yet, as much as this solution responds to latent problems from the past, it also inaugurates a form of life that undermines each member's own becoming. Essentially, these two have developed a self-enclosed relationship which shields them from any criticisms or perspectives that friends might bring to bear—criticisms or perspectives that might reveal limits or problems, foreclosures, or occlusions in the couple's ways of making sense of things. They have thus instituted a self-confirming, self-perpetuating way of being that results in stagnancy, rather than in learning, growth, or becoming. As Russon says, "this couple enacts a fundamental denial of the self-transformative possibilities—and imperatives—of their interhuman situation" (81).

Compare this with a second relationship described by Russon (2009, 81-2): this is a couple, two women, who find in each other affirmation of aspects of themselves that were denied in their former long-term relationships—aspects like their intelligence and competence, the value of their emotional depth, and the validity of their sexual desires. Their relationship thus involves the institution of a bond that affirms the agency and worth of each member, and thereby draws them each out of old and unsatisfying patterns of subordination to, or manipulative seduction of, others. Together they thereby establish a form of coexistence that serves as a kind of protection or shield. But in this case, what they are shielding against is not learning from others and the growth that can bring, but rather the kinds of misrecognitions—and indeed, shared institutions—that can draw and have drawn them into self-undermining ways of perceiving themselves and the world. They have transgressed into and shaped each other's habitual sense of self and possibility; they have established in their bond a shared institution, a

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[21] I am drawing from a section of the book where Russon is establishing what ethical imperatives and responsibilities must characterize interpersonal relations, given the nature of intersubjectivity or what he calls "the epiphany of the other" (2009, ch. 4). Russon's ideas in this section helped to crystallize for me something of the import of Merleau-Ponty's understanding of intersubjectivity. The last two sections of this paper are thus much indebted to Russon's thought here.

certain way of coexisting towards the world, themselves, and each other; but they have done this in a manner that ultimately promotes each person's self-actualization and development. For, on the basis of this bond or institution, each member of this relationship now experiences herself as capable of taking initiative, able to be more honest with herself and others, inclined to cultivate more substantial relations with others outside of this intimate relationship, and engaged with larger social and political concerns—all of which are conducive to learning, becoming, and developing.

In these two examples, we see how an enduring bond or shared institution is set up between two people in a manner that involves mutual transgression and an abiding sense of who they each are in relation to each other and the world.

This intimacy as shared institution should not, I am arguing, be confused with intimacy in the moment: these are two different layers which can in fact be at odds with each other—though ideally we want them to support each other. A further example from Eric Berne's *Games People Play* (1964) helps to illustrate the dissonance that can occur between these layers of intimacy. Berne describes a very common dynamic between intimates—a dynamic that he names "If It Weren't for You." In this situation, a couple is constantly in conflict, experiencing a repeated lack of momentary intimacy, but only by virtue of being entangled in the same structure or shared institution. In other words, it turns out that they are in fact collaborating and supporting each other in who they are, engaging in an implicitly agreed upon ritual of mutual self-definition, even though it seems to them that they are disagreeing, and they feel alienated from, and not really recognized by, each other. The disagreement takes the form of one person (we will say she is a woman) demanding of her partner (a man, let us say) that he stay home with her, and not go out on his own adventures with others. The man, for his side, feels like he is being kept from realizing his full potential because of the woman's needs. "If it weren't for her" he would be realizing his true potential. When, however, the woman relents and allows the man to go out, he realizes that he has great fears of going out. The dynamic between them, then, was not one of her keeping him home, simply; it was an institution that they co-established, and both needed. It worked for her because it relieved her of fears of abandonment. It worked for him because he was able to avoid his fears and anxieties of taking on new things and developing himself. What looked like struggle, disagreement, and misrecognition, was rooted in a shared pact; and though the frequent arguments and tensions left them feeling alone and misrecognized in the moment, they were at the same time an expression of their entanglement, co-dependency and shared institution—an expression, that is, of an enduring form of intimacy, albeit one that works against intimacy at the momentary level.[22]

Concrete intimacy, then, occurs at two levels or layers each made possible by the transgressions of ontological intimacy. In each layer, we establish a kind of shared body, an intercorporeity, such that your way of taking me up is incorporated into my sense of world and self, and my way of taking you up is incorporated into yours. In one layer, we find intimacy at this moment, experienced as connection: here, if there is intimacy, it is because when each incorporates or is transgressed by the other's orientation, there is an experience of mutual recognition. Each finds themselves, the world, and the other per-

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[22] Eric Berne adds the important insight that, even though these two feel alone and misrecognized, their arguments and fights actually are ways of connecting or "stroking" each other—albeit in painful, rather than pleasurable, ways (1964, 15).

ceived in ways that are deeply aligned with their own orientation, and that may even further their own insights. But intimacy also occurs at another level, in another layer—that of shared institutions. Here, even when an *experience* of momentary connection is missing, two people can be deeply intertwined: in an enduring, habitual manner, they transgress into, and actively inform and uphold each other's way of being in the world. Through their habitual practices and the ritually patterned dynamics therein, each intimate is dependent upon the other for her sense of who she is in the world and how to be at home there.

We have seen, moreover, that these layers of intimacy can inhibit our development as individuals, or enable and encourage it. Momentary intimacy can help us realize aspects of ourselves (and possibilities within the world) that were until then merely latent within our experience. Our shared institutions, on the other hand, can either trap us in dynamics that close us off from learning, or establish a form of mutual self-definition that opens us up to and promotes self-development. The challenge, then, is to live our enduring relationships, with their inevitable transgressions and their resulting institutions, in ways that allow for genuine becoming: for a creative taking up and expressive transformation of the past, for the establishment of new institutions—personal and interpersonal—that better support each person's growth. Such transformation or genuine becoming is what Merleau-Ponty understands as freedom.

III.
THE PROBLEM OF FREEDOM AND THE CHALLENGES OF INTIMACY

I contend that freedom in Merleau-Ponty's thought is ultimately understood as becoming: freedom is enacted not in a moment's decision but in a temporally extended process of self-overcoming. Latent tensions within our situation gradually emerge and motivate our assumption of a new existential orientation that both resolves those tensions and brings to expression a truth secretly harbored within them. Thereby, a new existential equilibrium is instituted within our lives, a new way of living and being is realized, and a new sense of the past and future established. Freedom is, in other words, realized in a process of creative self-transformation.

The individual who has lost her voice recovers it. The exploited and oppressed worker becomes a revolutionary. The analysand with the inferiority complex realizes a more honest habitual orientation towards herself. The gambler overcomes his addiction. Each transformation is a move from lesser to greater degrees of freedom, and each involves moments of initiative—saying no to one direction, and yes to another. But, says Merleau-Ponty, initiative is not yet freedom (2012, 463/502). The gambler can say no to gambling in one moment, only to be drawn back into it in the next. For (greater) freedom to be realized, a new way of life must take hold, motivated by tensions in the past, and supported by an enduring transformation of their meaning. If we can speak of a decision or choice, Merleau-Ponty says, it is "a conversion of our existence . . . [which] assumes a preexisting acquisition [and] establishes a new tradition" (463/502). As such, the conversion cannot be an unconditioned choice executed in an isolated moment: it is rather the culmination of a transformation that is prepared only through time, as if in secret, through a gradual articulation of tensions and indeterminate directionalities within one's situation. To use Merleau-Ponty's example (468–471/507–509), the day-laborer becomes a revolutionary not in an instantaneous

conscious decision, but rather through being drawn, over time and through contingent events, into coexistence with small farmers and city workers; through thereby becoming attuned to the contradictions of their shared situation; and through finally finding in the revolutionary words and actions of others a meaningful crystallization of that situation. If there is at all a moment that might be deemed the transformational instant of realization, the moment of conversion and coming to revolutionary consciousness, it is only the pinnacle or the final coming to expression of something that took form in a long and secret gestation through what Merleau-Ponty calls a "molecular process" (471/510) or a series of shifts and slippages (476/514, 482/519–20).[23]

Merleau-Ponty, following Cézanne, also speaks of this process as a kind of "germination." An artist, he says, paints not by knowing in advance what she is going to put on the canvas, but rather by "germinating" with the landscape:

> [There is] motivation that comes simultaneously from colors, light, substance, movement, a call from all of that to a movement of the hand which resolves the problem while being unaware of it . . . The choices are the trace of this labor of "germination." (2010, 47/86)

Similarly, a day-laborer attains to revolutionary consciousness and greater freedom not by knowing in advance what he seeks, but rather by "germinating" over time with his social conditions, and being motivated by them to assume a new social position which retrospectively transforms and resolves a problem that had been largely latent and merely inchoately felt. Freedom, then, is realized in coming back to one's situation, accepting and germinating with it to the point of being able to take it up, transform it, and thereby move beyond it: "it is by resolutely taking up what I am by chance, by willing what I will, by doing what I do, that I can go farther" (2012, 482–3/520). And if we do not germinate with and take up our own situation then we fail to attain real freedom: "the only way I can fail to be free is if I attempt to transcend my natural and social situation by refusing to take it up first." The addict who presumes to simply deny who he was, and to will himself free of his habit, inevitably finds himself still driven by and entangled in his habit.[24] Germinating with one's situation and thereby discovering a way of being that responds to and transforms the past which shapes one's future is essential to the development of freedom.

Germinating does not in itself ensure that the move one feels called to make is indeed a realization of freedom. There is no guarantee that one's realization is in fact a liberating realization. Like the artist who cannot be sure as he paints whether he is bringing to expression for the first time a reality and truth or only engaging in a clichéd repetition, we too cannot be certain in the process of pursuing freedom whether our decisions are truly realizing a new way of being ourselves or are only blindly repeating ourselves and even regressing. Is, for instance, a decision to quit this job the insightful recognition of a truth that has been making itself felt for years and the inauguration of a new and

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[23] Freedom as self-overcoming is thus really a matter of establishing new personal institutions. See Maclaren, "The '*entre-deux*' of Emotions: Emotional Institutions and their Dialectic" (2017).

[24] Gregory Bateson highlights this dynamic in his article "The Cybernetics of Self" (1987). The alcoholic remains imprisoned within his addiction so long as he supposes that he has it all under control, that he can handle it all himself. It is only when he gives up this notion of the self-sufficient individual that the healing transformation takes place.

better life? Or is it merely a reactive response based in an inferiority complex, repeating an old structure, and leading to an even more constrained and unfulfilling future? Such ambiguities and uncertainties are endemic to our realization of our own freedom.

It is here that the importance—and danger—of intimate others for the development of an individual's freedom emerges. This will be the focus of the remainder of this essay.

Always somewhat opaque to ourselves, never fully self-transparent, it is easy for us to miss ourselves. We can be carried away by the stories, tropes, and values that circulate in our social environment but are inadequate to our reality. We can equally be carried away by the ways in which others' practices transgress into our experience, position us, and misleadingly define our sense of self and world. And we can be carried away by becoming stuck within our own complexes or bad habits, which reduce us to less than we can be.

Intimate others, however, can help bring us back to ourselves. They can help us recall who we have been and can be, and what really matters to us. They can do this in two ways. By virtue of knowing us well, intimate others can explicitly call to our attention a way in which we have diverged from our characteristic selves; if this divergence seems to work against our becoming, they can make a case for this, and call on us to acknowledge this and to come back to ourselves. Sometimes, however, our intimate others need say nothing: they call us back to ourselves simply by being themselves and doing the things they do. In these ways, they draw us back into those shared interpersonal institutions that have previously configured our world and made us who we are—institutions from which we have strayed.

Returning a person to herself can, however, inhibit her becoming rather than promote it if it does not also allow her to (as we have seen Merleau-Ponty say) "go farther." Imagine that the institution that one has strayed from and to which one is returned is that which we found in the rebel pair, or in the "if it weren't for you" couple. In the rebel pair, drawing one partner back into a shared way of being is drawing that individual back into a shared interpersonal institution that prevents her from being open to and moved by friends' criticisms or perspectives.[25] In the case of the "if it weren't for you" couple, the quarreling couple draw each other back into the same old dynamic ("your duty is to be at home with me"; "if it weren't for you, I'd be realizing myself") which keeps them from facing their own anxieties and thereby developing themselves. To promote and support an intimate other's becoming, then, each partner must not merely help the other return to her familiar ways of being. Each must also help her to "germinate" with those ways of being—to open herself up to feeling the tensions within these institutions and to find therein an impetus and means for going farther, for self-overcoming, and for realizing new, freer ways of being herself.

Here is where the great challenge and responsibility that intimacy is becomes more evident. On a Cartesian vision of the self, we might think that supporting an intimate other is simply leaving her free to become whomever she wants to be. But this vision of support is based upon a notion of the subject as ontologically separate from others, as

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[25]Again, we can see an extreme version of this in the isolating effects of an abusive partner's behavior. This partner may insist that "no one understands you like I do" and "it's me and you against them" or "I need you to stay with me to help me," thereby keeping the survivor of abuse from developing relationships that might criticize and challenge the abusive relationship (Perez-Darby 2016, 109).

self-possessed and self-transparent. And such a vision of the subject is precisely what is under challenge in this essay. Transgressed by others, a person is never simply ontologically separate, and she does not have herself wholly in her own hands; she is to a significant extent dispossessed and informed by others. As a result—that is, precisely because she can be carried away by others into momentary misrecognitions or into shared institutions of sense-making that do not do justice to who she has been and can be—that individual can be profoundly wrong about who she is and wants to be. An intimate other may, for instance, take herself to be quitting her job because she has "discovered" that she is not capable of doing this well and that to stay in her job is to be caught up in a futile and self-undermining struggle. But in fact this "discovery" may be a wrongful self-interpretation motivated by an employer who unjustly casts her as a bad employee, or by a long standing inferiority complex, or both.

What is notable is that in this situation, an intimate partner does not have the option to "leave the other free," and trying to do so would be the least supportive and most irresponsible course of action. Our worlds and identities are already intertwined; each person's perspective already transgresses upon and informs the other's, and these facts require that one take a stand one way or another on who one's intimate other is. Leaving my intimate other "free" to make her own choices and letting her simply quit her job is not in fact a neutral leaving free; it is rather an endorsement of her sense of herself as incapable. My silence in the face of her decision asserts "you know yourself, and whomever you take yourself to be must be who you are; if you think you are incapable of this line of work, that must be the truth." My silence is not, therefore, a non-involvement in her decision as it pretends to be; my silence is, as Merleau-Ponty says, "deciding on her behalf" insofar as it endorses and promotes a certain vision of who she is and what she ought to do (1964a, 154). It is, of course, still she who carries out the decision to quit, handing in her resignation to her employer, but that action grows out of a more fundamental decision about who she is and how her situation ought to be understood.[26] And in relation to this more fundamental decision I have played a part, helping bring it to crystallization, while simultaneously doing so under the guise of letting her decide who she is. My silent "leaving her free" is thus a deception. If I am to live our intimacy truthfully, instead, I will have to take responsibility for the decisions that I unavoidably make on her behalf. What would it mean truly to take responsibility for my transgressions into my intimate other's decisions? It may mean, interestingly, entering into con-

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[26] It is important to note that, when I speak of "deciding on the others' behalf," I am not focusing upon a coercive relationship in which an abusive partner might pressure the survivor partner into making a certain decision. I am instead challenging the notion that, in those relationships which seem to leave each member free to make up her own mind, there is indeed total, uninhibited freedom. Even in those non-coercive relationships, I am arguing, there is unfreedom and deciding on the other's behalf: that deciding on the other's behalf occurs at the level of endorsing or denying the other's vision of self, world, and possibility, or transgressing into and usurping that vision with another one. To genuinely promote each other's freedom, we need to become aware of this more subtle "deciding on another's behalf" and take responsibility for it. This does not deny that there is an important line between the abusive, coercive intimate partner and the non-abusive, non-coercive intimate partner. But it does demand more subtlety in understanding the difference between the two.

flict with my intimate other.[27] In some situations, it may be that being true to my intimate other, really standing by her and supporting her freedom or becoming, will require *resisting her decision* and calling on her to see this situation otherwise, to find in her situation a different *sens* or meaning than the one upon which she has settled. "It is not that you are incapable" we might say; "this seems rather an instance in which your inferiority complex is running the show." Such resistance might well be felt by my intimate other, in its immediacy, as violence, as a betrayal, for it is indeed a denial of, and taking distance from, her own position; it dismisses her position as out of touch with reality (even if it acknowledges how real and weighty an inferiority complex can be).[28] And yet, as Russon notes in his investigation of loyalty, betrayal, and ethics in interpersonal relationships, what is felt as a betrayal could be the greatest act of solidarity (2009, 93). For, the resistance and denial of the other is a taking distance from the other *in order to call her back to herself,* to help her better discover herself and find a truer enaction of herself.

For some of us, this prospect of resisting the other can inspire anxiety. For there is a presumption being enacted here. It is the presumption that I can see the situation better than my intimate other can, and that I am in fact helping her. Since, however, I (like my intimate other) am finite, not all-knowing, and addled by my own blindnesses, I could be wrong about this. It may be that I am calling her away from herself instead of back to herself. This could be not an act of solidarity—indeed, even worse, it could be a failed attempt at solidarity that is presenting itself as an act of solidarity. But the point of this essay, the insight articulated in Merleau-Ponty's claim that we are, in intimacy, always deciding to some extent on the other's behalf is this: we cannot help but presume; we are always already taking a stand. If, in fear of being presumptuous, I leave the other "free" to make her own decision, to quit her job, I am thereby endorsing her decision. I am presuming that she sees better than I, and that I have nothing to offer her. If this is true, then this presumption is a good one. But it if is false, then it is a presumption that has let my intimate partner down. betrayed her, and left her to damage her own life substantially when I could have helped her.

What, then, am I to do, if I cannot help but to presume and to decide on the other's behalf? I must take a stand—the best stand I know how to take—since I cannot do otherwise. But I must take it with an openness to finding out that I am wrong and to learning more about myself and my intimate other.[29] I must make it from a stance that seeks understanding, communication, and mutual confirmation rather than a legislation of who the other is. I can resist her in the moment, in other words, and produce a breakdown in our momentary sense of intimacy; but if I am to be responsible to our intimacy and committed to our mutual becoming and flourishing, and if I am to remain intimate and *with* her in a more enduring, overarching manner, I must do it from

[27]One might imagine that, on this model, one ought never to remain silent if one thinks one's intimate other is going astray. Intimate life would then be a matter of constantly challenging each other. But this challenging mode of behavior also decides on the other's behalf in the very mode that it assumes; in challenging rather than awaiting, it makes a claim about who the other is. It claims that she is incapable of coming to insight on her own, in time. We need, then, to acknowledge two forms of silence. There is the silence that merely goes along with, and thus endorses and is complicit. But there is also the silence that trustingly holds open the space for the other to encounter the tensions in her own stance and to find her own way back to herself. Parker Palmer describes this silence well in "Deep Speaks to Deep," in *A Hidden Wholeness* (2004).

[28] In "Pain and Agency" (2016), Shannon Hoff notes how pain is not only negative, and can in fact be an inevitable concomitant of the very interpersonal transgressions of boundaries that enable self-transformation and the development of greater agency.

[29] Taken up in this way, intimacy can in fact be one of the best of forums for becoming existentially educated, and developing one's interpretive resources and insights.

within a co-established, co-perpetuated, interpersonal institution of communication, openness, and learning.

IV.
CONCLUSION

Intimacy, I have proposed, is not made up of inner feelings and beliefs about others; it is rather the fact that others transgress into our own perspectives and shape our sense of world and self. Such intimacy is present in all our interpersonal relations in the form of what I have called "ontological intimacy." It also underlies our concrete experiences of intimacy—whether with strangers or intimate others. Here, the transgression enables momentary experiences of connection; but it can also be deepened and come to carry more weight by virtue of becoming embodied in habitual and enduring dynamics of mutual self-and-world-definition. We establish between us shared interpersonal institutions; the other comes to be embodied in me and my outlook, and I come to be embodied in her and hers.

Transgression into the other's experience, informing how she finds herself positioned and defined in the world is, then, inevitable. The question is not how to avoid it, but whether we are owning up to it and its effects—are we being honest about and taking responsibility for what we are already doing? These transgressions are, in fact, impositions of a kind of unfreedom on the other. Within this unfreedom lies great dangers of interpersonal violence, alienation and oppression. But this unfreedom can also be the greatest enabler of freedom. One person's perspective working within another's also takes that other beyond her current form of sense-making. If, in doing this, the transgression enables that other to come back to who she has been: to germinate with that, and to "go farther," discovering new ways of being herself that resolve tensions that had been making themselves felt, then that transgression and imposition of unfreedom works in the service of freedom. And the freer others are, or the more they are in touch with the reality and imperatives found within themselves, their situations, and their social and natural environments, the better their transgressions will work to resist our own errancy and enable freedom within us. The great challenge of intimate relations, then, is to forge a way of being with others—in the moment and through shared interpersonal institutions—that takes responsibility for the transgressions and encroachments we inevitably effect, and that enacts them in ways that promote openness, communication, recognition, and becoming.

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THE DIFFERENCE OF FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGY: THE CASE OF SHAME

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Is feminist phenomenology just a phenomenological inquiry into the specific phenomenon of "woman," or carried out from the specific point of view of a woman? In other words, is it a species of applied phenomenology, where phenomenological method or practice is taken as complete and competent, and simply put to work by a new subject or in relation to a new object? If this is the case, sexed embodiment may be disclosed as the origin of meanings and values that have previously been missing from the phenomenological account—but it is a version of phenomenological practice that has already been established which yields the disclosure. When feminist phenomenologists commit to this line of thinking about what feminist phenomenology is, they find all the resources needed to do feminist phenomenology already there in Edmund Husserl, or Emmanuel Levinas, or Maurice Merleau-Ponty, waiting to be set to work on the phenomenon of woman. But does the phenomenon suffer in the process?

Or does feminist phenomenology pose a challenge or even a threat to phenomenology as it has been practiced? Is it, in other words, disruptive and transformative in its nature and its aims? Does the object of concern for feminist phenomenology or the particularity of the subject undertaking the inquiry shape things in such a way that the inherited practice is not simply deployed, but destroyed? And if so, what emerges as the *practice* of feminist phenomenology from the ashes? If feminist phenomenology is not *simply* an act of destruction, what else is it? In other words, what is the difference of feminist phenomenology?

In what follows I approach these questions first through an examination of what two feminist phenomenologists, Sara Heinämaa and Johanna Oksala, each with very different relations to the phenomenological canon, have to say about feminist phenomenological practice. I then turn to Simone de Beauvoir, whom we might credit with the distinction of being the first feminist phenomenologist, to try to articulate what is different about her phenomenology, i.e., what those of us who practice feminist phenomenology might count as a positive inheritance. Both of these discussions require talking about feminist phenomenology rather than doing it, while the real difference of feminist phenomenology only emerges in the practice itself. In order to try to capture something about this difference, I take the phenomenon of shame as a case study, and compare three recent phenomenological accounts of shame.[1]

Before embarking on this undertaking, however, it is necessary to clear away some debris. There is something that stands in the way, not only of feminist phenomenology,

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[1] Both in my account of Beauvoir's phenomenological practice and in my discussion of shame, I draw heavily on my other published work. I've designated these sections with footnotes in the text.

but of any feminist inquiry in almost any philosophical context. It is an affective problem, *not* a cognitive problem. It has important implications related to the difference between the two conceptions of feminist phenomenology already mentioned (as enacting or destroying the practice itself). The problem is *reverence*. Reverence for the figure or the text, so important to philosophy's affective world, is often disrupted by feminist thought. The disruption occurs, however, beneath the level of conscious awareness. There, disturbed reverence does its work, acting as a factory for the manufacture of resistance to feminist philosophical ideas, while never being recognized or acknowledged for what it is: a visceral, intense, affective attachment, that makes one feel as if one's very way of life, system of values, and well-being are at stake when this affective modality is injured.

I raise the problem of reverence here in order to warn against its workings as readers move through the rest of the text. It would not be a mistake to read this essay as two essays (and indeed it is the length of two essays) the first of which (part I) is meant to provide a clearing in which the account of feminist phenomenology presented in the second (parts II-V) stands some chance of being heard.

I.
WOMEN WITH CAN(N)ONS:
BLOWING THINGS UP AND OTHER FEMINIST METHODS,
OR THE REVERENCE PROBLEM

Philosophy, at least as I have known it, is a reverent discipline, where deep affective attachments often mark the philosopher's relationship to figure and text. By this I mean that the relationships that compose philosophy, the relationships that are foregrounded in its self-understanding, are saturated by an affective tone or mood in which awe, adulation, and respect predominate. In continental philosophy, where I have my training, this is perhaps even more true than it is for the rest of the discipline—perhaps here it is even pathologically true—but I don't think that relations of reverence are by any means limited to the continentalists who may be most openly passionate about living on their knees.

This is not to say of course that philosophy is only reverent, or that it cultivates reverence in all its relationships. On the contrary, there are many different affective moods or states that are cultivated in the culture of philosophy—defensiveness, narcissistic entitlement, triumphalism, *schadenfreude*, gratuitous nastiness—to name only a few. Of course, I enact some of those when I write that. But if we think about the relationships that are foregrounded in the stories philosophers tell ourselves about our discipline and its history—the stories we tell about our own entrance into the lineage of philosophy—often these are father/son stories; teacher/eager student stories; wise sage and seeker after wisdom stories; rarely mother/daughter stories. They center on key figures or texts, Socrates or Plato or Descartes or Kant or Hegel or Husserl or Heidegger—and almost Beauvoir in my philosophical world—being the center of a reverent love. This mode of fetishization amounts to the cultivation of a certain erotic religiosity in relation to specific texts that are deeply adored, or a kind of awe in relation to certain figures who are regarded as elevated progenitors. These relations are echoed in living relations between scholars and their own teachers, or scholars and the living thinkers they admire, so that conferences or symposia or keynote lectures, peopled by these admired figures, are accompanied by the subtle sounds of genuflecting, the light pop-

ping sounds of knees used to too much sitting, reaching toward the ground.

Paul Woodruff has this to say about the virtue of reverence: "Reverence is the well-developed capacity to have the feelings of awe, respect, and shame when these are the right feelings to have" (2001, 19). Now philosophers may not agree on when and in relation to whom such feelings are appropriate, but I think there is a kind of felt consensus that reverence is part of the warp and woof of our philosophical lives, so that to give up on reverence is, for all intents and purposes, to give up on philosophy.

I want to think about this affective mood in relation to reactions to the arrival, on the philosophical scene, of feminist philosophers, particularly when they arrive in significant numbers, which is what has happened slowly, over the last decades. I also want to think about this affective mood in relation to the requirements of feminist philosophy, and our approaches to masculine philosophical canons.

To make things far too simple, we could say that in the early days of feminist criticism of the canon, there were two ways of reading *the problem of women* (this goes for questions of race, too) (Witt 1996). One of these ways is very palatable to the reverent ones, and one of these ways is very threatening to them. It is perhaps too obvious to state that a canon is not a once-and-for-all established collectivity. What we call a "canon" is always under duress, always contested, and always subject to revision. But it also has a certain historical stubbornness that we have to contend with. When feminists began to criticize the canon, or to criticize particular figures in the canon in relation to questions of sex and gender, this criticism took two broad forms. First, feminists paid attention to what these canonical figures said about women, about men, and about sexual difference. "The problems of the woman reading philosophy intensify when the talk turns to women," wrote Nancy Tuana, "she has no doubt that she is the subject of the discourse, but she cannot recognize herself in what she reads" (1992, 3). Feminists criticized specific passages in specific texts—they engaged in what Charlotte Witt called "the cataloguing of explicit misogyny" (1996, 4). Now, the reverent ones, who first reacted with horror that anyone would comment on the stains on the robes of the messiah, have, over time, gotten pretty comfortable with this. They think it's okay. The reason they think it is okay is they do not think it matters very much. Kant said some awful, in a flattering kind of way, things about women; he said some awful, in an absolutely unflattering kind of way, things about Africans. He was a man of his time, we can acknowledge that, lament it, set it aside and get on with things. The reverent ones are not worried about this. They also are not very interested in it. As Tuana wrote, they believe that "a philosopher's gender biases, although perhaps historically interesting, are not philosophically significant" (1992, 5). In fact, "a philosopher's gender biases, although perhaps reprehensible, are independent of his larger philosophical framework" (5). Or, as Witt writes of her own graduate education in the 1970s, "we all shared the assumption that whatever Hegel thought about women just wasn't all that important" (2006, 537). It is a curious side problem that doesn't impact the enterprise of scholarship in the reverent mode.

The problem is, feminist criticism does not and cannot stop there. The problem is, you notice things when you are engaged in this kind of project and reading closely (Tuana 1992, 5; Witt 1996, 4). You notice, for example, that the temporality of the relation to the African other that Kant seems to imagine, and the temporality of the relation between European men and women (where European women are *unmündlich*, or immature in relation to men, i.e., stuck at an earlier developmental stage, and Africans—presumably men and women—are stuck at a "primitive" stage) seems to permeate the whole

structure of Kant's work (Mann 2006). You suspect there is a more than accidental relation between these things. You think someone should probably point this out, so you do. This upsets the reverent ones who believe that to speak of such things, to point out that the entire temporal structure underlying a work of great genius is encrusted with the colonial, masculinist enterprise, does not fall into the category of what we call "scholarship" at all. It is, rather, an act of near-violence, like shitting on the steps of the temple or laying your grubby hands on the Ark of the Covenant, or having sex behind the altar, or skinny dipping in the baptismal pool with your drunken high school friends.

It is the kind of act that blows things up. You have essentially taken a cannon to the canon, let shrapnel loose in the chapel. The kind of feminist criticism that enacts this sort of irreverence is often regarded as beneath contempt, or slightly ridiculous. Embarrassing really. The only possible responses are to mount a spirited defense in which you insist that this *not*-philosophy is not philosophy—the feminist critics are surface dwellers like sociologists or historians (Alcoff 2000a, 841)—or to ignore the act altogether, pretend it hasn't happened, and go on with the worship service. Stop up your ears and hum hymns.

The crucial point is that feminist scholarship can only be received as scholarship by the reverent ones on the condition that their reverence is affirmed and secured in advance. The affective mood is paramount in importance to the scholarly questions, and this set of passionate affective commitments will determine the fate of feminist thought once it leaves the mouth or pen of the feminist thinker. These affective commitments are *at stake,* but *unthematized.*

I want to point out that this is a slightly different claim than the one we are perhaps familiar with, which Witt, among others, has put forward. She argues that it is because philosophers think of themselves in a certain way, and think of philosophical practice in a certain way, that philosophers cannot hear the claims of feminist critics as anything but a call to war. "The gender neutrality of philosophy is normative," she writes, "and therefore not amenable to mere empirical refutation" (2006, 542). In other words, proving that a particular bit of philosophy is not gender neutral, or that thousands of particular bits—which starts to seem to add up to the whole thing—are not gender neutral, does not seem to shake philosophy's belief in its own gender-neutrality. What gets in the way is "the powerful self-image of philosophy as a nonsituated (gender-neutral) and nonpragmatic discipline, a self-understanding that is extremely resilient and resistant to alteration" (Witt 2006, 549). Now the problem with this claim—that it is the way that philosophers understand their work to be "nonsituated and nonpragmatic" that causes them to be unable to engage feminist thinking—is that the more situated and pragmatic philosophers, like the pragmatists, for example, or practitioners of some versions of hermeneutics, or the Marxists in some cases, tend to be as unable, or nearly as unable, to hear the claims of feminist critics as the rest.

 I suspect that the philosophers' "self-understanding" is less fundamentally at stake than something that operates beneath and before any sort of conscious self-conceptualization. The passionate affective investments and intensities that undergird things like an articulable self-understanding, those affective intensities to which we don't necessarily or easily acquire conscious access, but which nevertheless send us into fits of defensive life-or-death reactivity, are at play. These affective investments run in directions that in no way faithfully mirror one's conscious self-understanding at any given historical moment. In fact they might even run in the opposite direction to one's own self-under-

standing, so that they tend to make one literally incoherent at certain moments—which does not seem to diffuse the intensity of the passions in question.

We can call these commitments aesthetic in the broad sense, in the old sense of that term, meaning they are carried in the body, they are in evidence in our gestural life and rooted in our image-world, they are constituted in stories and legends, in the metaphors we choose, in the tone and tenor of our speech more than its content. They are at home in the philosophical imaginary (to use Michelle Le Doeuff's 1990 formulation) but may never cross over into conscious awareness, or only partially and in fragments. When these commitments are threatened, we are likely to experience the threat at one level but understand it on another. We experience it as a threat to our very existence, to our place in being, to the entire complex of meaning that makes a life this sort of life—in this case the philosophical life. But because we do not necessarily or automatically have conscious access to what is going on, even as it undergirds and shapes what we call consciousness, we respond with arguments or claims that don't make any sense, we flail around to find a response that will do justice to the sense of injured reverence, which, unnamed and unthematized, dominates such engagements and motivates the flailing.

This is why arguments against feminist philosophy as such, as opposed to specific arguments made from actual engagements with specific claims made by specific feminists, tend to make so little sense. Let me give an example, popular in the last couple of years. If you trawl the philosophy blogs, which I try to always avoid, or if you listen to what your colleagues are saying (which I try to do when I can bear it), you will encounter the claim that there is no connection between feminist philosophy and the welcoming of women into philosophy on equal terms with men. In other words, philosophy's demographics and philosophy's response to feminism have no relation. One can have, it is said, a high opinion of women and a low opinion of feminist philosophy—*all of it*, very apparently without having read any of it—at the same time. The stronger version of this claim is that the presence of feminist philosophy is actually turning women away from philosophy, that the reason philosophy's demographics are so bad is that women think if they become philosophers they have to become feminists. I heard this claim directly from the mouth of the chair of one of the country's top notch programs in continental philosophy. Now this is an intelligent man. He has got to know that philosophy's demographics problem didn't start with the arrival on the scene of feminist philosophy, historically. If he were thinking, in that moment, he would have to consider that the school of thought that affirms the equality and dignity of women is important to promote the equality and dignity of women in the historically and currently hostile climates and androcentric cultures of most philosophy departments. If he wanted more evidence he could simply review the demographics of philosophy departments and find a suggestive correlation between an emphasis on feminist philosophy and a better gender balance—though tracing this correlation might be too sociological an endeavor for such an elevated intelligence. Instead, his fear disguises itself as a reasoned claim and speaks, unexamined, unreflected—unrecognized by him as fear speaking. His fear that he no longer belongs, that a bombshell has been dropped right into the heart of this reverential affective field, that a cannon has been discharged in the canon, emerges as incoherent thinking. The thinking and its incoherence are symptoms of experiencing oneself to be under siege on another level and being unable to speak about it, or even think about it, at that level.

The question is, if this is what we are up against, how does, how can, feminist philosophy work against or with or in relation to the problem of reverence? What can we hope

for if no amount of feminist thinking—no matter how sharp, how careful, how thorough and how right—stands a chance against this impassioned, life-or-death affective mood? What if we are facing a problem of dimensions, so that the dimension in which we work is not the dimension that must be reworked in order for feminist philosophy to remake the world of philosophy in the ways we wish to remake it? What if the dimension of ideas, conscious reflection, and careful argumentation, is strangely autonomous from philosophy's imaginary domain—and therefore more or less powerless against it—while at the same time being utterly dependent on it? How does feminist philosophy operate, when it does, on philosophy's imaginary domain, rather than just on its conscious commitments?

Monique Wittig, thinking more about literature than philosophy, worked and reworked this question over the course of her entire writing career. She famously advocated the occupation of patriarchal literary forms. Her own work mimicked various literary forms: the bildungsroman (*The Opoponax*), the epic poem (*Les Guérillères*), the anatomy textbook and the *Song of Songs* (*The Lesbian Body*), *Dante's Inferno* (*Across the Acheron*), etc. She also wrote a single, seven-page essay on what it means to occupy a patriarchal form, entitled "The Trojan Horse" (1992).

> At first it looks strange to the Trojans, the wooden horse, off color, outsized, barbaric. Like a mountain, it reaches up to the sky. Then, little by little, they discover the familiar forms which coincide with those of a horse. Already for them, the Trojans, there have been many forms, various ones, sometimes contradictory, that were put together and worked into creating a horse, for they have an old culture. The horse built by the Greeks is doubtlessly also one for the Trojans, while they still consider it with uneasiness. It is barbaric for its size but also for its form, too raw for them . . . But later on they become fond of the apparent simplicity, within which they see sophistication. They see, by now, all the elaboration that was hidden at first under a brutal coarseness. They come to see as strong, powerful, the work they had considered formless. They want to make it theirs, to adopt it as a monument and shelter it within their walls, a gratuitous object whose only purpose is to be found in itself. But what if it were a war machine? (68)

Wittig goes on to claim that "any work with a new form operates as a war machine, because its design and its goal is to pulverize the old forms and formal conventions" (68-69). Her first novel, *The Opoponax*, won the *prix Médicis* and catapulted her to fame on the French literary scene in 1964. Julia Balén (2004) cites *The New York Times* Book Review in her memorial for Wittig. Of *The Opoponax,* Balén writes:

> One of its most revolutionary aspects is her use of pronouns, a project she developed throughout her *oeuvre*. Resisting language's insistent generalization of the masculine and particularization of the feminine, Wittig brilliantly and effectively used the non-gendered pronoun "one" to articulate lesbian childhood experiences as the general. This allowed her to, in her own words, "locate the characters outside of the social division by sexes and annul it for the duration of the book." Claude Simon

> expressed evidence of her success when he wrote in his 1964 review of
> the book, "I see, I breathe, I chew, I feel through her eyes, her mouth,
> her hands, her skin." He, in effect, became lesbian—for the moment,
> neither man nor woman. All of her fiction continued this project of re-
> sisting what she came to call "the mark of gender." (5)

Straight, non-feminist readers, men and women, fell in love with the book. It was only after loving it that they realized they became lesbian for the duration of its reading.

Wittig takes Marcel Proust as her model here. In a discussion of Proust, she extols the way his literary forms practically lulled people to sleep. "At first everybody thought [*Remembrance of Things Past*] was only a *roman à clef* and a minute description of Parisian high society" (1992, 75). It was only slowly, over time, that it became clear that literally "everybody ends up being homosexual," and that Proust had succeeded in "turning the real world into a homosexual-only world" (75). "Characters and given moments are prepared, like so many layers, in order to build, little by little, the subject as being homosexual for the first time in history"—but by that time the "sophisticates" were already smitten, i.e., were themselves already homosexualized in the reading (74).

Wittig is completely unabashed about trying to universalize the lesbian point of view. In *Les Guérillères*, the third person feminine plural pronoun *elles* is gradually universalized over the course of the novel, becoming the subject of history, so that by the end, this *elles* includes subjects with bodies that we would tend to regard as male—designated in a collection of subjects by the third person feminine plural. "For in literature," she writes, "history intervenes at the individual and subjective level and manifests itself in the particular point of view of the writer. It is then one of the most vital and strategic parts of the writer's task to universalize this point of view" (1992, 74). The Trojan horse works because the Trojans recognize, and then begin to love, its form—by then it is too late, it has become part of them, they belong to it as much as it belongs to them. The horse unleashes a force that destroys them. "It is the attempted universalization of the point of view that turns or does not turn a literary work into a war machine," Wittig writes (75).

If I were to say, today, that I think we ought to embrace the objective, as feminist philosophers, of universalizing the feminist point of view—I could be accused of engaging in blasphemous slander. I can almost hear my readers' objections firing like little involuntary muscle spasms, foot cramps, and charlie horses—some of you seem to be groaning in pain. These reflex-reactions take two forms, at least. First, you think we ought to know, by now, that there is no singular feminist point of view to universalize—Bonnie Mann, of all people, ought to know that. Any student who has taken a course in feminist philosophy, only one, already knows that. Second, feminists are all about particularizing and specifying, not universalizing: to universalize is to repeat the patriarchal and colonial gesture that messed everything up in the first place. It is an arrogant move, one that defies the plea for epistemic humility that characterizes almost all feminist, anti-racist, and decolonial work.

So let me try to calm those cramping muscles and see if I can keep you with me here, for at least a little while longer. Even if we think we do not, all feminists do agree on one thing: the importance of articulating and promoting the emancipatory aspirations of women—the emancipatory aspirations of some women, somewhere—is an important and valuable and even urgent historical undertaking. How to do that, what it means to do that, which women are in question in each particular moment, what their emancipatory aspirations look like, what it means to be a woman, and who gets

to or has to be one—even if that category is itself doomed to disappear—all of these things are points of disagreement. But for now, while folks called women, or folks who call themselves women, continue to exist, and while the category continues to operate quite robustly in our languages and our lived experience (in no matter how contested a fashion), the emancipatory aspirations of the people who are categorized as women or categorize themselves as women—and therefore live as women, however variously positioned or situated—are worth something, are worth a great deal. A feminist is someone who carries with her, consciously or unconsciously, explicitly or implicitly, this deep, felt sense of the worth of, the dignity of, the importance of, and the concerns and experiences of people called women, in whatever specific context they receive that designation. This is the affective world of belonging of a feminist: it is about what matters, it is about the deep affective sense of something or someone *mattering enough* that it/they *should* matter to everyone. What it means to be antifeminist is *not* to carry this deep, felt sense of the worth of, the dignity of, the *mattering* of, and the aspirations of people so designated, at least not as such. So when I say we want to universalize the feminist point of view, what I mean is that we want to universalize this deeply felt sense that women matter, in whatever specific context we are busy with. Of course it is possible to have the sense that only some women matter, in some contexts, which is what white feminists have been challenged on by women of color and decolonial feminists, and what straight feminists have been challenged on by lesbians, etc. We could say that many feminists, too, have failed to universalize this deeply held conviction that *women matter.*

But why universalize at all? Is not the one consistent plea in contemporary feminism, critical race theory, and decolonial thought a plea for epistemic humility? A plea that we recognize what we know as partial, tentative, situated, and local? Of course that plea deconstructs itself because if everyone joins in this new appreciation for and cultivation of humility—which is, after all, the hope—we will have successfully universalized the point of view that advocates a refusal to universalize one's point of view. So we speak of strategic, historically specific, practical, temporary, or tentative universalizations (Butler 2000).

Universalization, here, does not masquerade as observational acuity, as it does in traditional phenomenology, as I will argue in the second half of this essay. In traditional phenomenology, the phenomenon simply gives itself to the supposedly universal, generic subject, in and through its supposedly universal structures and values. The structures are taken to be universal in the observational sense, while the values are universal in the normative sense. The universalization I advocate is normative in the aspirational sense at the level of value. Women's lives *should* matter, to everyone. Making them matter is a political undertaking. Wittig's universalization requires the popularization and aestheticization (making beautiful, and making familiar, in this case) of a *particular* point of view at the level of experience. My approach is to advocate a phenomenology that strives to do justice to the particular at the level of experience, in order to reveal the sort of world (for which we are responsible) in which a singular life unfolds, and to universalize its *mattering*, its *importance.* In both cases, if the undertaking is effectual, the reader enters into the point of view of a particular other and the world is revealed differently as a result. What is universalized is an understanding and embodied experience of the world as shaped by particular injustice, as subject to a reordering of both values and material relations in the direction of justice, and as demanding a shouldering of

responsibility for the values that might affect such a transformation.

So how do we understand the relation between Wittig's plea for the universalization of what she called the lesbian point of view (but we could think in terms of any liberatory point of view) and the problem of reverence that we feminist philosophers face in our philosophical lives?[2] Is it not the case that this is precisely what the reverent ones are so afraid of: that their exclusive point of view (concomitantly, their superior world of values, the special mattering of what matters to them) will become obsolete? Of course, the answer to that question is, has to be, yes. Feminist philosophy, if successful, will destroy the way of life you love, will undo your place in existence, will undermine everything you hold dear. It really is very, very scary.

At the same time, there is a new place in existence, a new set of affective commitments that you are already learning as you touch the legs of the great wooden horse, marvel at its form, recognize it as a horse like but unlike any other horse. By the time the warriors emerge from its belly, it is already too late. You have already been taken in, you've already changed—even if you don't quite know it—because the world you exist in changed the minute the horse was pulled through the city gates. Because you accidentally fell in love with, or at least in league with, that horse, as it became part of the space of your existence. It started to belong to you. You started to belong to it.

Let me give a very mundane example. It is no longer possible for most philosophers, in my context, to write using "he" and "him" and "his" as the universal pronoun. I have been surprised to read the work of my most reverent colleagues, who now use "she" as the universal pronoun. This may seem to be a mere superficial adjustment, and usually, I'm the one who reads every superficial advance as actually a deep retrenchment—usually, I am the most pessimistic person in the room—but, I am going to argue for an optimistic assessment of this change. Sometimes this use of the feminine is done in an absolutely silly and misleading way, as when someone writes, "for Kant, Enlightenment meant the arrival of the autonomous moral subject, she…" I find this very annoying, to say the least, but a certain amount of bumbling is to be expected. Those same philosophers cannot, unselfconsciously, in their own voice, write "the subject, he…" or "the moral agent, he…" or "the citizen, he…" anymore. Something about their world has been disrupted. Their language has had a hole blasted in it: they write, "the subject…."—gap, gasp, space, abyss—*she*. Now this is not a smooth transition. There is nothing natural or innocuous or slick or easy about the form of this sentence. It startles—the gap, gasp, space, abyss is linked to the pronoun. But it is easier for the reverent ones, now, to write "the subject, she" than it is to write "the subject, he." What happened? "The subject, he…" has come to designate a false universal, more importantly it has come to *feel* like a false universal; it has come to be experienced, in the body, as an arrogant, colonizing point of view. It has come to be experienced as a kind of speech that makes one narrow and outdated—if you write that, it itches. There is a giant hole in language that is *experienced in the body* as a sort of opening, a clearing, an empty space—fear and possibility. The decision "she" is made. The word "she" is written. The writer experiences himself in this moment, no doubt, as having enacted a kind of generosity. But adaptation to a new world feels good, if also strange. To write "he"

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[2] This is not to say that one liberatory point of view is equivalent to another. It is precisely in their specificity that liberatory points of view must work toward universalization, mattering to everyone in their specificity. Most recently the Black Lives Matter movement has actualized this aspiration in extremely effective and persuasive terms.

would be stranger still. He finds he no longer belongs to a world in which it is possible, unselfconsciously, without an awareness of the lifted feminist eyebrow, to write, "the subject, he…". But when he confronts the gap, the abyss, and writes "she," he affirms his belonging to a new world in which the point of view that claimed the injustice of the masculine universal has won the day—he has internalized the raised feminist eyebrow in the form of his new, still awkward speech. The raised feminist eyebrow is almost his own eyebrow, it is becoming his own eyebrow. Of course it is terrifying to lose one's eyebrows in the midst of cannon fire, but it helps to feel the new ones growing in.

How do we get the Trojan Horse through the gates? The biggest problem with philosophy's incapacities in relation to feminism is that the vast majority of philosophers can go through their entire training without ever encountering feminist thought in a sustained, in-depth, meaningful way. They are assigned, maybe, one feminist essay in a class about something else, without much context or pedagogical finesse, and they are willing from that experience—which simply serves to produce an *injured sense of reverence*, but doesn't build anything—to proclaim their low opinion of the whole feminist endeavor.

In my own department, feminist philosophy was institutionalized as a requirement, for every graduate student, before I joined the program. At first, the students who come to us who have not had any exposure to feminist philosophy—and there are many—eye the horse with suspicion, but then, over time, in forced close proximity, many of them, maybe even most of them, start to recognize its form: it starts to look and feel like philosophy to them, they start to love it a little bit. By the time the war machine is unleashed, they already belong to its world, it already belongs to them. By the time their eyebrows are singed off, the new ones have already started to grow in.

In the discipline as a whole, the institutions are more resistant, the sense of reverence more established and tenacious. How does one occupy a patriarchal philosophical form, work its limits, infiltrate it, crack it open?

II.
THE (IM)PROPER MATTER OF CONCERN FOR FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGY

How does one occupy *phenomenology* as a particular patriarchal, philosophical form? The question may make it sound as if I am about to offer my readers a how-to lesson, a manual full of instructions for the aspiring feminist phenomenologist, as if we could functionalize this project and break it down into steps A, B and C. But the feminist phenomenologist is not in the business of manufacturing things, according to a set of pre-established rules, and I have no toolbox full of phenomenological implements to offer. In fact, the first thing I will claim about feminist phenomenology is that it does not provide a set of principles in advance. The approach is shaped as much by the *matter of concern* which draws the philosopher's attention, as by the philosopher herself, or to put it more succinctly: the nature of the inquiry is constituted substantially by the nature of its object.

Indeed, if I were to try to say what characterizes feminist phenomenology in general, I would have to start with the most basic or primary phenomenon with which it concerns itself. We must start by asking not, "Which phenomenological implements does the feminist thinker employ?" but "What commands her attention?" or "What

animates her curiosity?" Only then can the inquiry turn to the philosophical practice appropriate to the phenomenon in question. To clarify, I am not asserting here that the matter of concern is wholly active and the one concerned is wholly passive in the development of the practice. I am suggesting, rather, that the practice arises in the relation between the matter and the philosopher, with all its specificity, its historical peculiarity, and its unique affective modalities. The question can be posed this way: what is the relation between the matter of concern and the philosopher, such that the practice develops in this way rather than that?

Interestingly, those who are known as feminist phenomenologists do not even agree onthe answer to this question. Let me give you an example from two well-known figures in feminist phenomenology, Sara Heinämaa and Johanna Oksala. What is at stake in the difference between the two is nothing short of the proper object of feminist phenomenological concern, and because the matter of concern and our relationship to it constitutes the practice, what sort of practice feminist phenomenology is.

In Heinämaa's 2003 study of Beauvoirean phenomenology, entitled *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir*, she claims that in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir undertakes a phenomenological study in the tradition of Husserl, which she suggests is passed down to Beauvoir through Merleau-Ponty. "I argue," she writes, "that Beauvoir's discussion of femininity and sexual difference is phenomenological in its aims and its methods. Her basic starting points are in the Husserlian idea of the living body that she found developed in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*" (xii). It was Merleau-Ponty who convinced Beauvoir of Husserl's claim that "phenomenology is… a philosophy of corporeality and intersubjectivity" (xii). Phenomenology, on this account, is *already competent* to take up questions of sexual difference, it is simply a matter of turning our attention to a new object.

If we ask what feminist phenomenology is *about* in Heinämaa's view, what it concerns itself with, we have a clear answer in her claim that *The Second Sex* is "not a thesis about women's socialization, but a phenomenological inquiry into the constitution of the meaning of sexual difference" (2003, xiii); it is "not an argument against femininity" but "a disclosure of a feminine way of relating to the world" (xiv). In other words, "the fundamental question about the sexual difference" is: "what does it *mean* to *be* a woman, and how does the world appear to such a being" (xvii). Beauvoir, like Luce Irigaray, who Heinämaa believes to have inherited and further elaborated Beauvoir's project, convinces us that "we need to turn back to experience and study the whole of it from a new view point, that of the female body" (xvii), which is not primarily about "a demand for equal value," but instead "implies a philosophical investigation into the origins of values and valuations" (xix). The feminist phenomenologist directs her attention to a different sort of existence than other phenomenologists, which is the source of values and valuations that have not yet been countenanced by phenomenology; but, it is the same phenomenology that enables this new inquiry.

I want to pay attention here to the claim that *The Second Sex* is "not a thesis about women's socialization," and that Beauvoir does not offer us "an argument against femininity."

Take the claim that *The Second Sex* does not offer a thesis about women's socialization. On the first reading, this flies in the face of even the most well-known passages of Beauvoir's text, passages in which she talks about the effects that adult behavior and expectations have on children, such as when parents and other adults praise girls for

how they appear, but praise boys for what they do; see, for example (2010, 292–295); passages in which she describes the second weaning, which boys undergo but girls do not (285–287); passages in which she laments the physically restricted world that adults offer to girls (over and over again Beauvoir expresses outrage that girls are not allowed to climb trees—see for example: 60, 300–1); the famous passage in which Beauvoir discusses the self-alienation of the boy in his penis, and the girl in her doll and the deep impact these differences have on the formation of one's self-consciousness (292–294); not to mention those places in the text in which she discusses the messages of fairy tales, the operations of the myths (throughout, but especially Part III). Now the word "social-ization" might be a reductive word for what she is describing and criticizing. It would be better to say that Beauvoir offers us a rich, critical account of the girl's relentless encounter with the norms and material conditions of femininity in language, in institu-tions, and in embodied practices. "Socialization" may be a mundane way of capturing that, but certainly we could not claim that Beauvoir is *not* giving us an account of, even a thesis about, socialization! In fact, her thesis is clear: *the socialization of girl children trains them for complicity with their own subordination, it gives them an existential stake in the injustices that rob them of their full humanity.*

Similarly, how do we reconcile Heinämaa's claim that Beauvoir does not offer us "an argument against femininity" when Beauvoir refers over and over again to femininity as *mutilation*, and suggests in one striking and powerful passage that femininity with all its delights must be sacrificed if liberty is to be won? Comparing the case to the great and beautiful, old southern plantations in the United States, which depended on slavery for their greatness, of "feminine charm" Beauvoir writes: "[D]oes such a fleeting mir-acle … justify perpetuating a situation that is so damaging for both sexes? The beauty of flowers and women's charms can be appreciated for what they are worth," she con-tinues, but "if these treasures are paid for with blood or misery, one must be willing to sacrifice them" (2010, 764).

Now, to be sure, Beauvoir uses the French term for femininity in more than one sense. Sometimes, *féminin* simply means "pertaining to women," but often it shares the specific valence of the English term, which always carries with it shades of pink, i.e., the delicacy of lace, connotations of weakness, childlikeness, a sometimes-charming, sometimes-vicious mendacity, and the absence of courage, competence, and honor. "In exchange for her freedom," Beauvoir writes, "[woman] was given fallacious treasures of 'femininity' as a gift" (2010, 757). "To be feminine," Beauvoir says, "is to show oneself as weak, futile, passive and docile" (348). A woman's femininity is, in fact, in conflict with her humanity, as Beauvoir observes again and again: "being an autonomous ac-tivity contradicts her femininity," the girl "already knows that accepting herself as a woman means resigning and mutilating herself" (725, 308). "The conflict will last as long as … femininity is perpetuated as such" (755).

So, on a first reading, I find Heinämaa's claims that Beauvoir is not centrally and fundamentally concerned with the socialization of girls and is not offering a critique of femininity deeply misplaced. Certainly, Beauvoir does not claim that *all* significant structures of women's existence are always and only exploitative and destructively nor-mative. The dimensions of injustice which tend to close time and determine a woman's future, are deeply entangled with stubborn tendencies toward resistance, spontaneity, and freedom. These are not usually *entirely* crushed by the normative weight of feminine destiny. The girl is a becoming, not a being, and not always simply complicit. She resists

spontaneously, repeatedly, sometimes in destructive ways, sometimes in surprisingly creative and positive ways. Beauvoir, in this dimension of her thought, is not giving us a *reductive* thesis about socialization, but a thesis about the possibilities of freedom in the face of a life-long confrontation with values and material arrangements generated in a society run by men.

Similarly, Beauvoir does, indeed, give us many, many arguments against femininity understood not as what pertains to women, but as a certain stylization of gender around values of weakness, vulnerability, childlikeness, incompetence, narcissism, dissimulation, self-sacrifice, parasitic existential dependence on masculinist judgment, and material dependence on men's money. In some sense, the entire one-thousand page treatise is an argument against femininity. But if Heinämaa is referencing femininity in its first sense, as denoting simply that which "pertains to women," if she only means to suggest, by saying that she does not give us an argument against femininity, that Beauvoir does not claim that women should become men, then Heinämaa offers us an important corrective to those who have read Beauvoir as a "masculinist."

I worry about this tendency in Heinämaa's work—to sideline the importance of the more overtly political dimensions of Beauvoir's philosophy; even to deny that those dimensions are properly part of her phenomenological project. By stripping sexual difference of the material and cultural context of injustice that constitutes it, *as it is lived*, Heinämaa constrains the phenomenon in advance, peels away history and power, so that sexual difference can appear as *properly phenomenological*.[3] She *strains out* the elements of Beauvoir's thought that are *improper* to phenomenological inquiry in its classical form. This stripped-down object, still called sexual difference but unrecognizable from the perspective of *lived* sexual difference, lends itself to an investigation through the phenomenological method passed down from Husserl, without disrupting or challenging that practice. Reduced to an ahistorical difference between bodies, sexual difference lends itself to an affirmation of the competence of the classical phenomenological method. Certainly, one of the motivations in reading Beauvoir in this way is just to see her taken seriously, finally, but might there also be a costly albeit not consciously willed acquiescence to an impassioned paternal lineage—an avoidance of danger—a circumvention of the problem of injured reverence in relation to a certain canonical figure? And, if so, at what cost?

Oksala gives a very different account of feminist phenomenology in her new book, *Feminist Experiences: Foucauldian and Phenomenological Investigations* (2016). First, she suggests that "in its traditional formulations phenomenology can't address the question of gender or sexual difference at all" (97), since "the question of gender or sexual difference cannot arise in the phenomenological analysis of transcendental subjectivity," because transcendental subjectivity "must rise above or look behind these mundane phenomena"—that's how it gets to be transcendental (98). No wonder, then, that she suggests that feminist phenomenologists have tended to look to Merleau-Ponty, with his emphasis on the unachievability of a complete transcendental reduction, and his centralizing of the lived body and embodied style (99).[4]

Oksala's example in this section is Heinämaa. She cites Heinämaa's claim that "the principle difference" with which feminist phenomenology concerns itself "is the experi-

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[3] See Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (2003) and Heinämaa, "Transformations of Old Age: Selfhood, Normativity, and Time" (2014).

[4] It is interesting that Heinämaa reads Merleau-Ponty as the loyal inheritor of Husserl's project, while Oksala, in keeping with a number of other feminist thinkers, reads Merleau-Ponty against Husserl.

ential difference between two types of living bodies, women's bodies and men's bodies" (quoted in Oksala 2016, 100). Oksala worries that this sort of conclusion might "push us back into defending a form of corporeal essentialism" (99), and that accounts of sexual difference exclusively focused on the difference between living bodies are simply too limited, even reductive, to do justice to the phenomenon of sexual difference as it is given. "The extent to which gender or sexual difference is a philosophical question," she writes:

> . . . is not an issue that can be settled by just studying bodies, even if they are understood phenomenologically as opposed to biologically. It would thus be simplistic to conclude that . . . the philosophical meaning of gender could be reduced to the difference between two types of bodies. (100)

For Oksala, the proper matter of concern for any feminist philosophical inquiry is both "what kinds of beings these women are" and "how the facts about them are conceptualized, organized, and legitimized" in a situation of injustice (4). To do justice to the phenomenon as it manifests in the world, she suggests, any feminist philosophical inquiry "must also encompass a study of the culturally specific ontological schemas in which those bodies and experiences gain value and meaning" (101). In other words, to do justice to the phenomenon of sexual difference one must pay attention to the conditions of injustice under which the phenomenon is given and by which it is constituted in its particularity.

Oksala's account of the feminist phenomenological project is unapologetically interested, unreservedly political. "A key objective of feminist philosophy is to expose, analyse, criticize, and ultimately change the power relations that produce and organize society, or more fundamentally reality, in a way that makes it unequal or unjust for beings who are constructed and classified as women" (2016, 3). In other words, feminism is "first and foremost a form of *social critique*" (3). She suggests that "phenomenology can provide a fruitful theoretical and methodological framework for feminist philosophy, but only if it is radically modified" (13). As long as feminist phenomenology regards itself as a "faithful assistant to the phenomenological project … dealing with its marginal or regional subthemes," it will fail to do its work (88). Instead, "it should be understood as a critical current going through the whole body of phenomenological thinking reaching all the way down to its most fundamental tenets" (89). For phenomenology to be feminist, Oksala suggests, it needs to embrace the challenge of "destabilizing phenomenological thinking" as we have inherited it (96).

Oksala turns to Foucault to engage these questions, and suggests that Foucault might be a better source for feminist philosophical reflections than the classical phenomenology of Husserl.[5] She finally opts for what she calls "post-phenomenology," which she connects with what thinkers like Anthony Steinbock take up under the heading of "generative phenomenology" (1995). On Oksala's account, this sort of phenomenological practice decenters the notion of experience constituted by the subject in favor

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[5] Space does not permit me to go into any detail about Oksala's turn to Foucault, so I simply note it, but there is something worrisome here. We have, to simplify things too much and move too quickly, arrived at a point where the conflict is between Husserlian phenomenology and Foucauldian post-phenomenology. Feminist phenomenologists can and should draw on every available and competent resource, but our main task is to discover and establish the practice that is demanded by the phenomenon of sexual difference, which no "father-figure" will provide whole cloth.

of the event, which is not constituted by but *undergone* by the subject (Oksala 2016, 96). Generative phenomenology claims more broadly to be able to deal with a temporality that extends beyond the life of the individual subject, with the sorts of historically established structures and institutions that shape and constitute subjective experience, but pre-exist the subject of that experience, or endure after her passing.

To summarize, the proper matter of concern for feminist phenomenology is, on Heinämaa's view, embodied sexual difference, at a level that is prior to the political and social dimensions of its formation. On Oksala's view, one cannot reduce the phenomenon of sexual difference to embodied difference; embodied differences themselves are only adequately understood as ensconced in a subject-world relation that is forged in the fires of sedimented, historical relations of power, bound to institutional structures that materialize those relations, and to linguistic arrangements that bear the marks of injustice. The proper object of feminist phenomenology exceeds the bounds of the female body, the woman subject; it includes the ontology of the event and asks after woman in her historical becoming.

It is my contention that we already find the beginning of the practice Oksala calls for in Beauvoir.[6] Now, all, or at least most, of the great men who are phenomenologists have been quite willing to talk *about* phenomenology, sometimes they talk *about* it more than they actually practice it. But Beauvoir mostly just does it, simply undertakes the practice, so it is harder to discern the shape of her phenomenological approach. But there is a positive inheritance for feminist phenomenologists here that departs from and undoes the tradition out of which it emerges. Phenomenology understood not as a toolbox, but as a practice that must be practiced: a kind of doing that must be undertaken, a kind of thinking that must be thought, in order to be understood.

III.
BEAUVOIR'S PHENOMENOLOGICAL PRACTICE

What Oksala calls post-phenomenology, what might be called critical phenomenology, what I would simply call feminist phenomenology, admits its own active, ethical motivations. It seeks not just to describe the world in other words, but to change it—particularly to intervene in those power relations that have sedimented into conditions of injustice. Beauvoir takes as her object of concern, not sexual difference as such, as if there were such a thing, but sexual difference as it is constituted through injustice.

The matter of concern and her relationship to it shape her philosophical practice. I will mention four things which characterize this relation.[7]`

First, Beauvoir does not presume that one can "bracket" one's prejudices at the outset of an inquiry, or that one can in any immediate way neutralize the force of interested, located, particular participation in the ethical background of the inquiry. Instead, one must pass through the prejudices, keeping them close at hand and working on them, in order to begin the never-complete task of neutralizing their hold on us. Loosening the

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[6] I am pushing back on Oksala's turn to Foucault, here. While poststructuralist thinkers like Foucault and Butler have a great deal to add to a feminist phenomenological inquiry, my view is that much is lost when one abandons a phenomenological approach. Beauvoir practices phenomenology differently rather than sacrificing it, as Foucault and Butler tend to do (though not always).

[7] A good portion of the section that follows was previously published (Mann 2014a, 4–29; 2014b).

intentional threads is not possible through an act of the will, nor will any amount of "imaginative variation" that I do by myself, sitting in a room, accomplish it. One cannot put one's belief in the actuality of women as a naturally given phenomenon out of play by some rigorous act of internal mental discipline, because the very consciousness which must discipline itself to put such things out of play has already been shaped by the prejudices it seeks to neutralize. Feminists will be (and have been) extremely skeptical of claims to have "set aside" prejudices through an imaginative or meditative practice in order to reach the essential structures of experience, given that these prejudices are not only deeply entrenched, historically and culturally sedimented, and institutionalized, but are also tied to real material interests and entangled with profoundly personal processes of identity formation; they are, in fact, part of what shapes our imaginative and meditative capacities in the first place.[8] If one's very consciousness is formed in the fires of one's value-laden prejudices, one cannot, by an act of conscious determination, put them out of play.

For Beauvoir, if there is an *epoché* it is a matter of labor, not of willpower. In her hands, setting aside our preconceptions turns out to be tedious, enraging, and exhaustive hard work; a painstaking reconstitution of our ability to perceive and imagine in ways that exceed the rigid confines of historically sedimented prejudice. Those hundreds of pages addressing the data of biological science, history, literature, specific case studies, and the myths of sexual difference are that work; a working-through which slowly, painfully reinstates the contingency of the contingent-which-has-been-rendered-necessary.

Second, Beauvoir's practice of "imaginative variation" requires more than fanciful reflections on the possible modes of existence of a phenomenon. Recognizing that the imagination is as much a force for binding an individual subject to her limited perspective as it is a force for freeing her from it, imaginative variation takes on the form of a kind of relentless migration between various points of view, each of them bound by particular interests with ethical consequences. This results in the sometimes maddening polyvocality of Beauvoir's text. For her, imaginative variation involves the perspective of a plurality of others, which she constantly moves into and retreats from. Beauvoir's infamous practice of citation, in which long paragraphs, sometimes pages, are borrowed from other authors, can be understood in this light. Her reader is continually led into perspectives that are not Beauvoir's, or that are possibly becoming Beauvoir's. No matter how tiring, no matter how infuriating, this placing of oneself into an overwhelming plurality of particular, interested, value-laden perspectives is the practice that begins to allow for the cessation of the force of one's own prejudices, for a reconstituting of one's own passionate commitments. We might say, as perhaps Hannah Arendt would, that Beauvoir restores plurality to the world we share, against a sovereign point of view that demands to be the single, essential perspective.

Third, Beauvoir's practice involves a certain kind of movement, which I will call, borrowing a term from some of my students in the process of struggling with Beauvoir's

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[8] The most well-known conversation about this question is that between Joan Scott (1992) and Linda Alcoff (2000b), in which Scott challenges the authority of experience precisely on the grounds I have mentioned here and Alcoff defends a phenomenological account of experience as important to feminist claims. Judith Butler writes, "[t]he questioning of taken-for-granted conditions becomes possible on occasion; but we cannot get there through a thought experiment, an epoché or act of the will" (2004, 107–108)." Oksala replies to this concern as well as the Scott/Alcoff debate (2016, 50–52). Oksala's claim is that the phenomenological method must be modified since we cannot "by some supreme methodological step such as the epoché … leave all our ontological commitments behind" (105).

phenomenological approach, an *oscillation*.[9] This oscillation is from the most concrete, particular, and located events and perspectives, to the general features of human experience, and back again.

Beauvoir uses literature richly and relentlessly to move her reader into the acute experience of the minutest details of a particular life. Just as she puts us into the body of a girl watching her mother do the dishes, crushed by the insight that this repetitious act is the shape of her future, we are launched into a discussion of the temporality of freedom, which applies to all human existence (2010, 475). Just as she works the generality of the crossed temporalities of transcendence and immanence, we find ourselves in the perspective of a housewife confronting a ball of dust under the couch with a ferocity that shows her very existence is at stake in the confrontation (475). This relentless motion is what allows Beauvoir to let the particularity of the phenomenon speak, to resist the violence of the patriarchal fantasy of the generic universal. Consequently, the results of Beauvoir's inquiry remain messy and ambivalent. One does not so much succeed at separating the general features of human existence from their contingent, empirical formations, as one begins to note how they are entangled. One does not arrive at pure consciousness or pure experience or even the ontological dimension of human existence extricated from the dreary, messy realities of how it is lived by particular subjects in particular, ethically laden situations. Beauvoir's "reduction," in other words, does not lead "behind" or "beneath" contingent features of human existence, but back into them, into their intertwinement with and parasitic dependence on the general features of human existence. The work of phenomenology, in Beauvoir's hands, does not bring us to "pure consciousness," "pure experience," or to "the ontological dimension of human existence," but to a consciousness burdened by material interests, experience shaped by situation and ontology entangled with ethical failure and political injustice.

Fourth, I want to suggest that the relation between the philosopher and the matter of concern that demands her attention is one that, while capable of moving through various affective modalities, is not simply referenced to an attitude of wonder as we generally understand it. While curiosity marks the inception of any philosophical inquiry, curiosity itself can be light and airy, or fiercely determined—it can be inflected with reverence (as it is when we call it wonder) or skepticism, aspirations to mastery or genuine humility. In the case of feminist phenomenology, the beginning of an inquiry is often inflected with a kind of irritation, the sense that something is wrong and must be righted, and at other moments it is fuming and outraged: as when Beauvoir spends nine pages at the beginning of her chapter on motherhood exploring the hypocrisy of French anti-abortion politics (2010, 524–533). Curiosity may be disgusted, or humorous, or both at the same time. All of these affective modalities belong to feminist philosophy, and they signal that it is a deeply interested endeavor, that something matters in a primary way, that fundamental values are at stake. In other words, detachment is not an affective attitude that pertains to feminist philosophy broadly, nor to feminist phenomenology specifically. The disruption of reverence that feminist philosophy effects is catalyzed by this *irritated* or *outraged* curiosity. The way that the matter of

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[9] I first paid attention to this term as apropos for Beauvoir's approach when it was used by Oscár Ralda in a graduate course on Beauvoir at the University of Oregon, and then discovered that a former student, Megan Burke, used the same term in a published paper on Beauvoir. Burke writes, "this relation and oscillation between the general and the particular is key in Beauvoir's work as it requires us to remain attentive to both the lived experience of the individual and to the lived experience of the social collective in which an individual finds herself" (2017, 170).

concern *matters* imbues feminist thinking with intensely interested affective attitudes.

While Beauvoir's work provides a positive inheritance and starting point for feminist phenomenologists, this does not mean that her phenomenological practice is not to be criticized, adapted, and transformed by contemporary thinkers—or even rejected outright if it proves to be incompetent in relation to certain phenomena.

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IV.
THE CASE OF SHAME

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If feminist phenomenology can only finally be learned through its practice, then it is important to look at a specific case, in order to disclose the difference of feminist phenomenology. In 2014, three books were published that all treat shame phenomenologically. In Anthony Steinbock's *Moral Emotions: Reclaiming the Evidence of the Heart*, shame is treated in its own chapter, as the second moral emotion of self-givenness. Dan Zahavi published *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame,* in which he claims that shame discloses dimensions of the self and self-experience that are mediated by others, even as he continues to maintain that, at the most fundamental level, selfhood is neither dependent on others nor socially constituted. In my own book, *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons from the War on Terror,* I explore shame's role in masculine identity-formation. Sovereign masculinity is taken to be an imaginary and aspirational status, which both plagues and exceeds identity. In the U.S. American context, it helps link the viscerally lived personal aspirations of vulnerable persons to nationalist bellicosity and the conceit of American exceptionalism.

While I began to develop my account of shame in *Sovereign Masculinity*, here I will draw more from an essay I wrote shortly after the book was published, entitled "Femininity, Shame and Redemption" (2018). I want to explore the differences between Zahavi's, Steinbock's, and my own accounts of shame, in order to show, or try to show, the difference of feminist phenomenology at work.

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THE HUMAN AGAINST LIFE:
SHAME AS MORAL AMELIORATION
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In our philosophical tradition, the human is often pitted against life. There are, of course, divisions, ruptures, and conflicts within the western philosophical tradition over the status of life, but I am emphasizing one dominant thread here. It weaves a tight connection between what counts as human, the experience of shame, and the relation of both to life. We could start almost anywhere in the history of western thought and pick up this thread. In Plato's *Phaedo,* those most human of all humans, the philosophers, are schooled by Socrates in the moment before his own death on the affinity between philosophy and death. In thinking, the philosopher seeks to escape the encumbrance of his body, and in death he is finally completely released from animal life. For the Christians, eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is equated with the knowledge of one's nakedness and gives rise to the first human experience of shame. This is shame in the face of what we might call one's animal vulnerability to death, and it results in the expulsion of Adam

and Eve from the Garden of Eden; to know one's nakedness is to know one's submersion in animal life, finitude, the vulnerability of the body. In Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic, the master becomes the master through his willingness to put power before life, to stake his life in order to achieve sovereignty. The slave's shame is in choosing life over power. Later, the slave realizes his power in another way; by coming to dominate, through the work of his hands, the very forces of life he succumbed to before, he overcomes shame.

One of the most explicit formulations of this conceptual entanglement of shame, life, and our notions of "the human" is to be found in the work of the German phenomenologist Max Scheler, who claims explicitly that "man's intention beyond himself and all life constitutes his essence … he is a thing that transcends its own life and all life" (1973, 289).[10] Steinbock follows Scheler's account of shame in *Moral Emotions*, arguing that shame is a self-revelatory emotion which discloses "the relation between life and spirit" (2014, 67). Citing Hegel, Scheler, and Agamben, Steinbock notes that all of them treat shame as "a matter of spirit in relation to life" (68). "For Scheler," Steinbock writes, "shame is an originary experience of the tension within the human being of person and life" (72). Referring to Hegel, he notes that "shame is the awakening of consciousness to life as evidence of the interval between spirit and life" (72). Steinbock tells us that shame happens when we are in the midst of the flow of existence as spirit but are suddenly turned back on ourselves such that our existence as life is exposed.

For Steinbock, shame is "at its core … a positive self-givenness grounded in self-love" since to be ashamed I have to experience "a diremptive movement whereby I am revealed to myself" in a way that threatens that positive self-givenness (2014, 82, 83). Shame is a positive moral emotion because it exposes me as vulnerable to the other, and undoes pride, the mistaken belief in my own self-groundedness. In Steinbock's religious phenomenological account, by bringing me to awareness of my existence as life, shame redeems me from that same dimension of existence by assuring me of my essential relation to the divine before whom I am shamed. Shame is ameliorative because it makes me confront the possibility that all I am is life, indistinguishable from all other life, and rescues me from this possibility by returning me to my original relation with God. Citing Steinbock positively, Zahavi agrees, suggesting that "rather than being inherently debilitating, shame might also, in short, play a constructive role in moral development" because it can "motivate me to reorient my way of living," though he notes in a footnote that there may be kinds of shame that are purely destructive. This reorientation is a recuperation of the sense of oneself grounded in love which shame disrupted, revealing it as grounded in divine love (215).

So, here comes that feminist irritation. This is a long history. It is a long history in which shame is associated with life; it is understood to be the affective modality of the person's relation to life-in-himself; it is credited with pushing him away from immersion in life toward the higher dimensions of human existence as spirit. At the very same times and in the very same contexts in which this historical association develops and persists, women of all classes and statuses, along with men who are poor, or slaves, or colonized—so perhaps eighty percent of the humans that are in geographic proximity

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[10] For Scheler, the key term is not "the human" but "the person," since the human is just another form of biological life, but he is trying to work out the distinctiveness of a kind of existence that other thinkers have used the word "human" to name. I think it is fair to say that in a broader inquiry, Scheler's notion of the "person" is part of the larger Western quest to distinguish the human and the animal, and we can use the term "human person" to link these efforts.

to, or in relation with, those thinking these thoughts—are irredeemably bound to life in the imaginary domain of the dominant class and through the material arrangements that support that imaginary. These eighty percent are given the sphere of life as their sphere of belonging and the shame of life as their inevitable lot—and this giving is manifested in the material and institutional forms of life that also constitute the thinker's world. The imaginary domain that develops historically and that persists, in which the thinker's *idea of himself* emerges as spirit against life, is intertwined with and dependent on the material arrangements that secure the subordination of these others. Shame is always being worked on and at work in two related dimensions: his own shame which is transitional to higher realms of human existence and moral standing, which he takes to be the generic human experience, and the backgrounded prereflective awareness of the other's shame, a *shame-status* rather than a *shame-event*, which fixes her in the lower realms, indicates permanent and unremitting moral failure, and as such, excludes her from the "generic" humanity at the center of this account. The ameliorative character of shame, for her, is excluded from the outset.

This relation is exceedingly well-studied, but Steinbock, writing in 2014, does not feel compelled to take note of it, reiterating affirmatively that shame arises in the tension between life and spirit and compels the subject to assume his spiritual inheritance or his moral obligations! Shame is discussed *in abstraction* from history and power (see below), as if it is an inheritance that belongs to all of us in the same way, with the same limits and possibilities, as if, after this history, the social location of the one shamed were not constitutive, at least co-constitutive, of the phenomenon. Further, the account flies in the face of actual empirical work on shame, which shows that it is anything but ameliorative. Shame, as it is lived rather than simply imagined, not only shuts down higher cognitive functions, but effectively shuts down the subject's ability to encounter certain others as deserving of moral consideration.[11]

THE TIME OF SHAME
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In a section of the text entitled "The Temporality of Shame as Presencing," Steinbock takes up the question of whether or not shame has a futural dimension. He argues that, whether I am ashamed of myself now in reference to who I once was, or ashamed of a past self in relation to who I am now, "the temporal determination of shame as presencing" is consistent (2014, 91-92). Shame involves both self-diremption and internal coherence: that past self that I am ashamed of is somehow distinct from who I am now, but is also still me. "Shame reveals me both as disjoined from and connected to myself," he notes. (93). Thus, shame has the effect of making me present to myself, revealing both a gap and a tie between myself as I am

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[11] See especially Tangey and Dearing's summary of empirical research on shame in *Shame and Guilt* (2003). Steinbock does acknowledge something he calls "debilitating shame," but he argues that the debilitating part is not actually the shame, but "the disordered heart" of the person who experiences the shame. It is the disordered heart that subordinates what he calls "spiritual values" to vital values or use values or even values of commodification. "Such a disordered heart," he writes, "can produce a debilitating shame" (2014, 81). Needless to say, focusing on the shamed one's "disordered heart" in a social context of deep injustice and near insurmountable pressures, seems cruel and insufficient when there is an actual case in view, rather than an imaginary one.

and myself as I once was. As for "anticipatory shame," Steinbock claims that it is not yet shame, and that the anticipation of shame is more related to shyness (96).

He concludes that "shame itself does not seem to possess a futural directedness" (93). In other words, when we are ashamed, we are ashamed of a past or present self, and thus shame does not have a futural dimension at all. "If something is going to count in shame, then it is going to be given as accomplished" (93).

Zahavi agrees that shame, at least "the interpersonal experience of shame that I am currently focusing on[,] might best be characterized in terms of a 'frozen now' … the future is lost, and the subject is fixed in the present moment" (2014, 223). Citing Jean-Paul Sartre, Zahavi argues that "in shame I experience myself as trapped in facticity, as being irremediably what I am (rather than as someone with future possibilities, as someone who can become otherwise)" (223). Even more strongly, "the acute feeling of interpersonal shame does not leave room for the exploration of future possibilities of redemption" (223).

Steinbock's account is a bit more nuanced when it comes to shame's relationship to a possible future, since shame stands in close relation to the hope of recovery (2014, 94). He notes, however, that the self that is to-be-recovered has a present temporality, since the person who will be recovered is "who I am," or we might say "who I really am."

Turning to gendered shame in the final section of this essay, I will agree with Zahavi that there are modes of shame in which all hope for redemption is crushed, where the crushing of hope, indeed, seems to be the productive work that the shame accomplishes. But as we will see in a moment, the problem with the conviction that shame *generally* has no futural dimension, is that it underplays the profoundly important role that hope for redemption plays in the shape and experience of other important modalities of shame. In some gendered shame, the hope of redemption is intensified and concentrated to such an extent that it is what enables shame to do its assigned work. It is, in other words, a central structuring feature of the shame *as it is lived*. It makes no sense to treat this dimension as if it were not proper to shame itself, once we pay attention to the lived instance. Even more, I will argue, the redemptive aspirations that shame unleashes in one modality provide the setting for the occasion of shame in the other, so that future-oriented shame is a necessary stage in the production process of the future-killing shame to come.

SHAME ABSTRACTED
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One key source of feminist irritation in relation to discussions of shame found in our philosophical tradition is that the philosophers' discussions, however compelling, remain persistently and consistently abstract—i.e., they remain disconnected from the specific living of shame in the specific historical and cultural context of the inquiry. They remain attached to the fantasy of a generic self, undergoing generic shame, in a generic situation. In relation to the movement I described above, the *oscillation* that Beauvoir maintains, these texts are simply static—they stake out their territory in the general features of human existence and refuse to move into the particular, to observe how shame actually works in *this* or *that* world, who it belongs to and how it belongs to them, who lives it in one way rather than another, what it effects, and how it is embedded in and preservative of structures of power. There is a violence to this move to the pseu-

do-generic (perhaps unconscious, perhaps unwilled), which tends to bury the living phenomenon in its differentiations in the "generic" subject's narcissistic universalizations.

In *Self and Other: Exploring Subjectivity, Empathy, and Shame,* Zahavi recognizes shame as a phenomenon that challenges his notion that the experiential self is primary, i.e., is before or beyond or excessive to what he calls the narrative self, which is embedded in and shaped by history, normative structures and practices, and bound by power. He acknowledges that shame tells us something about "the nature of the self" which demands recognition of an intersubjectively mediated form of self-relation (2014, 208-13). Citing Sartre, he asserts that "pure shame" is the realization that "I need the mediation of the Other in order to be what I am" (Sartre 2003, 312, quoted in Zahavi 2014, 213). Shame is an emotion that reveals "the exposed and interpersonal nature of the self" and "testifies to our exposure, vulnerability, and visibility" (235).

This does not change Zahavi's conviction that "there is a core dimension of our selfhood that is presocial" (2014, 235). He simply asserts that this "core dimension" is not what is "at stake in deep shame" (235). However, deep shame does not necessarily imply a learned set of social values or expectations that are betrayed in the shame experience either, as the notion of a narrative self—which for Zahavi is the historically and normatively constituted self—would presume. "On the one hand, we have a minimal take on self that seeks to cash it out in terms of the first-person perspective," he writes,

> . . . on the other hand, we have a far richer normatively guided notion that firmly situates the self in culture and history. Whereas the minimal notion captures an important but presocial aspect of our experiential life, the narrative notion most certainly does include the social dimension, but it does so by emphasizing the role of language. (237)

This would imply, if I have understood Zahavi correctly, that all shame is self-reflective, and cannot occur at the pre-reflective level. In order to solve this problem, he introduces the notion of an "interpersonal self," which occupies the space between the "experiential self" and the "narratively extended self:"

> [I]n contrast to the experiential self, the interpersonal self is clearly a socially constituted self. We come to be the social selves we are, not only by experiencing ourselves in our interaction with and emotional response to others, but also by experiencing and internalizing the other's perspective on ourselves. This interpersonal self will feed into and is an important precursor to the subsequent development of a more normatively enriched and diachronically extended narrative self, and can thereby serve as an important bridge between the two previously discussed dimensions of self. (238)

What Zahavi likes about this notion of an interpersonal self is that it allows us to affirm that shame is, at least in many instances, a social emotion, without having to accept the idea that it is, at its root, a socially constructed experience:

> I am … not denying what should be rather obvious, namely, that many shame experiences are culturally nested and presuppose narrative capacities. In its developmentally primary form, however, shame precedes the learning of particular social standards. (238)

What this seems to imply is that there is an interpersonal realm of human life that is social, but not in the full sense; it is not yet normatively constrained, not yet inflected by power, not yet beholden to an historical inheritance. It suggests that there is a place for the generic self and his shame, where the normative force of particular social standards is not yet at issue, even though other people are. So now we have two dimensions of the self that are not normatively constituted, that are prior to the sociality of the subject who is subject to power.

Let me say that I think it is, indeed, very important to provide an account of shame that does not conclude that shame is experienced only after the values of the social world are adopted and internalized by a lucid consciousness—so that I can only be ashamed of something that I have done if both I and the person shaming me agree that what I have done violates important values. I agree with Zahavi that shame is experienced pre-reflectively, that it is primarily and significantly experienced this way, and that while it is prereflective it is also intersubjective or social—he ends by calling it *interpersonal*. But why do we need the extra step of claiming that the "interpersonal" is somehow distinct from or free of the sedimented historical and normative weight of the culture more broadly? Is not the interpersonal, in fact, always burdened by that weight? Is it not a primary site of the re-production of those values, so that shame is not about a response to values that are already consciously accepted or adopted, as belief, *but one of the very events of their pre-reflective inscription*? Is there a border between the cultural and the interpersonal? What is it made of? I would similarly ask if there is a border between the cultural and the core experiential self. On what basis can we claim that these dimensions of the self are not all impacted by the world they emerge in? Is Zahavi giving us, with the notion of an "interpersonal" dimension of human existence, another justification for speaking in abstractions?

When specific examples are used, they are sometimes stunningly mundane, making the specific instance of shame seem positively bathetic. When they are gendered examples, they wear their propensity toward abstraction from history and social stratification on their sleeves. Zahavi uses an example from Scheler, and he, like Scheler, refuses to notice the gendered power at work in the example; he treats it in fact as if it had nothing to do with gender and power. "Scheler distinguishes," he writes, "the anticipating and protecting shame of the blushing virgin, which, on his view, is characterized by lovely warmth, from the painful experience of repenting shame" (2014, 215). This is simply an example of how shame comes in different forms, for Zahavi. But is it the core self or the interpersonal self or the narrative self that experiences the shame of the blushing virgin as "lovely" and "warm"? Is that her experience, or his experience of her? Does the old and dusty trope of the "blushing virgin" bespeak a dimension of human experience unaffected by power? To whom? Not to the feminist phenomenologist, I assure you.

A second example is one Zahavi borrows from Cristiano Castelfranchi and Isabella Poggi to explore the question of the distinction between "the other's evaluation and the underlying value" at work in the shame event (2014, 226). The example involves giving mouth to mouth resuscitation to "a girl after you have saved her from drowning" and

being accused, by onlookers, of sexual assault, or as he puts it, "taking advantage" (226). Since you know you were not committing assault, you do not share the valuation of the onlookers, but you do share the underlying value that sexually assaulting an unconscious woman is not a good thing. Zahavi does not think this situation would involve shame, but something else. He goes on to imagine that it might involve shame if one were to be "struck by the girl's beauty" in the process and experience an "illicit element of arousal" (226). This is a rather light-hearted example, for Zahavi, one that is stripped of the weight of any ethical background. The image of a beautiful, unconscious, and wholly vulnerable girl (he does not call her a woman) is apparently the right stage on which to play out the drama of men (the "you" in Zahavi's heteronormative account is implicitly male) trying to figure out how valuation and underlying values might be distinct. Does the appearance of yet another comatose woman being brought back to life by a male rescuer not draw our attention to how such examples are superficially abstracted from the weight of history and power and context—while at the same time reiterating and reaffirming the relations of power that constitute that context? Is the light-hearted affective modality evidenced in the telling of the story not as significant to the meaning of the text and its values as whether valuations and underlying values are distinguishable? Is the only shame in the story the shame of the rescuer?

In this whole tradition of thinking the relation between the human, life, and shame, from Plato to Steinbock and Zahavi, the discussion is radically, systematically abstracted from how shame is lived, and especially from how shame is lived by women. The subject's fantasy of himself as a generic subject, living generic shame, in a generic world, is secured by these philosophical moves. This is why Scheler is so wrong when he says that "in the phenomenological attitude … what is meant is intuited. It is not observed" (Scheler quoted in Emad 1972, 361). Now I am not suggesting these reflections bear no relation to how shame is lived at all. In fact, I think they do uncover important dimensions of shame, but they also cover over or obscure other dimensions that are equally or more significant. By divorcing themselves from particular, historically weighted, socially located experiences of shame, Steinbock and Zahavi (1) both completely ignore the overwhelmingly gendered nature of so many shame experiences and ignore the fact that gender is a primary site of shame, (2) give us a wildly rosy picture of shame in comparison to how shame actually plays itself out in lived lives by suggesting that shame is in some primary sense ameliorative, (3) miss the complexity of the lived temporality of shame, and (4) do not seem to see the *work* that shame is doing to *secure* social stratification and to reinforce and reproduce specific relations of domination and subordination.

TOWARD A FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGY OF SHAME

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Elsewhere, I have argued that gendered shame is a central mechanism of the apparatus that secures the continued subordination of women across a number of class and race contexts in the mediatized, late-capitalist west.[12] I include, in that account, the powerful first-person narrative offered by Amanda Todd, the Canadian teenager whose story, which she wrote on note cards and released to the public on YouTube, went viral

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[12] Much of the work in this section was previously published as part of an exploration of shame and feminine identity formation (Mann 2018).

in 2012, a few months before she took her own life (Todd 2012). I understand Todd to be a *thinker*, who has published a text she hopes will be read; someone who is not only providing a story about shame but also an account, however rudimentary, of its central structures.[13] She takes us into the lived dimensions of shame, and shows us that shame in contemporary western, late-capitalist life is a deeply personal and viscerally lived affect, on the one hand, and a feature of our social and political world on the other. I argue that it is one of the structural features that key the inner life of the subject into the broad patterns of power and social control which characterize exploitative relations between persons who are differently socially situated.

In order to make sense of Todd's account, we must distinguish between two kinds of shame. "Ubiquitous shame" is the name that I give to that shame-*status* that attaches to the very fact of existing as a girl or woman, or of having a female body, captured so powerfully in such common phrases as "like a girl" and "such a pussy." I argue that this shame is paradoxically characterized by a promise of redemption, i.e., its *futural* temporality. "Unbounded shame," on the other hand is a thick, relentless, engulfing shame, often catalyzed by a shame-*event*, that *combusts* in certain contexts, until it snuffs out any hope for redemption. This shame has suicide as its logical endpoint. The threat of it is part of the thick atmosphere of danger which accompanies women's becoming in this context and at this time, especially in adolescence. The two kinds of shame are related, I claim, in that one sets the stage for the other: ubiquitous shame with its promissory temporality is the "set up" for the decisions that catalyze the events that issue in unbounded shame for some girls and women.

Empirical studies of shame are important here. They are consistent in characterizing shame as an affect so powerful that it bends the body over on itself, buries the face in the hands, and hangs the head. Silvan Tomkins associates shame with an excruciating, intolerable visibility. "Shame is the affect of indignity," he writes, "the humiliated one … feels himself naked, defeated, alienated, lacking in dignity or worth" (1995, 133). "Shame has the power to make us feel completely worthless, degraded from head to foot," Jacoby writes (1994, 21). Shame can undo the self, unmake social ties, disable moral concern, and destroy the lifeworld of the one who is shamed.

Following Beauvoir, and maintaining an oscillation between the general and the particular, we note that the adolescent life is possessed, like all human life, but perhaps more intensely, by an urgent need to *justify itself* in the eyes of others (2010, 285). This is a generalized existential need, but it takes a specific form when and where shame is deeply gendered.[14] One of Beauvoir's most significant insights is that gender itself is an *operation of justification*.[15] In other words, the way you live your gender is a key part of how you establish your worth in the eyes of others, and thus in your own lifeworld. Your aspiration to be a man of a certain kind or a woman of a certain kind, is fundamentally about whether and how you are valued, and by whom, and for what. Think about adolescents posting selfies on social media, think of the comments on those pho-

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[13] I do not mean to suggest, by this, that she is not also a victim of gendered violence who is suffering. It is important not to reduce her to that status, however, and to recognize that she is also thinking about what has happened to her, and trying to articulate important dimensions of that experience.

[14] I am not claiming here that women experience shame more than men, far from it. In *Sovereign Masculinity*—especially in Part II—I argue that gendered shame is absolutely central to masculine identity-formation (Mann 2014a).

[15] I make the case that Beauvoir offers us an account of gender as justification in other publications (Mann 2014a, 29–47; Mann 2012).

tographs: "you're so hot," "what a slut," "he's ripped," "such a pussy." These comments are assignations of value, attached to a certain way of doing or being your gender. The negative comments are acts of stigmatization.[16] If my gender is a source of joy or pain, if it sometimes seems to be a life or death matter, it is because it is one important way that I justify my existence to others or become, for them, an object of contempt.

Today, assignations of status arrive equally quickly from close proximity and vast distances, instantaneously in fact, from collectivities of others who have little in common except for their presence in certain virtual spaces. These conditions have altered the scene of shame in important ways.

There is perhaps no story that has come to represent the contemporary scene of shame more than the story of Amanda Todd, a seventh grader who, after having uploaded some sexy videos of herself and her friends, fully clothed, was stalked online by a 36 year old man in the Netherlands (see Lau 2012; BBC News 2014; Todd 2012). After a year of chatting, and him asking, Todd finally "flashed him," i.e., provided him with an image of herself lifting up her shirt and baring her breasts. As is the practice of those calling themselves "cappers" on the internet, he captured that image in order to try to extort private sex-shows from Todd over the course of the next three years by threatening to release the photo to everyone she knew. Her refusals resulted in the photograph being released to all her Facebook friends at three different schools, and circulating broadly on child porn sites, as she and her family sought to flee the abuse by moving twice and unsuccessfully tried to get the police to pursue an investigation. The posting of the photograph resulted in repeated waves of what is now called "slut-shaming" at each new location. The cruelty of her peers was almost unimaginable.

Of course the fact that something so utterly mundane as a picture of a girl's breasts should give anyone the kind of power that it gave the central perpetrator, should enable such cruel *collusion* between him and Todd's peers, should produce the lethal shame that it did, already speaks volumes about the social *situatedness* of shame. One cannot abstract this shame from its context and hope to understand why it mattered in the way that it did *at all*. There is an entire misogynistic economy at work here, which secures the power of the photograph in advance.[17]

That power, in this case, eventually becomes the power of life and death. After a particularly acute event of shaming at her school, Todd drank bleach in her first attempt to kill herself. The failed suicide attempt and Todd's turn to self-harm in the form of drug and alcohol abuse and cutting, resulted in a further escalation of the tirade of online abuse from people in Todd's close proximity and people far away—a truly unbounded scene of shame. Todd fought back by trying to rescue her online reputation over and over again. She challenged the stalker to "come and meet me right now," thinking she would lure him into a situation where he could be arrested. Then, in September of 2012, Todd posted a silent YouTube video of herself with note cards in which she told what she called her "never ending story," a video that went viral and finally gained her some virtual support. A month later, she killed herself.

Was this an expression of Todd asserting her humanity by valuing herself *beyond* life? Did suffering through this shame give her the *gift* of self-disclosure such that she

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[16] Didier Eribon gives an eloquent and convincing account of insult and stigmatization in *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self* (2004).
[17] See Ringrose et. al., "Teen Girls, Sexual Double Standards and 'Sexting': Gendered Value in Digital Image Exchange" (2013).

recognized her worth as spirit-over-life, a realization expressed through her suicide? The sheer absurdity of posing such questions in relation to this lived instance of shame discloses that, while shame might turn the human against life, might produce an impossible choice for death over life, the "diremption" between spirit and life is not ameliorative but cruelly, brutally, wrong. Todd's story is instructive, then, for those of us schooled in the pretty optimism of abstract accounts.

 I include here a string of citations from Todd's own telling of her story:

> It [the message] said … if you don't put on a show for me I will send ur boobs
> He knew my adress [*sic*], school, relatives, friends family names
>
> Christmas break…
> Knock at my door at 4am…
> It was the police…
> [they told her that her picture was circulating online]
> I then got really sick and got…
> Anxiety, major deppresion [*sic*] and panic disorder
>
> [2nd School: as she continues to refuse his demands, the perpetrator makes a fake Facebook page saying he is going to be a transfer student to the school and is looking for friends, in order to expose her again]
> My boobs were his profile pic…
> Cried every night, lost all my friends and respect
> people had for me … again …
> Then nobody liked me
> name calling, judged…
> I can never get that Photo back
> It's out there forever…
>
> I promised myself never again…
> Didn't have any friends and I sat at lunch alone
>
> [After leaving the second school]
> 6 months has gone by … people are posting pictures of bleach, clorex and ditches
> tagging me … I was doing a lot better too… They said …
> She should try a different bleach. I hope she dies this time and isn't so stupid.
> They said I hope she sees this and kills herself..
> Why do I get this? I messed up but why follow me.
> I left your guys city…Im constanty [*sic*] crying now…
> Everyday I think why am I still here?
>
> [*sic*] Im stuck…whats left of me now…nothing stops
> I have nobody… I need someone. (Todd 2012)

The recurrent themes in Todd's story, told in her own words, are social isolation, social abandonment, and hopelessness. The eternal time of the picture repeatedly overwhelms geographic distance and the time of Todd's life story—"nothing stops" she writes, revealing the frustration of a future that simply repeats the past. The stalker destroys any fragile sense of an open future that emerges each time she flees to a new school, with shame as his weapon. Unbounded shame closes time. Seeking some way out, she tries to kill herself three times.

   This shame undoes the self. This acute, excruciating, endless, geographically unbounded shame has found its ecological niche in contemporary forms of social media. It is a future-killing shame, and suicide is its logical conclusion. But there is another shame that precedes and prepares the ground for it, that is harder to make visible, in part because it lives in close proximity to something we might call pride. In order to fully grasp the economy of shame in which adolescent girls' lives unfold, we have to understand both modalities of shame, and more importantly, we have to understand their relation.

   This other shame, ubiquitous shame, attaches to the social status of the feminine, and plays a pervasive part in the prereflective constitution of feminine ways of being in the world. When Sandra Bartky (1990) writes about this kind of shame, she suggests that shame enters the lives of men against a background assumption of male power in the form of singular shame-events. Shame in the lives of women is more like an atmosphere or environment that affectively shades the subject-world relation, what I am calling here "shame-status." If every generic account of shame is abstract, it is because we do not live shame generically, but as specific, socially situated subjects—in fact, shame is a powerful force in *situating us* socially as subjects.

   If we pay close attention and stay attuned to the phenomenon, we see that unlike unbounded shame, ubiquitous shame is temporally structured around its own redemptive aspirations; we see that feminine shame's futural fixations are a key aspect of creating the specific vulnerabilities of emerging women/subjects to the unbounded shame that now characterizes our social world. Here we see why an account of shame that associates it with a present and past, but never a future temporality, misses something important about gendered shame. While this shame is *ubiquitous*, i.e., everywhere, it is punctuated by pride and hope.

   Ubiquitous shame results in a "pervasive affective attunement" that exposes a "generalized condition of dishonor," as Bartky suggests, but we also find a promise of redemption at the very heart of ubiquitous shame; it is the feature of ubiquitous shame that distinguishes it from unbounded shame and structures the young woman's vulnerability to sexual predation (1990, 85). The imaginary domain of the girl is structured by a promise, as Beauvoir indicates, a place in adult existence is being prepared for her; she will be a prestigious object—she will, through the force of her beauty, have power over men—in other words, she is promised that her present abjection will be converted into admiration, desire, adulation. She will become the essential in that promised future moment when her mere physical presence will instantiate a powerful agency. "Because she is doomed to passivity and yet wants power," Beauvoir writes, "the adolescent girl must believe in magic: her body's magic that will bring men under her yoke, the magic of destiny in general that will fulfill her without her having *to do* anything" (2010, 352–353). The adolescent girl spends her free time in front of the mirror, or today, taking sexy pictures of herself

after a long period of preparation, and posting them online where her friends affirm her project of becoming bait by "liking" the pictures and commenting on how hot she looks. She pursues a hyper-stylized beauty, shaving, plucking, styling her hair, applying layers of make-up. In the mirror, she purses her lips, she practices looking like the photo she will take of herself. Then she injects her future into the present moment through the vehicle of the self-produced pornographic portrait. "For the girl," Beauvoir writes, "erotic transcendence consists in making herself prey in order to make a catch" (349). Her future sediments into the body, stylizes itself in the gait, the tilt of the head, the protrusion of the lips, the photo-ready smile.

From the perspective of the girl living it, time is not closed, time is promissory. Hope is not extinguished, it is intensified and concentrated. At the heart of ubiquitous shame, there is the promise of redemption. Her dawning bodily awareness of her own powerlessness is punctuated by the anticipation of an exquisite, eroticized power that is given to her as structurally constitutive of her future. It is not that she is unaware of danger, but she risks herself in the midst of this fairy tale. She has already experienced, for years, the pervasive micro-practices that constitute the world as belonging to boys. She has already heard, long before she had any understanding of what they meant, the words "slut" and "bitch" and "whore" as disclosive of something essentially stigmatized about women in their sexual being. She has come of age in an image-world replete with stories of women's shame, but these stories are punctuated with visions of triumph. The redemptive moment is the climax, in which the shamed girl gets her dignity or her power back.

Redemption in a masculinist economy of desire is concentrated around three events: the provocation of male desire; the marriage proposal; the wedding day—nearly every cultural coming of age story, for girls, is organized around the sorts of words and images that collect affective energy around these three moments. Ubiquitous shame is a powerful force for collecting that affective energy and intensifying it. These are the events in a woman's life which crystallize hope, those elements of a life where shame falls away and dignity is restored. The bride is immune from shame on her wedding day (which is why it is so much more her day than his); the girlfriend is exempt from shame at the moment of the proposal. The moment of desire is more ambiguous. It must be handled perfectly if the girl is to convert that desire into redemption. She has to provoke the desire, and then keep it going—she has to feed it, in other words—but she risks everything in feeding it. If it turns away, the weight of a closed future settles in. If she "lets herself be used," i.e., capitulates in the wrong way, at the wrong time, or to the wrong person, in the wrong circumstance, everything is lost. But the provocation of male desire is the first moment of the redemptive promise, the first step on the salvific path our cultural imaginary puts in front of her, and as such *must* be cultivated, sustained, undertaken.

Her hope is her vulnerability—her vulnerability is, in other words, embedded in the temporal structure of the experience. Amanda Todd tells us, in the simplest and most deeply explanatory terms, what made her succumb to the request for a photo of her breasts: "then got called stunning, beautiful, perfect, etc…," she writes (2012). Girls fighting for their self-worth in a masculinist economy of desire, against a backdrop of ubiquitous shame which is largely constituted by and through the hope for relief, can give no other explanation for their actions than the presence of male desire or adulation. When they inevitably mistake extortionist practices for the promised desire they have been relentlessly trained to wait and hope for, they are condemned for being "stupid" as well as being "sluts" (Ringrose et al. 2013).

What Todd's words disclose to us is nothing less than the shape of the world she inhabits, the urgent intensity of the promise of redemption: "stunning, beautiful, perfect," "I thought he liked me" (2012). The existential desperation to rescue the self from ubiquitous shame is a motor driving the girl to, in the words of Lynn Phillips, "flirt with danger" (2000). As Phillips discovered, girls facing these choices understand themselves to be fully agential and responsible, intensifying their sense of personal failure when things go wrong.[18] The redemption narrative has been a feature of her world since she was able to walk and talk. As the time of redemption draws near in adolescence, its promise feels tangible, believable, necessary and *destined* for the girl whose status is constituted by a background condition of ubiquitous shame that saturates her self-world relation without being thematizable. In an economy of masculine desire, in which value extraction and depletion, value-acquisition and surplus, are the terms of the logic, she is surrounded by stories and images of women rescued by male desire, women whose value is secured by the proposal, the wedding. Those moments of rescue require the provocation of male desire as their progenitor, their origin. This becomes an urgent existential necessity, for so many girls, in adolescence. It is the shape of this imagined future, paired with a deep determination not to succumb to the ubiquitous shame of feminine existence, that secures the girl's complicity in her own destruction and that makes her susceptible to unbounded shame. As Todd puts it "Im stuck…whats left of me now…nothing stops" (2012).

V.
THE DIFFERENCE OF FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGY

All I have been able to do here is gesture toward the difference of feminist phenomenology; a more robust account must wait for another day. To try to both summarize and anticipate: a feminist phenomenology of shame can never be satisfied with an abstract, generalized account. It must do justice to the specificity of shame as it is lived in the present, bound as it is to historically sedimented forms of power, specified as it is by its relation to time, ensconced as it is in structures of injustice, *at work* as it is in the re-production of social stratification. The general features of human existence that make us deeply vulnerable to others are always in play, but always in their entanglements with the specific events and patterns of experience that mark the world for particular subjects. The general features of existence—like not being self-given, like sociality, like the interpersonal dimension of the self, like time—are never innocent. They never give us permission, in other words, to fantasize a "generic subject" who undergoes shame in a generic way, in a generic context. They do not invite happy stories of sexual difference as the generative site of meaning when we consider how they are actually lived in the midst of more or less brutal relations of power by actual people.

The difference of feminist phenomenology is constituted by the interested, impassioned and ethically burdened relation between the phenomenologist and the matter of concern that shapes the phenomenological practice. She knows she cannot imagine away

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[18] They understand themselves this way at the time. As they gain distance from the events and experience, they are often much more forgiving of their younger selves.

the prejudices that shape her inquiry through an act of the will. She has to *enter into* the perspective of an other and allow it to work on her. She has to travel between the particularities of *this* shame, *this* life, *this* situation, and the generalities in a constant, oscillating motion. The phenomenon gives itself precisely in the intensified space between general features of human existence and radically particular specifications that are historically situated, bound up in material interests, ensconced in structures of injustice. She must work to keep this space open. She cannot attach herself to generic "findings," such as "shame has no futural dimension," but must instead follow the phenomenon, to see how time, for example, is revealed in it, and to see what time reveals. She may discover, as we have here, that *this* shame's futural dimension is constitutive of the experience itself. She cannot attach herself to happy thoughts, such as "shame redeems the moral person," as she witnesses lived shame destroy and undo, hears testimony of crushed hope, sees evidence that *this* shame produces a desire for death. Hers is an interested practice, often undertaken in irritation or outrage, always aimed at justice.

The driving motivation here is not reverence for either figure or text. There is no loyalty to an already established philosophical practice when it proves itself incompetent in relation to the phenomenon *as it gives itself.* The phenomenon, in its particularity, its historical specificity, its situatedness, is not *subordinated* to the practice. She may occupy a recognized philosophical form, but she does not *venerate* the form, she infiltrates it, works its limits, and allows the phenomenon to crack it open.

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UNMAKING AND REMAKING THE WORLD IN LONG-TERM SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

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On September 1, 2015, a landmark settlement was reached in Ashker v. Brown, a class action lawsuit brought by long-term prisoners in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) of Pelican Bay State Prison in California. The plaintiffs charged that conditions of extreme isolation in the SHU violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment, and that the lack of a meaningful review process for placement in the SHU violated their right to due process (Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity 2015).[1] Each of the plaintiffs had been isolated for ten or more years in an eight by ten foot windowless cell for twenty-two and a half to twenty-four hours a day. Time spent outside of the cell was limited to an empty outdoor exercise yard with twenty foot high concrete walls and no windows. Plaintiffs were not permitted contact visits with family, friends, or attorneys, and the only phone calls permitted were "bereavement calls" when a family member passed away.

At the time of the settlement, California housed approximately three thousand prisoners in solitary confinement: a fraction of the roughly eighty thousand prisoners in extreme isolation across the United States. Among these, more than one thousand California prisoners were isolated indefinitely as a result of policies for the management of "security threat groups" or prison gangs (Solitary Watch 2012). The criteria for labeling someone as a gang member were so loose, and so difficult to contest, that the Chair of California's Public Safety Committee observed that if the policy were applied to them, "many of us sitting on this committee would be [considered] gang associates, I don't know how it's possible to avoid association under this system" (Shourd 2014).[2] Even so, not everyone is equally subject to gang validation. Black and Latino prisoners are still disproportionately labeled as gang members and associates, not just at Pelican Bay but across California and the US (Schlanger 2013). Until the recent settlement, the only way out of the Pelican Bay SHU for a validated gang member or associate was to "debrief" by providing current information about prison gang activity and/or promising to collect information on an ongoing basis. In effect, this policy weaponized prisoner's voices against each other, both as snitches and as informants, to reinforce the prison administration's control

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[1] Also see Center for Constitutional Rights's summary of the lawsuit and settlement at https://ccrjustice.org/home/what-we-do/our-cases/ashker-v-brown.

[2] To facilitate this process, a step-down program is being implemented with more opportunities for contact with other people, including small group recreation, phone calls, and employment.

over a situation that they arguably created by failing to provide adequate protection for incarcerated people of color since the 1950s (Reiter 2012; Skarbek 2012).

The settlement agreement in Ashker v. Brown abolishes the practice of indefinite solitary confinement for validated gang members in California, bringing most long-term SHU prisoners back into the general prison population.[3] Gang validation and minor rule infractions will no longer be sufficient reasons to put someone in isolation, and the housing situation of every prisoner in the SHU will be individually reviewed within a year. The terms of this settlement were reached after two years of periodic hunger strikes by prisoners at Pelican Bay and across California, supported by a network of activists and lawyers outside the prison. The prisoners who organized the strike, known as the PBSP-SHU Short Corridor Collective, describe themselves as "a multi-racial, multi-regional Human Rights Movement to challenge torture in the Pelican Bay SHU" (Guillen 2013). They organized two hunger strikes in 2011, and after a period of slow, modest reform, they launched a third hunger strike in 2013, with over thirty thousand prisoners in California participating on the first day (Carroll 2013). The strike action was suspended two months later in response to a commitment by California lawmakers to hold hearings on solitary confinement. Meanwhile, prisoners continued to work with lawyers at the Center for Constitutional Rights on Ashker v. Brown, eventually winning their landmark settlement. As a result of years of legal and political action organized from within the extreme isolation of the Pelican Bay SHU, members of the Short Corridor Collective have finally been able to sit around a table and speak to one another face-to-face.

What happens to the prisoner's world when they are confined for over a decade in a windowless concrete box? What sort of world not only tolerates such radical confinement, but also normalizes, justifies, and defends it as a condition for public safety and efficient prison management? How have some prisoners managed to create and sustain a sense of shared Being-in-the-world and Being-with Others, even without the experience of shared space? And what would it take to restructure the world, such that the cruel and unusual practice of solitary confinement is "settled" once and for all?

This paper analyzes the SHU as a form of weaponized architecture for the torture of prisoners and the unmaking of the world. I will argue that through collective resistance, prisoners in the Pelican Bay Short Corridor have re-purposed this weaponized architecture as a tool for remaking the world by creating new, resistant, and resurgent forms of social life. This collective practice of remaking the world used the self-destructive tactic of a hunger strike to weaponize their bodies and their lives against the

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[3] In *Forced Passages: Imprisoned Radical Intellectuals and the U.S. Prison Regime* (2006), Dylan Rodriguez draws on the research of Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison to show how incarcerated activists build a "collective cognitive praxis," both as a tool for political organizing and as an epistemic practice of collective sense-making (109). For Eyerman and Jamison, "[a] social movement is not one organization or one particular special interest group. It is more like a cognitive territory, a new conceptual space that is filled by a dynamic interaction between different groups and organizations … It is precisely in the creation, articulation, formulation of new thoughts and ideas—new knowledge—that a social movement defines itself in society" (quoted in Rodriguez 2006, 105). Rodriguez situates this account of epistemic activism in relation to "radical prison praxis," understood as "the embodied theoretical practices that emerge from imprisoned liberationists' sustained and historical confrontations with, insurrection against, and dis- or rearticulations of the regimes of (legitimated and illicit) state violence inscribed and signified by the regime of the prison" (107). For an account of epistemic activism in a North Carolina jail, see Medina and Whitt, *Epistemic Activism and the Politics of Credibility* (forthcoming).

weaponized architecture of solitary confinement. But it also developed less spectacular, everyday practices of communication, self-expression, and community-building within a system that is designed to suppress these practices. By collectively refusing food, and by articulating the meaning and motivation of this refusal in articles, interviews, artwork, and legal documents, prisoners at Pelican Bay reclaimed and expanded their perceptual, cognitive, and expressive capacities for world-making, even in a space of systematic torture.[4]

I.
THE SHU AS WEAPONIZED ARCHITECTURE

By "weaponized architecture," I mean a way of designing space to inflict, perpetuate, or normalize violence. The term was coined by Léopold Lambert, a French architect and social theorist for whom "architecture is never innocent" (2012, 49). By creating a material separation between inside and outside, architecture establishes a specific site for social practices of inclusion and exclusion, property and dispossession, protection and exposure.[5] Both the gated community and the prison are forms of weaponized architecture; their primary difference lies in the power relations that lock people in or lock them out. Depending on one's social and geographical position, the same building can appear as a weapon or a tool, as a site of illegitimate violence or a legitimate defense against violence.

This is especially true of the SHU. The prototype of the Pelican Bay SHU was a Control Unit established at Marion Penitentiary in the early 1970s as a tool of prison management (or a weapon of counter-insurgency, depending on your perspective) to control federal prisoners who were thought to be "disruptive of institutional authority, or who held radical political views" (Eisenman 2009). Over the past four decades, the exceptional space of the control unit has been normalized, to the point where entire facilities operate as control prisons, and almost every prison, jail, detention center, and alternative school now has some kind of lockdown unit. Prisoners in the Pelican Bay SHU have described their isolation as a form of torture that scrambles their senses, fragments their memory, and interrupts their most basic sense of identity. "It's like time broke," says one prisoner in the Pelican Bay SHU (Haney 2015, 64). "You live the same life over and over" (69). "I don't remember what my house looked like, what my sister looks like" (64). Jack Henry Abbott spent almost his entire adult life in prison, including 15 years in solitary confinement. He wrote:

[4] Doors, windows, and passageways both open and restrict points of access, lines of visibility, and vectors of mobility. Walled enclosures function as fortresses to defend their inhabitants against potential intruders, or as cages to contain and immobilize their captives. See Weizman, *Hollow Land* (2007) for a brilliant analysis of the spatial politics of walls in Israel-Palestine

[5] As Elaine Scarry puts it, "the torturer uses the prisoner's aliveness to crush the things that he lives for" (1985, 38). "Each source of strength and delight, each means of moving out into the world or moving the world in to oneself, becomes a means of turning the body back in on itself, forcing the body to feed on the body" (48).

> My body communicates with the cell. We exchange temperatures and
> air currents, smells and leavings on the floor and walls. I try to keep it
> clean, to wash away my evidence, for the first year or so, then let it go
> at that. [. . .] If you are in that cell for weeks that add up to months,
> you do not ignore all this and live "with it"; you enter it and become a
> part of it. (1991, 46, 29)

In these and other testimonies, the solitary confinement cell functions not as a
room that shelters and supports the capacities of an embodied subject, but as an
anti-room that structurally undermines these capacities to break the prisoner down.

For Elaine Scarry, this is precisely the structure of torture, understood as a "vehicle
of self-betrayal," in which the prisoner is recruited as "the agent of his own annihila-
tion" (1985, 47). The most insidious aspect of torture is not physical violence inflicted
by a hostile other; after all, the identification of a specific antagonist can strengthen
one's capacity to survive and resist. But when violence gets under your skin—when it
feels like your own embodied consciousness has been weaponized against you—then
torture becomes an attack not just on the individual, but on the relational structure
of personhood. It is only as a social being that one can suffer from isolation, only as a
sentient creature that one can feel the pain of sensory deprivation, and only as an in-
telligent being that one can experience a loss of meaning.[6] Torture exploits the vulner-
ability that is necessarily entailed in an openness to others and to the world, by virtue
of which we do not exist as isolated, detachable subjects but as what Martin Heidegger
calls Dasein or Being-in-the-world.[7] And given that the world is not just the totality of
objects on planet Earth, but rather a web of relationships whose meaning is grounded
in praxis and in Being-with Others, torture is, in Scarry's words, an "unmaking of
the world" through the conversion of artifacts or tools that ought to support the struc-
ture of personhood, into weapons that incapacitate and undermine that structure (21).

The room is primary among these tools. For Scarry, a room is both "a magni-
fication of the body" and a "miniaturization of the world" (1985, 38). It provides
a stable location for meaningful thought and action—a place to stand, a roof over
one's head—as well as windows and doors to facilitate an exchange with others and
with the open horizons of a shared world.[8] But when deployed as a site of torture, the

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[6] For a more developed account of the relevance of phenomenological concepts such as Being-in-the-
world for a critique of solitary confinement, see Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives*
(2013) and Guenther, "Political Action at the End of the World: Hannah Arendt and the California
Prison Hunger Strikes" (2015).

[7] For Scarry, everyday domestic objects "express the most expansive potential of the human being, his
ability to project himself out of his private, isolating needs into a concrete, objectified, and therefore
sharable world" (1985, 41).

[8] For an example of taking responsibility for artifacts such as the SHU, see Raphael Sperry's work with
Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility (2014). Scarry's analysis of objects is unfortu-
nately limited by her emphasis on the artifact (and hence the artisan as an individual maker), rather
than systems and processes. A critical genealogy of the prison wall, not just as an artifact but as a ma-
terial component of the Prison Industrial Complex, demands an account that traces the production of
world-destroying artifacts like the SHU cell to the systems that (re)produce them and the people who
profit from them. Nevertheless, Scarry does acknowledge that the "making of an artifact is a social act,
for the object (whether an art work or instead an object of everyday use) is intended as something that
will both enter into and elicit human responsiveness" (1985, 175). In an expanded version of this paper, I
would like to develop an analysis of the prison wall as actant or lieutenant (Latour, "Mixing Humans and
Nonhumans Together: The Sociology of a Door-Closer," 1988) and as the practico-inert dimension of
praxis (see Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume 1*, 2004 and Guenther, "Critical Phenomenology,"
forthcoming).

room is "converted into a weapon, deconverted, undone" (41). This is the structure of weaponized architecture: a room that no longer supports the perceptual, cognitive, and expressive capacities of the inhabitant as a relational Being-in-the-world, but rather exploits this relationality and threatens to break its articulated structure. Even without the additional violence of physical assault by another person, the SHU already functions as a site of torture in precisely this sense. But it also obscures its own violence through rhetorical strategies that present the "security housing unit" as a standard tool for prison management and public safety. The rhetoric of security, protection, and individual accountability displaces the responsibility for torture from persons to things, as if it were "the wall that executes," rather than a revisable social order or political system (1985, 45). The walls of a prison cell are designed, built, and managed by specific historical actors in a way that produces both intended and unintended effects; walls can only "execute" in the context of embodied social practices that produce, empower, and sometimes alter their sedimented materiality.

For Scarry, a crucial part of the work of remaking the world that is unmade through torture is "to deprive the external world of the privilege of being inanimate—in other words, its privilege of being irresponsible to its sentient inhabitants on the basis that it is itself nonsentient" (1985, 285).[9] What would it take to interpret the windowless walls of the SHU cell as sentient and animate? What feelings do these walls amplify, absorb, and reproduce? How do they act out the logic of the Prison Industrial Complex by acting upon the sentience of the prisoner? What relationships of responsibility might they reveal if the walls could speak, and if we had ears to listen?

II.
WEAPON/TOOL

The ambivalence of weapon and tool is key for understanding both the structure of weaponized architecture and the possibility of (re)making the world and (re)building networks of responsibility. For Scarry, the same object can function as a weapon or a tool, depending on the surface upon which it acts and how it affects this surface (1985, 173). A weapon acts directly on a sentient surface to cause harm, and a tool acts directly on a nonsentient surface to create an artifact, which in turn acts indirectly on the sentience of another. Scarry describes the process whereby weapons are repurposed as tools as follows:

> Rather than using a weapon on someone's eyes, the world is rebuilt or re-presented (even if only modestly altered) in such a way that it must be reseen. That is, rather than directly altering sentience (as occurs in the use of a weapon on a living body), the tool alters sentience by providing "objects" of sentience. It alters without hurting (often even bringing about the diminution of hurt). Through tools and acts of making, human beings become implicated in each other's sentience. (175-176)

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[9] See Cacho, *Social Death* (2012) on criminalization as a material, social, and perceptual practice of differentiating between protected and unprotected lives.

This analysis of weapon and tool rests on Scarry's account of the internal structure of the artifact as "the structure of a perception" (289). While the artifact itself is not capable of perceiving, its structure or design articulates in concrete, material form the relation between intentional act and intentional object—or between singular, invisible processes of consciousness and visible objects in a shareable world—which defines the phenomenological structure of perception. In other words, the artifact manifests and materializes the intentionality of a sentient being (say, the architect or designer) who shapes the walls in a certain way, for certain reasons, both in order to express a certain vision of the world, and also to call forth a similar vision in others. As such, the artifact both produces and reproduces meaning through an engagement with materiality and a specific "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière 2004, 12).

This analysis is useful for tracing both the violence of the SHU and responsibility for this violence, from the seemingly "innocent" or irresponsible walls of the cell to the perceptual practices that racialize and criminalize socially vulnerable populations as "Security Threat Groups," whose isolation and incapacitation is justified or even necessitated by a perceived risk to public safety.[10] The logic of these perceptual practices is biopolitical: it mobilizes racism to differentiate between "those who must live" and "those who may die"—those who can count on the law to protect them, and those who are disproportionately exposed to legal forms of state violence, structural violence, and interpersonal violence.[11] The windowless walls of the SHU give objective or material form to these collective practices of biopolitical perception, and they also perpetuate these practices by acting indirectly on the public's capacity for sentience. The logic goes something like this: If someone is isolated in a cell that is designed to incapacitate "Security Threat Groups," then they must belong to a group that threatens the security of innocent people, i.e., everyone who is not in the SHU. Otherwise, how could such practices be justifiable in a putatively democratic society? The public perception of confinement and isolation as indispensable tools for public safety and individual accountability makes it difficult to perceive the way this tool is deployed as a weapon for torture and racial injustice. The weaponized language of Security Threat Groups, intensified by the windowless walls and media blackouts that literally block the public's view of people in prison, conjure and circulate images of monstrosity that foreclose the public perception of prisoners as complex persons who—like anyone else—are capable of both violence and suffering.[12]

However, given the ambivalence of weapon and tool, and given the role of perceptual practices in making, unmaking, and remaking the world, the room that has been weaponized to incapacitate its inhabitants can also be repurposed as a tool for resistance, empowerment, and transformation. In his essay, "Walls Turned Sideways are Bridges," radical geographer Rashad Shabazz writes:

[10] See Foucault, *Society Must be Defended* (2003); McWhorter, *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (2009); and Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (2014) on the racist structure of biopower.

[11] See Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collége de France* (2004) on monstrosity as a juridical and psychiatric construct.

[12] Lambert defines resistive architecture as "the ensemble of architectural apparatuses defined by either their legal status or their physicality as a resistance to the normative establishment" (2012, 35).

> Prisoners are architects. They [may] lack the ability to physically transform the world around them. Nevertheless, prisoners alter the space of prison. They do this through transcending the bars and re-purposing prison space … These spaces do what the hands cannot. They change the geography of the prison and at times [they transport] prisoners out of the spaces that hold them.
> (2014, 582)

Shabazz explores writing as a transformative practice that repurposes the weaponized architecture of the prison and creates tools for building community and solidarity behind, across, and beyond the prison walls. We could call this a practice of "resistive architecture," following Lambert's call for architectural practices of re-purposing weaponized architecture as a tool for survival, resistance and collective liberation.[13] In the following section, I show how prisoners at Pelican Bay have managed to create resistive architecture through everyday conversation, writing, and political organizing. Among these practices of resistance were the hunger strikes through which prisoners arguably weaponized their own bodies against the weaponized architecture of the SHU. But, as I will suggest, the strike was just one among many tactics for re-tooling the space of extreme isolation and creating new possibilities for Being-in-the-world and Being-with Others. These transformative practices—creative and destructive, singular and collective, written and embodied in practice—are the work of critical phenomenology (Guenther 2013; Guenther forthcoming).

III.
REMAKING THE WORLD

In 2003, seven prisoners were moved to a part of the Pelican Bay SHU called the Short Corridor. Each of these prisoners were labeled by the prison as a Security Threat Group member, and some were thought to be leaders of rival gangs such as the Black Guerrilla Family, Aryan Brotherhood, Mexican Mafia, and Nuestra Familia. Among these prisoners were the men who eventually formed the core leadership team of the Pelican Bay SHU Short Corridor Collective, organizing mass hunger strikes in 2011 and 2013. Throughout the multi-year strike action, prisoner-activists such as Sitawa Jamaa, Todd Ashker, Mutope Duguma, and Antonio Guillen wrote insightful analyses of the situation in the SHU for the Bay View Black Newspaper, the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Network website, and other media outlets.

It may seem impossible, both practically and theoretically, for a group of prisoners in extreme isolation to engage in such broad and effective political action. How did they manage to get up in the morning, let alone organize the largest hunger strike in state history? How did they communicate across the material barriers of concrete walls and steel doors, and across the social barriers of state-sponsored racism and rival gang affiliation? In what follows, I will argue that while the Pelican Bay SHU is a form of weaponized architecture, explicitly designed to undermine the prisoner's capacity for resistance and collective action, prisoners in the Short Corridor managed to repurpose this weapon as a tool for creating new

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[13] As Prisoner O said to Craig Haney, "I was taught to endure. So I do. But coping is not the same as not being affected or changed" (Haney 2015, 68).

forms of social life beyond the logic of social death. This is not to imply that the SHU is any less violent or harmful because some people have managed to avoid being utterly destroyed by it.[14] Rather, it is to affirm the complexity of social death and its afterlives, both within and beyond the structures that (re)produce them.[15]

In an article for the Bay View National Black Newspaper, prisoner-activist Antonio Guillen argues that the intended purpose of extreme isolation in the SHU is to "create an environment that discourages a man's ability and/or desire to socialize with other human beings" (Guillen 2013). In effect, Guillen names the SHU as a space of torture that undermines the prisoner's capacity for social relations. He explains how prisoners in the Short Corridor learned to reshape this world-destroying isolation and to co-create a shared world, beginning with everyday conversation. Even in a concrete box, locked behind steel doors, unable to see each other's faces, and divided by racial oppositions and, in some cases, gang rivalries, prisoners in the SHU found a way to communicate with each other, and to begin the difficult work of (re)making a shared world. They used weak points in the architecture of the SHU—the ventilation system, cracks under doors, even toilet drains—to repurpose the technology of social death and build new forms of social life. They even used existing gang networks and communication strategies to distribute the call to end hostilities and to coordinate hunger strikes across different institutions (Wallace-Wells 2014). After all, if you can run a successful gang operation behind bars, you can also run a successful political campaign. This, too, is an example of repurposing the weaponized sociality of the gang as a tool for collective empowerment.

For Guillen, "the sharing and debating of thoughts and ideas," and the act of "offering moral support in times of personal loss or tragedy" are "the things that make human beings, human beings" (2013).[16] This sharing of words, ideas, and feelings helped to support the emergence of a specifically political self-understanding as a prisoner class. In an interview with *Democracy Now*, prisoner-activist Todd Ashker explains how people in the Short Corridor began to recognize their common interests and to identify both a specific political agenda of their own and a connection to broader human rights struggles:

[14] See Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives* (2013) for a more sustained analysis of social death and its afterlives, and Guenther, "Political Action at the End of the World: Hannah Arendt and the California Prison Hunger Strikes" (2015) for a different account of the unmaking and remaking of the world at Pelican Bay, drawing on Heidegger's account of world and Arendt's account of political action.

[15] In Craig Haney's 2015 interviews with prisoners in the Pelican Bay SHU, Prisoner E reflects on the importance of a social context for a meaningful intellectual life: "[T]hey say the mind is a terrible thing to waste. I think a mind is a terrible thing to have alone. You just have your thoughts in your head, to go over and over, and the repetition is deadening. The things we read in books, the ideas we learn, we can't use them" (78).

[16] See also hunger striker Jose Villarreal's open letter from the Pelican Bay SHU, on the importance of class consciousness for hunger strikers: "Marx once said when differentiating himself with Feuerbach: 'The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively.' Just like Marx, I see our current actions in this prison strike as 'sensuous activity.' Our actions are revolutionary acts that are much more important than may be perceived by the state just as Feuerbach or others would have perceived our acts" (2013; italics added).

> [W]e believe it's … a powerful symbol of the wisdom and strength similarly situated people can achieve in the face of seemingly impossible odds when they collectively unite to fight for the common good of all . . . This common experience together, with the group of us being housed together in adjacent cells, wherein we engaged in dialogue about our common experience, legal challenges, politics and the worsening conditions, enabled us to put aside any disputes we may have harbored against each other and unite as a collective group—a prisoner class—with the common goal of using nonviolent, peaceful means to force meaningful, long-overdue prison reform to happen now. (2013)[17]

Ashker's response testifies to the power of words and deeds for creating a sense of collective self-understanding, even in a space of extreme isolation. The language of a "prisoner class," and the proposal for a hunger strike to empower this prisoner class as activists in a human rights struggle, emerged in the context of a "revolutionary book club" in which prisoners in the SHU Short Corridor read work by Howard Zinn, Naomi Wolf, Michel Foucault, and a history of the Irish Hunger Strikes (Ashker 2013; Wells-Wallace 2014). Building on these social and intellectual practices through the artifact of the book, prisoners in the Short Corridor repurposed the weaponized architecture of the SHU—including the racist oppositions that typically organize the social space of California prisons—in a way that collectivized their agency to remake the world.

Ashker emphasizes the importance of both a particular identification as members of a "prisoner class" and a universal commitment to "fighting for the common good of all" (2013). This connection between the particular and the universal makes a counter-hegemonic claim against the representation of poor and racialized groups as inherent threats to social life rather than co-constituents of a shared social world. As such, it reclaims a meaningful sense of personhood, starting from the shared experience of "similarly-situated" people who have joined together in collective action, and in resistance to the racist structures that would otherwise make it unthinkable for a white man covered in swastika tattoos, two Latino men from Northern and Southern Mexico, and several black men of diverse ethnic and political affiliations to collaborate with each other. In the context of this radical political organizing as a prisoner class, the language of "human rights" becomes a tool, repurposed from the discourse of liberal democracy, to universalize the struggle and to assert one's political personhood or "humanity" from a position of presumed monstrosity.

This counter-hegemonic orientation towards collective liberation, rooted in a plurality of different histories and social positions, is especially evident in the writing of New Afrikan prisoners such as Sitawa Jamaa, Mutope Duguma, and Kijana Askari, who situate the shared language of a "prisoner class" in relation to specific histories of slavery, racism, and Black survival, resistance, and revolution. In 2011, Duguma issued a call to prisoners across the California system, "as well as the free oppressed and non-oppressed people" beyond the prison walls, to set aside racial and regional hostilities and support a collective hunger strike by prisoners in the Pelican Bay SHU. The text begins with a critical analysis of California prisoners' shared situation as a

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[17] See Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason, Volume 1* (2004) and Guenther, "Critical Phenomenology" (forthcoming) on the significance of the pledge for revolutionary politics.

form of "torture" and "civil death," using concepts from broader political struggles to resignify both the space of the prison cell (from a site of criminal justice to a site of social injustice) and the self-understanding of prisoners (from isolated individuals and/or rival gang members, to members of a prisoner class, where the meaning of class remains intertwined with the meanings and histories of race). "The Call" concludes by calling forth an emergent "we" or collective political subject from a range of shifting subject-positions: as "I," "you" and "them."

> I say that those of you who carry yourselves as principled human beings, no matter you're [*sic*] housing status, must fight to right this and other egregious wrongs. Although it is "us" today (united New Afrikans, Whites, Northern and Southern Mexicans, and others) it will be you all tomorrow. It is in your interests to peacefully support us in this protest today, and to beware of agitators, provocateurs, and obstructionists, because they are the ones who put ninety percent of us back here because they could not remain principled even within themselves. (Duguma 2011)

In other words: I say to you, or at least to some of you, that we are you, and tomorrow we will be all of you. You and I should form a we, in resistance to those who undermine our solidarity and reproduce the conditions of our torture. As such, "The Call" is the proleptic performance of a "we" that does not yet exist, but which cannot begin to exist without the capacity to understand oneself as a subject to whom the call is addressed. In other words, the text both issues and receives the call to create new forms of social life in resistance to social death.

As a testament to both the difficulty of this process and the persistence of prisoner-activists, a second "Agreement to End Hostilities" was issued on August 12, 2012 by the Short Corridor Collective. Sitawa Jamaa calls this agreement "an historical document …We are a prisoner class now" (quoted in Wallace-Wells 2014, 6). The text calls upon all prisoners to set aside racial hostilities for the sake of uniting as a multi-racial prisoner class:

> [N]ow is the time for us to *collectively seize this moment in time*, and put an end to more that 20-30 years of hostilities between our racial groups …We can no longer allow CDCR to use us against each other for their benefit!! *Because the reality is that collectively, we are an empowered, mighty force*, that can positively change this entire corrupt system into a system that actually benefits prisoners, and thereby, the public as a whole. (Pelican Bay State Prison SHU Short Corridor Collective 2012; italics added)

The Agreement to End Hostilities calls upon prisoners to resist one form of collective self-understanding—institutional(ized) racism, where the logic of race is oppositional rather than differential, and where racial opposition overcodes personal disagreements as intractable instances of racial hostility—for the sake of another form of collective self-understanding as "an empowered, mighty force" with the capacity for political transformation, both within and beyond the prison walls. As such, the agreement func-

tions as a pledge, not just to fight collectively for the interests of a particular group of people, but also to stand together in solidarity as a collective force in resistance to the oppressive structures that might otherwise divide them.[18] The call to "collectively seize this moment in time" re-animates the sense of dead or "broken" time articulated by prisoners at Pelican Bay. This is not just a matter of seizing an already-existing moment in objective time, but of collectively creating the moment to be seized, by interrupting the monotonous repetition of living death in the SHU. Again, this is the proleptic performance of a moment that will have been the decisive moment in which a prisoner class emerges, as long as it is grasped as such by a collective-subject-in-the-making.

The embodied social practice of speaking across both the material barriers of concrete walls and the social barriers of institutionalized racism is already a "remaking of the world" and a form of resistive architecture. But the Short Corridor Collective faced another challenge: to speak and act collectively in a way that was legible beyond the SHU as a form of effective political action. As convicted felons and validated gang members, their voices were either disqualified in advance or weaponized against each other as informants. And so the members of the Short Corridor Collective turned to a political discourse of last resort: the hunger strike.[19]

IV.
THE HUNGER STRIKE
AS A STRATEGIC WEAPONIZATION OF LIFE

A hunger strike is an act of political expression by those who are otherwise silenced by hegemonic power; it mobilizes the threat of biological death to reveal and contest a situation of social death. In effect, the wager of a hunger strike is this: if you weaponize my voice, my space, and the structure of my personhood against me, I will weaponize my life—and my capacity to die—against you.

In his analysis of the 1981 hunger strikes of political prisoners in Northern Ireland, which inspired the California hunger strikes at least in part, Allen Feldman argues that the strike action was both a "corporeal protest against injustice" and a way of "transcrib[ing] biological time into epochal time" (1991, 219, 225). The prisoners, whose status had been criminalized and de-politicized by a colonial penal system, weaponized their bodies against state power, first by refusing to wear prison uniforms, then by refusing to wash, and finally by refusing food. One protester explained:

[18] The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) sought to discredit the hunger strike organizers by rejecting their self-description as activists engaged in a non-violent struggle for human rights, and reinforcing their status as validated gang members and associates. For example, Secretary of the CDCR Jeffrey Beard condemned the strike action as a "gang power play" in an Op-Ed for the LA Times: "Don't be fooled … We're talking about convicted murderers who are putting lives at risk to advance their own agenda of violence" (Beard 2013).

[19] In an expanded version of this paper, I would like to develop an account of political action by family members and friends of incarcerated organizers in the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Network, the majority of whom are women. In *Golden Gulag* (2005), Ruth Gilmore offers a brilliant analysis of the grassroots activism of Mothers ROC, and later of Families to Amend California's Three Strikes. A similarly rich and detailed account of the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity Network would be useful, both as an organizing tool and as a resource for political theory.

> From the moment we entered the H-blocks we had used our bodies as
> a protest weapon. It came from an understanding that the Brits were
> using our bodies to break us. It wasn't just a prison movement.
> We began to identify with the oppressed all over the world. That's
> how full the circle had become. (Feldman 1991, 232)

This transformation of the body into a site of resistance and of global solidarity—even from the isolation of a prison cell—issued in a new "'temporalization' of history" (Feldman 1991, 233). The Blanket protest and the Dirty protest had been going on for years, with no promise of resolution. But the hunger strikes created a situation in which the life and death of the body made things happen, a situation in which time was of the essence. The hunger strikers used the vulnerability and mortality of their bodies to force open an eschatological time in which the status quo could not be maintained indefinitely. A hunger strike is an end game: the lives of prisoners are literally on the line, and the meaning of these lives is raised beyond the (bio)political systems that enclose them by the life-or-death stakes of the strike action. Feldman's analysis of the Irish hunger strikes suggests that the key to political transformation from a space of extreme isolation is not just the re-tooling of weaponized architecture but also, more radically, the introduction of a new sense of time structured by the irreversibility of death, which exceeds the reversible logic of weapon and tool. And yet, this transformation entailed an incalculable loss: the death of Bobby Sands and nine other prisoners. It would take almost twenty years of continued struggle before a peace deal was finally brokered in 1998.

In her book, *Starve and Immolate: the Politics of Human Weapons* (2014), Banu Bargu analyzes the hunger strikes that took place in Turkey from 2000-2007 in response to the construction of supermax-style prison units. For Bargu, the Turkish hunger strikes did not just weaponize the bodies of prisoners; they weaponized life through the self-destruction of bodies. By "the weaponization of life," Bargu means "the tactic of resorting to corporeal and existential practices of struggle, based on the technique of self-destruction, in order to make a political statement or advance political goals" (14). She argues that this weaponization of life:

> . . . presents a paradoxical combination of instrumentality and the
> abolition of instrumentality. On the one hand, the body is an inter-
> mediary, a means of staging a protest that advances certain specific
> demands as the political ends of that protest. On the other hand, the
> body is not an empty, mediate vessel to achieve political ends precisely
> because its deployment only by way of its destruction defies the distinc-
> tion between means and ends and obliterates instrumental rationality.
> (16)

This insurgent weaponization of life against the carceral weaponization of one's embodied, relational personhood in extreme isolation does not merely repurpose the weapon as a tool, or the tool as a weapon. Rather, it explodes this logic through the self-destruction of bodies. One hundred and twenty two people died in the Turkish hunger

strikes. Some hunger strikers continued their deathfast even after being released from prison as part of the state's attempt to undermine the strike action. Bargu coins the term "necroresistance" to name this radical "refusal against simultaneously individualizing and totalizing domination that acts by wrenching the power of life and death away from the apparatuses of the modern state in which this power is conventionally vested" (27).

The Irish and Turkish hunger strikes posed a direct challenge to the sovereign power of the state by exposing their bodies to the risk of death in order to demonstrate the illegitimacy of state violence. In the California prison hunger strikes, however, the tactic of a hunger strike was deployed more as a way of gaining access to state power, both through legislative hearings and through the courts. Is this a way of using the state's weapons against itself, or turning them into tools for reform, rather than weaponizing their own lives against the state? Were the California prison hunger strikes any less of a radical political movement than the Irish or Turkish hunger strikes, given their selective engagement with state power? Consider this passage from "The Call" to engage in hunger strikes:

> Therefore we have decided to put our fate in our own hands. Some of us have already suffered a slow, agonizing death in which the state has shown no compassion toward these dying prisoners. Rather than compassion they turn up their ruthlessness. No one wants to die. Yet under this current system of what amounts to intense torture, what choice do we have? If [we are] to die, it will be on our own terms. (Duguma 2011)

On the one hand, this statement resonates with the analysis of hunger strikes by Feldman and Bargu. The irreversibility of biological death is deployed, at least discursively, against the logic of social death for the sake of a more meaningful life and death. The tactic of the hunger strike opens a political temporality of radical transformation and collective liberation, beyond the reversible logic of weapon and tool, resistance and retaliation, reform and co-optation. And yet, on the other hand, Duguma is careful not to underestimate or celebrate the risk of death. The statement, "No one wants to die," underlines the goal of better living conditions in prison, while situating this more modest goal within an abolitionist horizon of world-remaking through bridge-building.[20]

In the context of the Pelican Bay SHU, the hunger strikes were an effective tactic for repurposing the weaponized architecture of the SHU, and for opening negotiations with the state that were unthinkable even five years ago. But this is quite different from the direct challenge to state power that both Feldman and Bargu associate with hunger strikes as a necropolitical tactic. The ambivalence of being willing to die, but publically announcing that one does not want to die, suggests a different logic of protest from the Irish deathfasts. (One person did die in the California prison hunger strikes—Billy "Guero" Sell—but it is not clear if his death was directly related to self-starvation (Law 2013).) Ultimately, I think the power of

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[20] Compare Bargu's acknowledgement that the practice of the hunger strike "often has a metaphysical element attached to it, an element regarding the meaning of existence. The self-destructive act makes a commentary on the meaning of life by conveying the prioritization of the life of a political cause over the biological existence of its proponents. These acts say, in a sense, it is not worth living life if you cannot live it according to your own political convictions" (2014, 16).

the 2013 hunger strikes lies not only—and perhaps not primarily—in the weaponization of bodies or of life, but in the seemingly humble practices of world-remaking, such as everyday conversation and writing, which create networks of solidarity and mutual support, both within the SHU and beyond. In other words, the political act of organizing the hunger strikes was just as important, if not more important than the strike action itself. The Short Corridor Collective, together with the Hunger Strike Solidarity Network, has undertaken a collective practice of repurposing weaponized architecture, which is just as crucial for abolitionist politics as the eschatological temporality of dismantling oppressive structures through the self-destruction of incarcerated bodies. The master's tools may never dismantle the master's house, but it remains to be seen whether the master's weapons can be repurposed as new and radically different tools for world-(re)making (Lorde 2007).

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