critical approaches to continental philosophy: intellectual community, disciplinary identity, and the politics of inclusion

timothy laurie, hannah stark and briohny walker

This article examines what it means to produce critical continental philosophy in contexts where the label of "continental" may seem increasingly tenuous, if not entirely anachronistic. We follow Ghassan Hage in understanding "critical thought" as enabling us "to reflexively move outside of ourselves such that we can start seeing ourselves in ways we could not have possibly seen ourselves, our culture or our society before."[1] Such thought may involve an interrogation of our own conditions of knowledge production, by giving us "access to forces that are outside of us but that are acting on us causally."[2] Our argument in this article is that critical approaches within continental philosophy need to examine a multiplicity of ways that disciplines can be defined and delimited, and to understand the ways that gender, geography, and coloniality (among other forces) shape the intellectual and social worlds of continental philosophy. In doing so, we want to consider the ways that familiar debates around intellectual and institutional biases might be enhanced by a closer consideration of process-based aspects of disciplinary self-reproduction, and we take as our example the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy (ASCP) conference at the University of Tasmania (November 29-December 1, 2017).[3] We also consider Nelson Maldonado-Torres' notion of "post-continental philosophy," and reflect on the implications of such a venture in the Australian context. But to begin with, we want to navigate a path between two modes of criticism commonly directed toward philosophy as a discipline.

The first mode of criticism, which we label idealist (in a non-pejorative sense of the term), takes philosophy as a relatively coherent field of interlocking propositions, and seeks to identify key missteps within this field that have allowed philosophers to perpetuate biases and prejudices. This approach tends to begin by identifying one philosopher (e.g. Plato, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant) as an exemplar of Western and/or European traditions, and by identifying weaknesses in this philosopher's programme that have subsequently affected the priorities or capabilities of philosophy. In some cases, this may involve demonstrating that the kinds of thinking promoted by this philosopher systematically marginalise, or even foreclose, radical ideas that challenge the established edifices of philosophical endeavour. The most well-known version of this approach points to Descartes' mind/body dualism as evidence that philosophy prioritises mental abstractions over embodied experiences, and that the discipline is therefore unable to wrestle with social justice issues that demand acknowledgement of corporeal harms, lived memory, everyday habits and practices, and so on.[4] In a notable variation on this approach, Ian Hunter cites Edmund Husserl as the villain of the piece, arguing that the problem with much of what gets called "theory" is its "skepticism toward empirical experience," which it often invokes to sustain petty attacks on the social and natural sciences.[5] Hunter notes that theory has invented for itself a personage, the Theorist, to which philosophers (especially those in the continental tradition) frequently become attached, one "characterized by the desire to interrupt ordinary life and knowledge in order to rise above it, to look down on it, to be someone for whom and to whom the world declares itself in all its purity."[6] The tendency of Theorists to distrust empirical research makes them particularly ill-equipped to respond to issues that require documentation through qualitative and quantitative methods (e.g. institutional or structural discrimination), such that a direct conflict emerges between the Theorist's system of ideas and progressive disciplinary transformation.

Nevertheless, institutionalised philosophy has proven adept at incorporating the criticisms levelled against its ideological tendencies. Indeed, the failures of philosophy have proven fruitful material for meta-critique. As a notable example, feminist philosophy has generated compelling criticisms of gender politics in philosophy, and in doing so, has breathed new life into continental philosophy itself, expanding its thematic reach and conceptual tools, and allowing philosophy to better communicate with innovations in cognate disciplines (psychoanalysis, sociology, cultural studies, politics, and so on). Continental philosophy has a enduring capacity to lurch forward through its crises, precisely because meta-critical

reflection—or at least, a certain *kind* of meta-criticism—is a preferred tool of the discipline itself. In some cases, however, the incorporation of criticism through meta-critique can contribute to an erasure of the embodied, social and institutional dynamics in play. Aileen Moreton-Robinson makes the following observation in her commentary on whiteness within Australian studies:

> The writer-knower as subject is racially invisible, while the Aboriginal as object is visible. The discourse of primitivism deploys the Cartesian model to separate the racialised white body of the knower from the racialised discourse and knowledge produced by its mind. In this way the body, which is the marker of race, is erased leaving only the disembodied mind. Whiteness, as an ontological and epistemological a priori, is seductive in producing the assumption of a racially neutral mind and an invisible detached white body.[7]

In an important example to which we return below, critical commentaries on "coloniality" and "decolonial" thinking may easily gain currency in meta-critiques of continental philosophy, without any concrete transformation in the relationship between embodied identities and knowledge production, or the ways that social identities shape situated understandings of settler colonial societies. Of course, ideological beliefs do shape the ways that scholars respond to criticisms of, say, Eurocentrism in their disciplines, but we remain unconvinced that this problem can be cured solely through public indictments of Platonism, Cartesianism, Kantianism, or the other *isms*. Continental philosophy has no original sin for which mere repentance would suffice; or rather, the persona of the repentant sinner-scholar can easily contribute toward new modalities of group-constitution, wherein European philosophers still play leading roles in the theatres of atonement.[8]

The second mode of criticism, which we label sociological, concerns the institutional conditions that sustain philosophy as a discipline, including patterns of enrolment and recruitment, mentorship and advocacy, promotions and progression, and so on. In *Women In Philosophy: What In Needs To Change?,* Fiona Jenkins and Katrina Hutchison note that philosophy in Australia, unlike sociology or history, has seen relatively little improvement in the participation of women since the 1960s.[9] To this, we can add the well-documented patterns of gender bias in academic citations across both analytic and continental philosophy.[10] No systematic study of philosophy in Australia has investigated inequalities around race,

nationality, class or disability, but scholarship from the United States suggests persistent biases toward white, middle-class, able-bodied masculinities.[11] This does not mean that there is a lack of diversity among those persons *philosophising*. Many scholars read philosophy, write philosophy and teach philosophy, while either not identifying as philosophers, or understanding their philosophical identity as precarious, especially if they are unable to imagine professional futures in the discipline.[12] Sally Haslanger argues that social inequalities in relation to gender follow from the "cultures" of philosophy departments relative to other programs: competitive, combative, judgmental, and "oriented toward individual accomplishment."[13] Jenkins also notes the ways that myths of meritocracy (e.g. "the best philosophers naturally rise to the top") come to naturalise the patently skewed demographic composition of the discipline.[14]

By placing the emphasis on institutional cultures, practices of direct or indirect discrimination come into sharper relief. However, such approaches are less effective when examining power dynamics that exist between the Global North and the Global South; between Anglophone and non-Anglophone publishing circuits; between institutionalised philosophy and those disciplines that philosophers sometimes consider insufficiently philosophical (e.g. anthropology, studies in religion); and between universities and alternative sites of pedagogy and learning. Sociological research tools suited to the analysis of a single institution - rates of participation and promotion, social experiences within classrooms and committees, and so on - may not so easily be extrapolated when seeking to explain the broad tendencies in the shaping of disciplinary priorities and boundaries within the global formations of research in continental philosophy.

These two modes of criticism, idealist and sociological, each contribute to contemporary conversations about the historical legacies and future viability of continental philosophy. Increasing political scrutiny has been directed toward the nomenclature of "continental philosophy," given the density of geopolitical meanings that attend continental both within and outside Europe. Definitions of continental philosophy vary wildly, from polemical indictments (often in comparisons with analytic philosophy) of continental thought as obscurantist and lacking in argumentative rigour, to culturalist accounts of continental philosophy as embedded in the national sentiments and orientations of French, German and other European thinkers, to canonical accounts of continental philosophy as inaugurated by a radical European thinker who remains unacceptable within most Anglo-American philosophy, such as G.W.F. Hegel.[15] It is sometimes altogether too

easy to nominate a definition of continental philosophy to suit one's own critical purposes, depending on whether one adopts an idealist or sociological approach. Nevertheless, whatever definition one adopts, Maldonado-Torres' assessment of a fundamental tension within continental philosophy remains compelling:

> [Continental] philosophy does not denote a purely contingent relation among certain philosophers, but ... involves a certain commitment with Europe as the primordial site of philosophy and critique. Commitment with Europe involves peculiar conceptions of geopolitical space and history as well as of European and non-European peoples. [16]

Maldonado-Torres' argument can be read in both idealist and sociological ways. It can serve both as a description of systems of ideas that contain tacit understandings of the superiority and indispensability of Europenness in critical thought, and as an indictment of the spatial, temporal and material conditions by which a discipline reproduces itself in relation to a (real or imagined) European centre, thereby excluding vast swathes of thinking that comes to be positioned as marginal. Of course, as Maldonado-Torres has noted, it may be that ideas developed by continental philosophers have equivalents in other intellectual traditions, and that certain tools from continental thinkers can be "utilized in a radical critique of coloniality."[17] Nevertheless, to the extent that continental philosophy understands itself to have monopolised certain ways of thinking, the genuine diversity of philosophical activity around the world—emerging over many millennia and extended across all continents—will continue to be evaluated in relation to the accepted canons and debates that animate continental philosophy. For this reason, before we consider the substantive claims made against particular kinds of thinking associated with continental philosophy, we want to note that disciplinarity and disciplinary boundaries pose a series of difficulties that cannot be overlooked when considering the consequences of expanding or abandoning the category of the continental.

"Disciplinary decadence" is the name that Lewis Gordon gives to the calcification of disciplines that seek to subsume all other disciplines and ways of thinking under a uniform criteria for inclusion and exclusion:

> Disciplinary decadence takes the form of one discipline assessing all other disciplines from its supposedly complete standpoint. It is the literary scholar who criticises work in other disciplines as not literary. It is the

sociologist who rejects other disciplines as not sociological. It is the historian who asserts history as the foundation of everything. It is the natural scientist that criticises the others for not being scientific. And it is also the philosopher who rejects all for not being properly philosophical.[18]

Against the tendency toward decadence that is certainly observable in some quarters of philosophy, we should recall that philosophy has a long and enduring history of interdisciplinary collegiality and cross-pollination. Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, European philosophers frequently conceived themselves as contributing to the broader project of scientific inquiry, allying itself with other enterprises searching for methodological consistency - physics, chemistry, biology, economics, and so on. Richard Rorty argues that with Immanuel Kant and the 19th century post-Kantians, this perceived purpose of philosophy as an ally of the sciences slowly changed.[19] In part through pressures of institutionalisation, philosophy was re-articulated as a foundation for, rather than complement to, the natural sciences and social sciences. The philosopher would now arbitrate the legitimate conditions of knowledge production underpinning those disciplines perceived to exist "downstream," so to speak.[20] Disciplinary decadence, from this viewpoint, emerged not simply from the inward-looking character of philosophy as a discipline, but from its self-appointed task in seeking to reveal the errors committed by other disciplines.

Two possible roles for the philosopher emerge from this historical transformation, as Rorty tells it. One role is that "of the cultural overseer who knows everyone's common ground—the Platonic philosopher-king who knows what everybody else is really doing whether they know it or not, because he [sic] knows about the ultimate context (the Forms, the Mind, Language) within which they are doing it."[21] This role can be seen at work in the scholarly practices identified by Moreton-Robinson, Maldonado-Torres and Stephen Muecke, wherein non-European ways of knowing and theorising come to be conscripted by philosophers as "objects" of evaluation, rather than as opportunities for dialogue, interlocution, and mutual transformation.[22] For Rorty, this philosopher-king role has eclipsed another possible role for philosophers, "the informed dilettante, the polypragmatic, Socratic intermediary between various discourses. In his salon, so to speak, hermetic thinkers are charmed out of their self-enclosed practices. Disagreements between disciplines and discourses are compromised or transcended in the course of the conversation."[23] To endorse this latter conception of philosopher as intermediary does not necessarily mean fetishising interdisciplinarity. The current enthusiasm

for interdisciplinary research in Australia, often driven opportunistically by research quotas and grant funding models, can risk diverting attention from critical interrogations of the histories, purposes and limits of specific disciplinary formations.[24] Nevertheless, we want to build on Rorty's argument for more pragmatic and creative relationships between disciplines, including more flexibility in the vocabularies used by philosophers to support inter-disciplinary communication.

Continental philosophy in Australia occupies an interesting position in relation to disciplinarity. This is in part due to institutionalised divisions between analytic and continental philosophy (e.g. sharp demarcations between undergraduate subject-offerings, journals, conferences and so on), and in part because of the interdisciplinary vigour of continental philosophy outside of demarcated philosophy departments—albeit, often practiced in self-consciously undisciplinary or anti-disciplinary ways. At its best, scholarship across traditional and disciplinary boundaries can produce moments of encounter that are potentially transformative, for thinkers, communities and schools of thought. As Thomas Ford has argued, disciplinary rigour and undisciplined vagueness, far from being opposing tendencies, may be "intertwined, even mutually generative."[25] Intellectual dialogues have the capacity to build enduring relationships that hold parties in responsibility to each other, and to each other's investments and commitments. In neoliberal university environments organised around competitive metrics for output and impact, humanities scholars need strong, inter-connected academic communities through which to advocate for the worth of our labor, which so often cannot be sufficiently measured in monetary value or key performance indicators.

Diversifying the themes, methods, and perceived canons of continental philosophy may be an important way to transform the meanings attached to the "continental." Nevertheless, we cannot escape the histories of colonial violence and epistemological injustice that have shaped imagined geographies of philosophical competence, including the prestige still accorded to "European thinkers" and Western European languages (especially English, French, and German). Nelson Maldonado-Torres' articulation of *post-continental philosophy* may be useful for thinking through these issues:

> Post-continentality is an expression of the idea that continents are not natural spaces, but projects that rely on specific notions of spatiality. Instead of seeking a dialectic between Europe and other continents, post-continental philosophy suggests that the possibilities for generating and

grounding theory and philosophy are multiple and include a variety of spatial and bodily references: the boat of the middle passage and the plantation, the black and the Chicana body, the island and the archipelago, the reservation and the boarding school, the prison and the camp.[26]

Post-continental philosophy does not involve abandoning European philosophical works, but it does involve showing that "normative subjectivities or communities" embedded within European works do affect the priorities and limitations of this scholarship.[27] Just as importantly, though, Maldonado-Torres argues for an entirely different way of situating philosophy in time and space, one that allows for the "lived experience of dehumanization" to be acknowledged as a site *from* which thought is produced, rather than simply an object *of* thinking as it takes place in the academy.[28] In this way, post-continental philosophy demands an alternative conception of the space of thinking. Rather than national cultures and national canon, Maldonado-Torres invites an engagement with "borderlands" (borrowing from Gloria Anzaldúa). These can be borders between "two people, between the people and those regarded nonpeople, and, between the non-people themselves—not in the continent or the nation."[29] By its very nature, post-continental philosophy cannot be a privatised intellectual pursuit: it demands thinking about philosophy as a public, institutional practice, wherein the "post" becomes immanent to the communities that emerge across radically disparate spaces of thinking and being.

One problem with the concept of the otherwise generative concept of the "post-continental" is that, like many of the neologisms that already circulate within continental philosophy, it may produce what Sara Ahmed calls "non-performatives,"[30] or speech acts that do not perform the action that they promise.[31] There is a significant gap between what we often *say* about philosophy in aspirational terms, and what actually happens in the institutional and organisational formations of the discipline. In parallel discussions around "decolonisation" in academic research, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang note "the ease with which the language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education and other social sciences, supplanting prior ways of talking about social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches which decenter settler perspectives."[32] Familiar initiatives underpinned by rights-based anti-discrimination frameworks may be expediently re-branded as "decolonial," without eroding the constitutive relations between the colonial State (as the arbiter rights) and colonised peoples. We therefore need to acknowledge that, even if "post-continental philosophy" acquired greater

currency in Australian universities, this may not greatly transform the relationship between Anglo-American and European-focused philosophy departments and publications, on the one hand, and research projects that are led by and centre Australian Indigenous voices and communities, on the other. As three non-Indigenous scholars trained both in continental philosophy and in humanities disciplines (e.g. literary studies, cultural studies) that continue to centre Anglo-American and European scholarship, we are conscious that our capacities to read postcolonial and decolonial scholarship does not rectify this asymmetry between those positioned as researchers and those commonly cast as objects of research.[33] This hierarchical relationship between those who research and those discursively positioned as objects of research is rarely reversed within humanities research in Australia, although steps towards this have been taken. As Moreton-Robinson points out, "it is rarely considered that Indigenous people are extremely knowledgeable about whites and whiteness. It is white scholars who have long been positioned as the leading investigators of the lives, values and abilities of Indigenous people."[34] In this context, we need to treat seriously the politico-economic dynamics that reward the modes of inhabiting whiteness that Moreton-Robinson describes. For example, there is no shortage of examples where non-European paradigms and political projects have simply been used to value-add whiteness, expanding its portfolios of inquiry without disturbing the institutional stratification of knowledges and segregation of knowers. The problems faced by one community become the research outputs enjoyed by another. Further inquiry to these issues might investigate the under-citation of scholars in the Global South by scholars in the Global North both as an ideological issue, insofar as some regions are perceived by those in the Global North as less philosophically salient than others, and as an economic issue, insofar as scholars seek to capitalise on existing institutional privileges and social networks through collective self-citation (and for editors, exclusionist curatorial practices).[35]

These broad considerations around the political dimensions of disciplinary identity were present in the planning for the Australasian Society for Continental Philosophy conference at the University of Tasmania in 2017. Hosting a conference in Sandy Bay in Hobart locates on the country of the Mouheneener people. This country bares a long history of European settler colonial violence in which sovereignty was never ceded. As members of the conference organising committee, we were motivated by the questions: how do we engage feminist, ecological, and decolonial thought to critique the historical legacies of philosophy and to produce new concepts? What does it mean to work within and through these frameworks

in an Australasian context, especially given the awkward colonial imaginaries that sustain both "continental philosophy" and "Australasia"?[36] Perhaps more acutely, if continental philosophy in this region has failed to sufficiently centre and attend to vital questions of gender, colonialism, and ecology, what is to be learned from this failure? What is worth bringing forward and what is better left behind? What does it mean to speak up, and when is it time to simply listen?

The multimodal capacities of the academic conference seem to promise alternatives to outputs fetish of the research university, even if this promise often feels unfulfilled. Despite the high levels of institutional scrutiny to which they can be subject, conferences are noticeably under-theorised as academic activities.[37] They have the potential to cultivate what Tanja Dreher calls "political listening," which involves not only the promotion of previously underrepresented voices (something that publishing may do, too), but the development of improved capacities for receptivity and responsiveness.[38] These capacities are developed at the intersections of textual and interpersonal practices. As Neil Gross and Crystal Fleming note, "conferences can be key sites for the social orchestration of academic knowledge and for the intrusion of sociality into forms of social knowledge production ... that might at first glance seem to take place entirely within practitioners' heads."[39] Against the masculinist mythos of the critical theorist who summons wisdom *sui generis,*[40] conferences can make visible the collective conditions of creativity and erudition, and open onto those seemingly mundane problems that, in practical terms, may be more consequential than any singular piece of research: how much will the registration fees, and which variables are taken into account in the scaling of fees? How many bursaries are allocated for disadvantaged delegates, and under what criteria? How are disciplinary and sub-disciplinary alignments reinforced or challenged by the choice of keynotes and the organisation of plenaries and panels? How does the allocation of spaces and the organisation of the program determine which papers will receive an audience? To what extent do communicative protocols - around question and answer sessions, the contributions of session chairs, or in the Australian contexts, Welcomes to Country and Acknowledgements of Country - shape the social connections and collisions that conferences can (or cannot) make possible?[41]

These questions may seem banal from the viewpoint of continental philosophy. But the experience of banality can be instructive, because intellectual divisions between the spectacular and the banal, the compelling and the pedestrian, are the effect of social processes. Logistical questions feel banal because the domi-

nant concepts and traditions in continental philosophy have not been designed to answer them.[42] As Achille Mbembe reminds us, in the context of the decolonial project in South Africa, shifting the institutional conditions for the production of knowledge require that we develop a greater awareness of the ways that specific infrastructures, such as the naming of institutional buildings and memorials, shapes the norms and priorities knowledge production.[43] Nevertheless, knowledge emerging from material practices and struggles is commonly dismissed as unstudied, while knowledge emerging from engagement with familiar textual canons is more readily accepted as rigorous. Put in Heideggerian terms, the quotidian business of organisation comes to be regarded as "ontic," while concept invention and critique are accorded status as "ontological."[44] A critical approach to continental philosophy might begin by re-mapping the diversity of skills and knowledges required to sustain a discipline, including those considered banal, pedestrian, or otherwise removed from the habituated objects of philosophical contemplation.

The prioritisation of equitable processes for hosting academic conference is not, of course, a panacea for the warts and worries of the neoliberal university. Conferences can consecrate and naturalise existing social hierarchies, and further extend social capital for those most easily able to travel, to pay fees, to be invited, and so on.[45] There is no template for the perfectly transformative academic conference, although initiatives outside university institutions - such as the Brisbane Free University in Australia - suggest that it may not be salaried academics who are best equipped to envisage the future forms that continental philosophy events should take.[46] We do maintain, nevertheless, that there is value in working through and foregrounding the often fraught political considerations that shape how conferences come into being and to hold out hope that, in bringing a scholarly community together, this work is not done in vain.

This special issue draws together a variety of papers presented at the 2017 ASCP conference. It begins with Michelle Boulous Walker's meditation on the importance collegiality as a space of political resistance to the neoliberal university. This piece was delivered at the inaugural ASCP postgraduate development day, which focussed on pathways to academic futures, institutional and professional wellbeing, and building intellectual communities beyond the academy. Walker advocates for the importance of collegiality within the modern university a site for social change. She describes this type of collegiality as "fragile and precarious" and implores us, in her contribution to this special issue, "to think more about

our relations *with others* within the university, than with *our selves*."[47] At the same time, Walker cautions us that any call to collegiality needs to be cognisant of the potentiality for exclusion and marginalisation, an issue that runs across the papers gathered for the ASCP plenary.

In the tradition of the ASCP, the 2017 conference hosted a plenary honouring the work of a significant Australasian philosopher, and on this occasion, the focus was on the extensive and diverse feminist philosophy of Professor Moira Gatens. The three articles celebrating Gatens' work reflect the depth of her contribution across social and political philosophy, feminist philosophy, early modern philosophy, and philosophy and literature. Louise Richardson-Self starts with Gatens' ground-breaking 1983 publication "A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction," and reads the central themes of this article, embodiment and social imaginaries, in relation to Gatens' subsequent work. Timothy Laurie examines the ways that Gatens situates knowledge claims and speech acts within specific conditions of community formation, focusing on the way that "monstrous" ideologies and beliefs might be subject to contextualisation, without resorting to the static models of group consensus. In the final commentary on Gatens, Simone Bignall examines the contribution that Gatens makes to Spinoza studies. Bignall examines how Gatens works through Spinoza to articulate her concept of "imaginary bodies" in order to think about power, freedom and the right, and then examines the ways that Gatens uses this foundation to consider institutional arrangements of power. Finally, Bignall shows that Gatens is not only an exemplary feminist thinker but also "an *imaginative* philosopher whose associative methodology creates new possibilities for thought," and who "presents a reconception of philosophy as a genre and a practice that strives to exert an imaginative power capable of changing and reshaping reality itself."[48]

The plenary on Moira Gatens opens onto the broader questions around the status of "European" thought in philosophy. The relationship between continental philosophy and other intellectual traditions are pursued in different ways through the special issue contributions from Elese Dowden, Anisha Sankar, Adrian Moore, and Briohny Walker. Adrian Moore's "Dissolving the Conscious in *Satori*: Merleau-Ponty and the Phenomenology of Suzuki's Embodied Buddhism," which maps complex associations between the *flesh* in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, Gestalt psychology, the concept of Māya in Indian philosophical traditions, and the diverse bodies of work concerned with *Satori* in Buddhism (with a focus on Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki). While Moore's piece uncovers unexpected resonanc-

es between geographically disparate traditions, the remaining three articles place a greater emphasis on tensions between culturally-specific ways of knowing, especially those shaped by European colonialism. Dowden's 'Colonial Mind, Colonised Body: Structural Violence and Incarceration in Aotearoa' draws on research in settler colonial studies to identify ways that the "coloniality of being" shapes the lives of Māori communities, focusing on the normalisation of Pākehā (non-Māori) identities through practices of governance and incarceration. Throughout, Dowden considers the way that the historical problem of settler colonial violence is displaced on Māori communities, who are in turned positioned as a "problem" to be managed by a State that elsewhere purports to endorse the virtues of multiculturalism. Extending these themes, Anisha Sankar places in dialogue the work on Frantz Fanon and Walter Benjamin, focusing on the status of "ruptures" in relation to anti-colonial and revolutionary struggles. In doing so, questions emerge around the value of Hegelian dialectics in both Fanon's and Benjamin's work, and Sankar draws on Lewis Gordon and Glen Coulthard to consider critique of recognition-based politics in contemporary decolonial scholarship. Finally, Briohny Walker's essay "Precarious Time: Queer Anthropocene Futures" (awarded the ASCP prize for Postgraduate Essay) brings together queer theory and decolonial thought in order to explore what is left when the future promised by capitalism is no longer guaranteed or even desirable. Walker looks for alternative ways to navigate the future that rely neither on the reproductive futurism of hetero-patriarchal thought, nor on colonial modes of thinking about futures and about the earth. Working with queer ecology and Indigenous knowledges, she finds potential for the production of precarious Anthropocene subjectivities that emerge from the failures of capitalism, and that may promise alternative futures to those currently imagined within market-driven societies.

TIMOTHY LAURIE is a Scholarly Teaching Fellow in the School of Communication at the University of Technology Sydney. His core research interests include cultural theory, popular music studies, and gender and sexuality studies. He is Managing Editor of *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*.

HANNAH STARK is a senior lecturer in the School of Humanities at the University of Tasmania. She is the author of *Feminist Theory After Deleuze* (Bloomsbury, 2017) and the co-editor of *Deleuze and the Non/Human* (Palgrave Macmillan 2015) and *Deleuze and Guattari in the Anthropocene* (Edinburgh 2016).

BRIOHNY WALKER is a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania in Philosophy and Gender Studies, with interests in feminist philosophy, queer theory, anti-capitalist politics, the Anthropocene and the transformative potential of education. Briohny is a cofounder of Brisbane Free University and Queering Health Hobart.

NOTES

1. Ghassan Hage, "Critical Anthropological Thought and the Radical Political Imaginary Today," *Critique of Anthropology* 32:3 (2012), 287.

2. Hage, 289.

3. URL: http://www.utas.edu.au/humanities/events/australasian-society-for-continental-philoso-phy-conference-2017

4. Problems attending the citation of Descartes' mind/body dualism as metonymic for Western philosophy are discussed in Christine Battersby, *The Phenomenal Woman: Feminist Metaphysics and the Patterns of Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998), 190-191.

5. Ian Hunter, "The History of Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 33:1 (2006), 81.

6. Hunter, 87.

7. Moreton-Robinson, 81. A parallel argument can be found in the work of Achille Mbembe, with specific references to colonial knowledge production across the African continent: "Western epistemic traditions are traditions that claim detachment of the known from the knower. They rest on a division between mind and world, or between reason and nature as an ontological a priori. They are traditions in which the knowing subject is enclosed in itself and peeks out at a world of objects and produces supposedly objective knowledge of those objects. The knowing subject is thus able to know the world without being part of that world and he or she is by all ac-counts able to produce knowledge that is supposed to be universal and independent of context." Achille Mbembe, "Decolonizing the University: New Directions," *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 15:1 (2016), 29-45, 32-33.

8. On group-constitution through recuperative re-interpretations of canonical works, see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Politics of Interpretations," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Criti-cism* (New York and London: Methuen, 1987), 118-33.

9. Katrina Hutchison and Fiona Jenkins, "Searching for Sofia: Gender and Philosophy in the 21st Century," in *Women in Philosophy: What Needs to Change?*, eds. Katrina Hutchison and Fiona Jenkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 7. See also Eliza Goddard. *Improving the Par-ticipation of Women in the Philosophy Profession: Executive Summary May 2008* (Hobart: Australian Association of Philosophy). Gender has also been identified as a barrier to philosophy in both the US and UK. In 2001, women in the UK held 24% of tenured positions in philosophy. See Helen Beebee and Jenny Saul, *Women in Philosophy in the UK: A Report by the British Philosophical Association and the Society for Women in Philosophy UK* (London: BPA/SWIPUK, 2001). In 2000, 21% of faculty positions in philosophy in the United States were held by women. See Molly Pax-ton, Carrie Figdor and Valerie Tiberius, "Quantifying the Gender Gap: An Empirical Study of the Underrepresentation of Women in Philosophy," *Hypatia* 27:4 (2012), 949-957.

10. See Fiona Jenkins, "Discriminating Well: On Excellence in Philosophy and Ways of Seeing Disciplinary Space," *Rivista di Estetica* 16 (2017), 103-18.

11. See Sally Haslanger, "Changing the Ideology and Culture of Philosophy: Not by Reason (Alone)," *Hypatia* 23:2 (2008), 210-23.

12. Hutchison and Jenkins.

13. Haslanger, 217.

14. Jenkins.

15. See Kevin Mulligan, "Introduction: On the History of Continental Philosophy," *Topoi* 10:2 (1991), 115-20. On Hegel as the historical touchstone for continental philosophy, see Nelson

Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources," *Review of Contemporary Philosophy* 9 (2010).

16. Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources," 53.

17. Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources," 53.

18. Lewis R. Gordon, "Disciplinary Decadence and the Decolonisation of Knowledge," *Africa Development* 39:1 (2014), 86.

19. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979). For an alternative history of this transformation of the (perceived) role of philosophy in relation to other disciplines, see Hunter, "The History of Theory."

20. Rorty, 131-134.

21. Rorty, 317.

22. See Moreton-Robinson; Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources"; Stephen Muecke, *Ancient and Modern: Time, Culture, and Indigenous Philosophy* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004).

23. Rorty, 317.

24. Despite his own reservations about disciplinary insularity, Gordon is also critical of interdisciplinarity, because "the presumed disciplinary completeness of each discipline is compatible with disciplinary decadence. Disciplines could simply work alongside each other like ships passing in the night." Gordon, 87.

25. Thomas H. Ford, *Wordsworth and the Poetics of Air* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 98.

26. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, "Thinking through the Decolonial Turn: Post-Continental Interventions in Theory, Philosophy, and Critique—an Introduction," *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1: 2 (2011), 4-5.

27. Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources," 56.

28. Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources," 56.

29. Maldonado-Torres, "Post-Continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources," 54.

30. Sara Ahmed, *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 117.

31. Ahmed, 117.

32. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1:1 (2012), 2.

33. One formative effort to re-articulate this relationship between the "researcher" and the "researched" is a co-authored (and illustrated) philosophical project between Paddy Roe (an elder of the Goolarabooloo people of the Nyigina in Western Australia), Moroccan-born artist Krim Benterrak, and non-Indigenous Australian anthropologist Stephen Muecke, entitled *Reading the Country: Introduction to Nomadology* (Melbourne: re.press, 2014 [1984]).

34. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Whiteness, Epistemology and Indigenous Representation," in *Whitening Race*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 85.

35. Raewyn Connell, "Southern Theory and World Universities," *Higher Education Research & Development* 36:1 (2017), 4-15. On rates of publishing around issues of race and racism in major

philosophy journals, see Haslanger, 220. On practices of self-citation within closed academic networks, see Jo Ann Oravec, "The Moral Imagination in an Era of 'Gaming Academia': Implications of Emerging Reputational Issues in Scholarly Activities for Knowledge Organization Practices," *Knowledge Organization* 42:5 (2015): n.p.

36. On "Australasia," see Katrina Gulliver, "Finding the Pacific World," *Journal of World History* 22: 1 (2011), 86.

37. On the intense scrutiny attending conferences focused on the Israel-Palestine conflict, see Mazen Masri, "A Tale of Two Conferences: On Power, Identity, and Academic Freedom," *AAUP Journal of Academic Freedom* 2 (2011), 1-28.

38. Tanja Dreher, "Social/Participation/Listening: Keywords for the Social Impact of Community Media." *Communication Research and Practice* 3:1 (2017), 26.

39. Neil Gross and Crystal Fleming, "Academic Conferences and the Making of Philosophical Knowledge," in *Social Knowledge in the Making*, eds. Charles Camic, Neil Gross and Michèle Lamont (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 152.

40. See Jane Flax, "Critical Theory as a Vocation," *Politics & Society* 8:2 (1978), 201-23.

41. On Acknowledgements of Country and Welcomes to Country in the Australian context, see Alison Whittaker, "Acknowledgement," *Overland* (January 13, 2017).

42. On this contextual understanding of banality as instructive for critical thinking, see Meaghan Morris, "Banality in Cultural Studies," in *The Cultural Studies Reader*, ed. Simon During (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

43. Mbembe, 29-45, 32-33.

44. We owe this observation to generous reflections from Remy Low. On this particular adaptation of Martin Heidegger's distinction between the ontic and ontological, see Tony Fry, "Design for/by "the Global South," *Design Philosophy Papers* 15:1 (2017), 21.

45. Gross and Fleming, 156.

46. See Anna Carlson and Briohny Walker, "Free Universities and Radical Reading Groups: Learning to Care in the Here and Now," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 32:6 (2018), 782-94.

47. Michelle Boulous Walker, "The Fragility of Collegiality: 'What Remains of me in the University, Within the University?'" *Parrhesia*, this issue. Emphasis in original.

48. Simone Bignall, "Re-visioning Benedict Spinoza and George Eliot through the work of George Eliot" *Parrhesia*, this issue.

the fragility of collegiality: 'what remains of me at the university, within the university?'

michelle boulous walker

In their exchange on the discourse of the academy, the French writers Héléne Cixous and Cathérine Clément ask: "*What remains of me at the university, within the university*?"[1] We might rephrase their question as "What remains of *us* at the university, of *us* within the university?" in the hope of undermining the rampant individualism that flourishes in the contemporary neo-liberal age. My suggestion is that we need to think more about our relations *with others* within the university, than with *our selves*—whether this be our successes, our triumphs, our productivities, or whatever. The question of what remains, echoes Cixous's long-term concern with pedagogy, and the role of the academic institution which, as Jennifer Birkett points out, has "no criteria for assessing 'genuine' bedazzlement."[2] And while I am supportive of the idea that we consider the case for "bedazzlement"—which we might think of in terms of an open and poetic response to the complexity we encounter in our thinking and in our work—I am concerned that our institutions (our universities) are failing us in other important regards. What remains of *us* at the university, of *us* within the university is—to put it simply—a collegiality we can only refer to as fragile, precarious.

To speak of collegiality, though, is to risk reifying a term that has a complex history of its own. While we can think of it as an unquestioned good, both a necessary and desirable state of intersubjective relations, we need to consider how differently collegiality manifests in different times and places. Indeed, in the context

of many Western universities, collegiality has, at times, supported a closed and very elitist conception of who our colleagues are. As Hannah Forsyth, in *A History of the Modern Australian University* argues, the radical critiques of this elitism— emerging throughout the sixties, seventies, and beyond—point to ideological and economic structures marginalising people "on the basis of class, race, gender and sexuality."[3] The idea or concept of collegiality can obscure the complex ways in which we exclude and marginalise, in order to gather a privileged elite in often (paradoxically) hierarchical ways.[4] Such exclusion perpetuates political, social, and economic inequalities, impoverishing the potential of the university as a site both for radical social analysis and change.

While collegiality should not be uncritically celebrated, and any feminist analysis should most certainly take issue with its potential for exclusion and marginalisation, there is, nonetheless, a sense in which we can rethink collegiality today, at least strategically, as a set of practices aimed to gather and support disparate and often atomised individuals in the university in more collective and communal ways. If collegiality is to have any practical meaning, it must partake in practices that re-connect us one with another, practices that enhance the humanity of our everyday exchanges and communications. Practices that return to us our self-worth, rather than to our use-value. Practices such as these are crucial, and yet they take time.

In 2010, in his important essay "What is the Institutional Form for Thinking?", Simon Critchley raises the question of collegiality, and while he does not address the potential problems associated with the term, what he has to say is helpful, I think, for any attempt to rethink it:

> At some point in the 1980s, an ideological mist descended, making academics obsessed with research, cutting the fragile bonds of solidarity with their colleagues (and collegiality is *so* important to academia and *so* fragile), and introducing an obsession with measuring and the ranking of institutions. Academics have almost entirely conspired with this process and are completely culpable. We have shifted from a model of oppositional politics in the Marxist sense, where there was a sort of war or class struggle between academics and the state that required strong unions, to a Foucaultian model, where university academics learn to discipline themselves and govern themselves in terms of structures and criteria handed down to them by university management and state departments of education.[5]

Critchtley's observation, that the competitive nature of the neo-liberal university threatens the fragile bonds of solidarity—the collegiality that is *so* important to the kind of work we do, provides us with both a positive account of collegiality as solidarity and collaboration, and a provisional response to Cixous and Clément's question above: at present, what remains of *us* at the university, of *us* within the university is something other than solidarity. Something other than collegiality. We are in danger of becoming the atomised individuals of neo-liberalism and late capitalism that many of our works decry.

In thinking through the complex issues that have structured the research I have undertaken in my recent book, *Slow Philosophy: Reading Against the Institution*, I have come to think that the question of collegiality ought to be central in any discussion of what constitutes good philosophy (or good thought, more generally). Collegiality, the kind that welcomes diversity and works to undo marginality, is arguably what is most at risk in our current work environments. I have argued[6] that the competitive frame of our encounters with others (for status, funding, and prestige), disturbs the fragile intellectual "ethos" that Critchley describes as falling somewhere between—on the one hand—"atmosphere, climate, and place" and—on the other—"a disposition for thinking and thoughtfulness."[7] If collegiality is the key to an ethos that promotes thinking and thoughtfulness, then the fragility of collegiality, in the context of today's corporate university, is cause for serious concern. Not just for us as academic and institutional philosophers, but for our society and culture more fundamentally. Thinking and thoughtfulness are what we most urgently need to protect.

Our "collaborative being-with others",[8] based on familiarity and trust, is under threat in the fortified world of the corporate institution. Isolation takes the place of engagement and exchange. Resentment increasingly thrives under conditions of high time pressure and even more so when teaching is pitted *against* research.[9] Under such conditions collegiality is a fragile possibility at best, and reclaiming pleasure and joy within the institutional context can be seen as a political act of resistance. For some, Simon Critchley and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht for example, teaching provides the locus of resistance. Reclaiming pleasure and joy within the context of teaching offers us ways of resisting the resentment and isolation that characterises the corporate and increasingly competitive capitalist university.[10] Critchley refers to the "delicate tact of teaching" and its involvement in "the formation of human beings"[11] and this reminds us of the great privilege that teaching is. His call for "a better, collaborative, institutional form of thinking" based on our

enjoyment of teaching is helpful, I think, for drawing our attention to the excesses of the corporate institution. In a similar vein, Gumbrecht argues that our primary pedagogical task ought to be identifying instances of complexity and exposing our students to these.[12] This, too, provides a pleasurable engagement with the work we undertake within the university, permitting us to experience the joy of sinking deeply into a slow and careful engagement with the complexities of thought.[13]

While I wholly support these claims, and I have spent a great deal of energy in the book pursuing the important *pedagogical* implications of slow philosophy and slow reading, I am concerned here to ask us all (as professional philosophers) to reflect on our collegial relations—our collaborative being-with others—as expressions of pleasure and joy.[14] Let us imagine collegiality as the ethical centre of a revival of what it means to do good philosophy today.

We know from Plato's dialogues that philosophy is a person-to-person relationship, an intimate and transformative relation propelling us from one existential state to another. Philosophy is an intense person-to-person encounter that has the potential to move us from a state near ignorance to one closer to wisdom. Given this, we need to think of our collegial encounters as potentially transformative ones, and if we do we begin to understand why anything that heightens the fragility of these relations is less than desirable. In fact, anything that increases the fragility of our collegial relations detracts from the philosophy that we are able to do. We cannot *calculate* the importance of these relations, and if we try we cease to think philosophically. As the corporate university begins to take hold, the risk is that calculation takes the place of encounter. Indeed as Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber in their work *The Slow Professor* (2016) contend, the rise of the corporate institution is accompanied by a deterioration in collegial relations which leads inevitably to an increasing isolation: "As [we] academics become more isolated from each other, we are also becoming more compliant as resistance to the corporatization of the academy *seems* futile."[15] This environment further encourages instrumental and calculative relations with others:

> We are enjoined to spend our time in ways that can be measured and registered in accounting systems. Deans' reports tend not to have sections with headings such as 'helping a colleague figure out why a lecture didn't go well' or 'offering support to an overwhelmed junior colleague' or 'expressing enthusiasm for a colleague's new research project.' In a climate of accounting, such activities belong to [what Bill Readings has referred to

as] 'an economy of waste' and, given the increasing faculty workload, it is not surprising that they fall by the wayside.[16]

The risk, here, is that we no longer talk with one another. Concern for career progression and status, vis-à-vis our colleagues, means that the corporate university divides and conquers an increasingly disengaged workforce: "Conversation is instrumentalized, and colleagues are turned into 'either resources or hindrances'."[17] Either way this is an unacceptable reduction of our human relations. In fact, the favoured term of the corporate institution is not human relations, but much more tellingly "human resources", and we recall well Martin Heidegger's warning on the reduction of a relation to a resource.[18]

There are problems, as we have seen, with any uncritical or ahistorical adoption of collegiality as a counter to the corporate university. In addition, the concept of collegiality can today no doubt be made to serve instrumental ends.[19] This is perhaps especially so when collegiality is reduced to the responsibility of the individual, rather than explored as a "fundamentally social phenomenon."[20] While this is always a danger it is not, I think, a reason to ignore the important ethical and political dimension that a renewed appreciation of collegiality can bring. Such an analysis ought to explore the affective dimensions of collegiality or what Teresa Brennan has called the "transmission of affect."[21] In doing so, it can bring to the fore the importance of trust and respect in our institutional dealings with colleagues, in order to remind us what really matters.[22]

In their discussion of the affective dimensions of collegiality, Berg and Seeber recommend that we "see the workplace as 'a kind of holding environment' or 'support net'." They argue that "a good 'holding environment' is able to contain fluctuations in its members' emotions, allowing for the expression of negative as well as positive feelings."[23] In support of this, they cite Frank Martela's account of the affective dimension of institutional work: "respecting each other, sharing emotional burdens, encouraging each other, knowing each other as a person, and solving emotional problems together."[24] Berg and Seeber agree with Sarah Wright's observation that "the [university] workplace is populated by people who have social and emotional needs both outside of work *and* during work hours",[25] and they conclude by offering the following practical advice: don't make communal events compulsory, vent rather than whine, risk intimacy, think about what we have already lost and what we miss, and finally, never give up hope that a more [inclusive] collegial environment can successfully resist the corporate universi-

ty.[26] While collegiality can be thought in abstract terms, its intimate relation with sets of practical actions or practices should be noted, and these practices will no doubt differ from place to place, and from discipline to discipline. What is certain, though, is that developing and sustaining collegiality takes time.

The kind of inclusive and supportive collegiality we are exploring hits another obstacle, in the guise of "excellence", exceptionalism, and the competitive frame these values require. In a brief piece on women's working lives, in what she refers to as the managerial university, Angela McRobbie points to the corrosive effects of competition on collegiality, and the specific danger this holds for women who so often, for complex structural reasons, retain only a tenuous hold on the institution. She argues that collectively "embracing the idea of ordinariness" may be a strategic solution that is, at the same time, also "good for the soul."[27] McRobbie urges us to invent new ways of thinking about the work we do, replacing the managerial talk of "talent" and "excellence" with "the more commonplace idea of a 'good job well done'." Such an orientation toward our work could counter the "self-promotional rhetoric" which she claims "wraps its way around academic self-description" in the university today. This rhetoric serves to heighten the competitive work environment—increasingly dominated by benchmarking and comparison—with the result that excellence stands in the way of any likely collegial experience.[28] "There is a requirement to be exceptional", McRobbie writes, and "only a truly exceptional young woman, one who was also lucky in her life-planning with a partner could have children and could survive this new style of university governmentality without falling apart."[29] Although she does not explore this, McRobbie's argument requires a collective and collegial re-thinking, a gesture in solidarity that ensures no individual is left with the invidious task (or consequences) of re-valuing the values herself.

The problems confronting our collegial relations arise today within the context of a workplace where time has been reduced to a precious resource. This is not coincidental. Collegiality thrives on the slow and careful development of relations of respect and trust. Without this time, we fail to provide the ground necessary for ethical relations to flourish. Our philosophical work occurs within the context of the demands of a largely corporate culture, one that commodifies time. The corporate nature of the institution limits our possibilities for attentive reflection—both in terms of our own research and in our teaching. If philosophy is to continue to help us engage the increasing complexity of the world, then our current institutional practices need to be resisted. Encounters with complexity take

time and can best be encouraged within environments that support attentive reflection and critical engagement. The corporate nature of the university restricts time and rewards efficiency in ways that work against establishing a community of philosophers, or of scholars. An equation is established between efficiency and haste, and increasingly we fail to challenge the suitability of this equation for the kind of work we do. *Slow Philosophy* reminds us that we should always question the institutional framework within which we think and work. It is not an argument *against* the institution, but more importantly one against the restrictive and short-sighted frame that the institution, over time, has become. *Slow Philosophy* is a call to renew the institution, to return to the innovative moment, the instituting processes, that precede the instituted structure of philosophy. In the West, these instituting processes are linked with the love of wisdom (*philo–sophia*), and we can think of this wisdom today in terms of our ability to engage the complex world we inhabit.

It may be utopian to consider how slow philosophy can help to reconfigure the ways we teach, learn, and research, in order to enhance possibilities for collegial being, nonetheless it is important that we try.[30] Resisting competitive relations with our colleagues is an important first step in changing our institutional relations—relations that, as I have suggested, all too often become instrumental, calculating, and inhuman. The fragility of collegiality is something that each of us must address and this goes beyond our peer relations to the work we undertake in our role as mentors. While it is crucial that we build strong and stable collegial relations, this in itself is not enough. It is equally important that we undertake the delicate and essential work of support that builds confidence and capability in those younger philosophers with whom we work closely—with those we supervise and those we encourage. Together, collegiality and a strong and practical commitment to mentoring[31] provide the grounds for more human ways of being in the university today.[32]

Given that our universities harbour destructive, instrumental, and competitive relations—relations that benefit the institution and yet damage the individual *and* the group—we need to think carefully about the dangers of uncritically adopting a corporate mentality where "output" and "production" place unrealistic and unhealthy time restrictions on the work that we each undertake. By reclaiming the pleasures of a collaborative teaching, learning, and thinking, and by fostering an inclusive collegiality, we can, to some extent, recognise and resist the more destructive pressures of the modern institution.

MICHELLE BOULOUS WALKER is Associate Professor in Philosophy in the School of Historical & Philosophical Inquiry and Head of the European Philosophy Research Group at The University of Queensland. Author of *Slow Philosophy: Reading Against the Institution* (Bloomsbury 2017) and *Philosophy and the Maternal Body: Reading Silence* (Routledge 1998); editor of *Performing Sexualities* (IMA 1994). Other publications span the fields of European philosophy, aesthetics, ethics, and feminist philosophy.

NOTES

1. Héléne Cixous and Cathérine Clément, *The Newly Born Woman*. Trans. Betsy Wing. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 146. Originally published as *La Jeune* née. Paris: Union Générale d'Editions, 1975.

2. Jennifer Birkett, "The Implications of *Etudes Féminines* for Teaching" *The Body and the Text: Hèlène Cixous, Reading and Teaching*. Eds Helen Wilcox et al. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990, 207.

3. Hannah Forsyth, *A History of the Modern Australian University*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2014, 228.

4. Indeed, Forsyth analyses the reign of the "God-professors" with their almost feudal powers to simultaneously give and to take away. Forsyth, "A History,"67-87.

5. Simon Critchley, "What is the Institutional Form for Thinking?" *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 21:1 (2010, 23).

6. Michelle Boulous Walker, *Slow Philosophy: Reading Against the Institution*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, 110.

7. Critchley, 29. Critchley points to the fragility of the intellectual ethos, which is, to his mind, "the easiest thing in the world to destroy." Critchley, "What is,"29.

8. Critchley, "What is,"27.

9. Boulous Walker, "Slow Philosophy,"125.

10. Maggie Berg and Barbara Seeber describe Sheila Slaughter's and Larry L. Leslie's term "academic capitalism" simply as "the application of market models to universities." Maggie Berg and Barbara K. Seeber, *The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016, 53.

11. Critchley, "What is,"26.

12. Gumbrecht refers to Niklas Luhmann's influential discussion of the university as an institution of teaching as well as research, whose primary function ought ideally be the production of complexity. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004, 128-9 and Niklas Luhmann, *Die Wissenschaft der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Surhkamp, 1990.

13. Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *The Powers of Philology: Dynamics of Textual Scholarship*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003, 85.

14. For a discussion of the importance of Cixous's collaborative practice and what this means for our "collaborative being-with others,"see Boulous Walker "Slow Philosophy,"169.

15. Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"70.

16. Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"72.

17. Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"80.

18. In *Slow Philosophy: Reading Against the Institution*) I draw on Heidegger's work to set the scene for the technological reduction of thinking in the corporate institution: "Heidegger's insights into modern technological society have a bearing, I think, on what we could call the creeping technological nature of today's institutions. One of Heidegger's main observations is that our modern ways of being or existing are impacted upon by that aspect of technological life that reduces everything in its wake to a resource. Our understanding and our ways of being in the world are in danger of becoming technological themselves. Our very understanding is in danger of reducing the world in which we exist to nothing other than a resource, or to what Heidegger refers to as a 'standing reserve.' To reduce the world and our understanding of it in this way is to fail, in Heidegger's terms,

to 'stay with things,'to engage with the world in meaningful, non-utilitarian ways. By striving for ever more speed, efficiency and interchangeability, this technological world-view makes objects or resources out of the things [and even people] that have previously had meaning for us." Boulous Walker, "Slow Philosophy,"xiv.

19. Berg and Seeber point out that the concept of collegiality can be mobilised in punitive ways, can comprise academic freedom, and, when appearing in the context of something such as the "Collegiality Assessment Matrix,"can be stripped of any critical response to the institution. In spite of these very real dangers they argue that we should not overlook the collective power of collegial relations and the benefit of these for our humanity. (Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"76-7). Additionally, they report findings from research into these matters indicating that 89% of faculty in US universities have identified collegiality as the most pressing need to best support young and early career colleagues (77). They go on to suggest that while recommendations, such as "works-in-progress series, speaker events, retreats, and reading groups" are laudable that they require time and energy that is all too scarce in the day-to-day reality of the corporate university (77): "Hall [in his recommendations] emphasizes personal responsibility, but personal responsibility can also slide into blame..." (77-8). While Berg and Seeber believe in the importance of individual agency, they are "wary of neglecting to take into account the institutional and political factors which set the conditions for our work..." (78). In short, they conclude: "Even well-meaning advice in the current climate is in danger of turning collegiality into the exchange of marketable skills. Seeing colleagues as resources precludes the affective dimension of talk, turning others into sound bites" (79).

20. Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"80. Forsyth suggests a more positive account of evidence for collegiality, in terms of how it has been transformed in the contemporary context. She writes: "Having relinquished long scholarly morning teas to focus on publication, collegial discussion happens nevertheless, over dinners, at conferences, through social networking and in the coffee shops that litter every campus" (Forsyth, "A History,"228-9). I am concerned, though, that this version of collegiality leans a little too heavily toward networking, which can involve practices that actually undermine the kind of collegiality I champion here. At its worst, networking instrumentalises our relations with our colleagues by reducing them to valuable resources, helpful in achieving our own individual research and career aims.

21. Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004.

22. There is scope, here, to explore the connections between a reconsidered collegiality, Brennan's transmission of affect, and a feminist ethics of care.

23. Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"82.

24. Martella cited in Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"82.

25. Wright cited in Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"82.

26. Berg and Seeber, "The Slow Professor,"84.

27. Angela McRobbie, "Women's working lives in the 'new' university" (10 August 2015). https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/angela-mcrobbie/womens-working-lives-in-new-university [11/04/2018].

28. In a similar vein, Forsyth reports that university structures of merit work "to exclude the very people who needed higher education the most." Forsyth, "A History,"228.

29. McRobbie asks: "Is there room for any women other than the 'exceptional woman,'let alone women with children, in the new hyper-stratified university?" McRobbie, "Women's working lives."

30. Birkett reminds us that "Utopia should not be a place of retreat, but a way of remaking the

present." Birkett, "The Implications of *Etudes Féminines*,"206.

31. My thanks to Lewis Gordon for reminding me how collegiality and mentoring work together to foster more ethical ways of being in the university. Indeed, Lewis's participation throughout the entirety of the Postgraduate Day (and the following ASCP Conference) provides a model of engaged collegial mentoring.

32. Cixous writes: "Nothing allows us to rule out the possibility of radical transformation of behaviours, mentalities, roles… today. Let us simultaneously imagine a general change in all the structures of training, education, [and] supervision" (Cixous, *La Jeune* née, 83, cited in Birkett, "The Implications of *Etudes Féminines*,"205.

reflections on imagination and embodiment in the work of moira gatens, 1983-2008

louise richardson-self

In 1983 Moira Gatens published 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction' (here-after, 'Critique').[1] Subsequently reprinted in a variety of feminist anthologies and in her own *Imaginary Bodies*,[2] this article questioned the uncritical adoption of 'gender' as the preferred conceptual category of feminist analysis. Whilst scholars were eagerly abandoning discussions of sexual difference, Gatens sought to interrogate this move. At the time, 'gender' (following Robert Stoller) was seen to have "psychological and cultural rather than biological connotations," and was thought to have deep explanatory power by extension, providing the best avenue for understanding women's oppression.[3] And, if women are oppressed because of their gender—that is, because of *socially shared ideas* about women—then a seeming-solution presents itself: let us degender society by changing culture and mind. We must learn that there is nothing innate about Woman (or Man); it is a social construct. In short, we must learn that there is nothing about the female sex—the capacity to birth and feed a child, the presence of female genitalia and secondary sex characteristics, and so on—that entails Woman's subordination to Man, nor her limitation to certain social roles (such as mother, wife, etc.), nor even that a person so-sexed *is* a woman. Such perceptions of Woman are fictions created amongst and perpetuated by social actors and institutions. To the extent that this basic understanding persists in our general collective consciousness, women's liberation still seems to point to this 'obvious' solution; we can and should degender our societies, treating all persons the same no matter their physical form.[4]

Gatens' crucial observation is that such degendering arguments are predicated on an unconvincing assumption that mind and body are separate, and ignores the historical and contextual fact that people *are* oppressed because of the cultural meanings that attach to their morphologically sexed specificity. But the argument was controversial. In an interview with Mary Walsh, Gatens recalls initially presenting the piece at conferences in 1981 and 1982, explaining that "it wasn't well received at all," and "there was a lot of confusion about it… it got a very aggressive reaction from people."[5] One of the reasons for this controversy follows from the mistaken tendency to attribute essentialist commitments to difference feminism, despite Gatens' explicit articulation of her intention to demonstrate that difference feminism need not fall afoul of this objection.[6] Yet, one can see how it is possible to make such a mistake. Consider, for instance, Gatens' statement: "I would suggest that some bodily experiences and events, though lacking any fixed significance, are likely, in *all* social structures, to be privileged sites of significance."[7] Since this occurs in all social structures, sexed bodies might then appear to have a certain inherent nature. But close attention reveals the nuance of the claim. As Gatens explains, the body with which she is concerned is "the situated body," "the body as lived," "the body's morphology"—in other words, "the imaginary body."[8] Gatens does explicitly challenge the belief that social meanings are made manifest by a neutral consciousness and that masculine and feminine behaviours are arbitrarily linked to male and female bodies. But this is not to posit an essence which fixes the identities of males as Men and females as Women; rather, it is an attempt to take seriously the fact that "we *are* historically and culturally situated in a society that is divided and organized in terms of sex."[9] This observation remains important as ever in contemporary western societies, for, as Gatens explains, people still "don't want to acknowledge that biology is also involved in culture," nor that culture produces biological knowledge.[10] I assert that the insights advanced in Gatens' 'Critique' remain both radical and important, and that the extension and nuanced articulation of the themes of imagination and embodiment throughout Gatens' oeuvre are crucial for ongoing feminist analysis, activism, and cultural (r)evolution.

A CRITIQUE OF THE SEX/GENDER DISTINCTION

The aim of 'Critique' is to demonstrate that the two premises underscoring the degendering proposal are unconvincing. They are:

1. the body is *neutral* and *passive* with regard to the formation of

consciousness... [and]

2. one can definitively alter the important effects of the historical and cultural specificity of one's 'lived experience' by consciously changing the material practices of the culture in question.[11]

Against the rationalist view (premise one), following Freud, Gatens argues that subjects are perceptual beings. The important insight here is that perception is an active rather than passive process, and that much of what is perceived by the body "never even enters consciousness but remains preconscious or unconscious."[12] Moreover, if the body were passive, then it could be trained to respond appropriately to certain stimuli and relied upon to consistently react in a certain way. But this is not what bodies do; bodies are actively and flexibly engaged in the world. Because subjectivity is not passive, it cannot be reduced to the mere body (as the behaviourist would have it), and because most of what is perceived through the body never makes it to the level of consciousness but *does* orient the subject in the world, subjectivity cannot be reduced only to mind either. This takes care of the claim that the body is passive with regard to the formation of consciousness, for the body is always in an active and creative engagement with its environment. To the point of neutrality, Gatens states bluntly: "let me be explicit, there is no neutral body, there are *at least* two kinds of bodies: the male body and the female body."[13]

To the second premise, Gatens charges that it is ahistorical itself; it fails to "consider the resilience of expressions of sexual difference along with the network of linguistic and other systems of signification that both constitute and perpetuate this difference."[14] Those who desire (or presume we can achieve) a degendered society miss the point, stated above: we *are* historically and culturally situated in a society that is divided and organised in terms of sex. What is required is an understanding of the body as lived for the subject, given that subjects always exist in cultures with a particular historical trajectory, as embodied, and where particular features of bodies have particular meanings and will always have *some sort of meaning*. As Gatens later explained, the aim here was "to offer a critique of the [sex/gender] distinction using the notion of the *imaginary body*."[15] It is to this concept, and to 'social imaginaries', that I now turn.

IMAGINARY BODIES AND SOCIAL IMAGINARIES: DEVELOPING THE CONCEPTS

While Gatens' notion of bodily imaginaries has developed over time, in this first elaboration much of her critique was influenced by insights from psychoanalysis and (to a lesser extent) phenomenology.[16] Use of the term in psychoanalytic circles can be traced back to at least the 1930s—it emerges, for instance, within Lacan's articulation of the mirror phase, which was, in turn, developed from Freud's account of the narcissistic ego.[17] The narcissistic ego is always mediated by others, and to the extent that it can invest its own libidinal tributaries to its own image or to parts of its own body, it must come to see itself as not only a subject but also an object (-as-seen-by-others). Thus, the narcissistic ego is an alienated ego; "the subject that takes itself as its own object is fundamentally *split*."[18] So, the ego is "the psychical representation of the subject's perceived and libidinized relation to its body [as object-ified]."[19] The mirror phase is thus designed to explain the emergence of the narcissistic ego or unified 'self' which cannot be separated from the body.

For Lacan, the preconditions of this genesis are the child's awareness of a distinction between itself and the (m)other or mirror-image, an absence of instant gratification of need, and the beginnings of a displacement of the child's dependence—the mirror stage "provides a promise or anticipation of (self)mastery and control the subject lacks" at present.[20] This external perception of 'the self' is adopted wholesale and the body-image comes to organise the subject's own experience of its body.[21] As Elizabeth Grosz puts it, the ego (one's conception of 'the self') is an *imaginary anatomy*: "a psychical projection of the body, a kind of map of the body's psycho-social meaning" that is invested with affect.[22] It is organised not by "the laws of biology," but by "a culture's *concepts* of biology," and thus of "parental or familial significations and fantasies about the body."[23] This explains how each subject has its own unique body image, but also how patterns emerge across the body images of similarly-(em)bodied individuals (e.g. those who share specific sex characteristics). Put another way, the imaginary body is a *threshold concept*, it is neither natural nor cultural, neither mind nor body, neither individual nor social, but always inescapably and simultaneously both.[24] In 'Critique', Gatens saw this liminal concept as one from which politically productive theorising about equality could emerge.

Feminist understandings of the imaginary body such as Gatens' also go beyond the psychoanalytic conception, acknowledging the relationship of imaginary bodies to social imaginaries. Social imaginaries ultimately produce certain sorts of subjects; as Gatens says, "it is misleading to explain the imaginary in terms of the creative subjective imagination because without the instituting social imaginary there would be no subjects."[25] But subjects also have the power to (collectively) shape the social imaginaries in which they invest and to which they conform. In short, the relationship between the two is co-constitutive. For Gatens, social imaginaries—i.e. our repositories of collective imaginings, including those which underscore what Lacan labelled 'the symbolic'—are understood more readily as a cause rather than the effect of thoughts by individual subjects, even though subjects nonetheless remain capable of imagining themselves and their worlds anew.[26]

The importance of the social imaginary can also be located in the work of Cornelius Castoriadis. For him, our social life is a manifestation of the (dominant) social imaginary, which is "our most basic ontological category," and is inclusive of our capacity to generate and modify "networks of interconnecting symbols that give meaning to our existence."[27] Yet, while Gatens' own work on the imaginary shares similarities to Castoriadis' work, her focus on the material difference of bodies (in the development of individual subjectivity via imaginary bodies) distinguishes her insights. Indeed, she has been described as "drawing together the concerns of broadly psychological conceptions of the imaginary with those of theorists of the social imaginary [e.g. Castoriadis]" and bringing them to bear on the issue of embodiment.[28] Also influential for Gatens were insights on the body arising out of the phenomenological tradition (as mentioned above), particularly in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. So, for her, the imaginary includes elements of both the "conscious, imagining, and imaging, mind," as in the phenomenological tradition, and the "unconscious, phantasying mind," as in psychoanalysis,[29] as well as to the stock of images that social collectives are deeply, *affectively* invested in,[30] which ultimately and inevitably shape our own bodily morphology—our experience of embodiment—and our understanding of the world as meaningful.

Given this understanding of imaginary bodies, we are now well-placed to understand what Gatens' hoped to achieve by contesting the sex/gender distinction via appeal to this concept in her seminal article. Her argument is not that sexed specificity entails a *specific* cultural interpretation that would invariably shape subjectivity in a fixed way. Rather, her argument is that certain bodily features and

functions will not escape cultural conceptualisation *whatever that may turn out to be*. Moreover, since there is no ahistorical nor neutral body, we would do well to explore the impact of *the body as lived* for subjects who find themselves born into patriarchal societies—such as subjects born into western societies—if we want to address oppression as it effects real people. For Gatens, the imaginary body is not the physiological, anatomical, nor biological body. And it is "not simply a product of subjective imagination, fantasy or folklore."[31] It is constituted in part by shared images, symbols, metaphors, and representations, which means the imaginary body is inherently, inescapably *social*. But it is also always *affective*, *embodied*; there is no separation of body and mind.

To summarise: we employ ready-made images and symbols from the social imaginaries into which we are born, including our shared cultural meanings of biology, to make sense of and (e)value(ate) the subjects we encounter, including our own embodied experiences. We do this based on cultural conceptions of biology which, though contingent, are not arbitrary.[32] This has an important implication. Since we call upon "ready-made images and symbols to make sense of social bodies," including one's own body, to determine what constitutes appropriate treatment of, and value for, certain subjects, we come to find that "it is not what is done or how it is done but *who* does it that determines social value."[33] In short, it is not so much the activity that generates social value, rather it is the type of person who engages with that activity that is so-valued within the social imaginary.[34] This allows us to make sense of Gatens' statement: "it is not masculinity *per se* that is valorized in our culture"—as proponents of degendering would seem to suggest—"but the *masculine male*":[35] a claim which still holds true today. And in a patriarchal social context, this is what must be challenged.

THE SPINOZISTIC TURN

Following the publication of 'Critique,' the Spinozistic influence in Gatens' approach to the imaginary and embodiment—in her feminist effort to understand human subjectivity and becoming—moves to the foreground. The feminist appeal of Spinoza is vast (though his philosophy was not particularly prominent at the time Gatens began to engage with it).[36] He does away with the mind/body substance dualism of Descartes, and his is an embodied monism: *a* mind is the idea of *a* body, and bodies are always already in a social context, bearing traces of their own past. In Gatens' words, "the body is the ground of human action," and "the mind is constituted by the affirmation of the *actual* existence of the body."[37] There

is no clear reason/passion split in his philosophy either, since, according to Gatens' interpretation, his notion of reason is that of an active emotion. Moreover, reason is *embodied* "precisely because it is the affirmation of a *particular* bodily experience."[38] There is also no clear dichotomy between nature/culture, since human beings are a part of (rather than separate from) nature.[39] Indeed, "the human body is radically open to its surroundings," and is "in constant interchange with its environment."[40] Spinoza further sees subjectivity in part as "an awareness of the body as it is impinged upon by other bodies."[41] Thus, it is inherently social and, crucially, always becoming and always in process.

Importantly, for Spinoza, the imagination is "a form of bodily awareness,"[42] and the imagination is never transcended. What makes his account of the imagination ripe for mining by feminist philosophers are three observations: the imagination is inevitably material, it is inherently social (i.e. tied to collectives), and it is suffused with emotion and affect.[43] His insights on the imagination and its importance for feminism are summed up by Gatens as follows:

> Imagination necessarily involves both mind and body—and a body that is already inserted into a context in which it has certain values and meanings. These may well be false, but, if so, that is completely irrelevant, because it is through these meanings and values that a body becomes whatever it is. So for me, the notion of the imaginary *embodies*, *specifies*, *historicizes*, and *contextualizes* the experience of individuals and groups.[44]

Gatens marries this with psychoanalytic and phenomenological ideas about the imaginary body in order to produce an account of individual and collective growth and change that is both contextualized and particular.

We can also retroactively trace these insights back into a reading of Gatens' 'Critique' to see once again why it is politically misguided for feminists to abandon the material body in favour of analysis of gender (where gender is understood as the social construction of a mind that bears no trace of the material form in which it is embodied).[45] The point is that the cultural meanings of biology are tied up in relations of domination and oppression (because bodies are never outside of a context), so feminism must fight for different social relations between *embodied* beings that are *specific* to time and context. And while feminism cannot ignore the polarization of men and women that is a part of our socio-political histories, a feminism which is attentive to embodiment is not subsequently shackled to rec-

ognising bodies as always and only either male or female and subsequently Men or Women. We can, drawing inspiration from Spinoza, "begin the exploration of other ontologies which would be developed hand in hand with a politico-ethical stance that accommodates *multiple*, not simply dichotomously *sexed* bodies."[46] We avoid essentialism too, because we understand that the body is always a body in process, in changing contexts, and so its capacities and meaning are always varied and variable. By eliciting insights from Spinoza, as well as psychoanalytic and phenomenological insights into the subject's imaginary body that were drawn upon in 'Critique', Gatens is able to press the importance of embodiment in the constitution of the subject in a historical and contextualized way which endures throughout her research. She avoids reducing discussions of difference to mere biological essentialism by advancing an account which stresses the morphology of bodies as produced within interconnecting and temporally extending social imaginaries.

Taking on and adapting such frameworks also allowed Gatens to make good on another central feminist commitment as she grew her body of scholarship: recognition of intersectionality—acknowledging the fact that sexual difference is not the only embodied difference, nor is it a difference which can legitimately be privileged over others in the struggle for liberation.[47] Importantly, the dominant, overarching, interconnecting stock of images in contemporary western societies attaches greater value to certain sorts of bodies and the activities those bodies undertake—namely, white, male, cisgender, heterosexual subjects—and less to others. The question is: how do we move beyond oppressive social imaginaries (which substantially produce specific morphologies of sexed, raced, desiring bodies and thus affect the body as lived) to a world in which our cultural meanings and normative practices are instead *enabling* for a great variety of subjects? We must collectively produce new 'stocks of images'[48] (or alter our old ones) in a process that is never closed: always contextual, but open ended and always unfinished.

'CAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOMMODATE WOMEN'S RIGHTS?' SOCIAL IMAGINARIES AND IMAGINARY BODIES IN PRACTICAL CONTEXT

The insights articulated by Gatens in 'Critique' have endured throughout her writing and have grounded her analysis of contemporary matters of social justice. For instance, she repeats her point that the value of social activities is dependent upon *who* performs them in her 2004 article 'Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?' (hereafter, 'Women's Rights'):

The meaning of normative behaviour will vary depending on whose behaviour it is. The links between various imaginaries and gender norms crucially involve the body and bodies are of at least two kinds: male and female… Meaning *depends* upon how specific norms attach to types of bodies.[49]

In short, we cannot understand gender-based oppression unless we take the body-as-lived into account. Gatens then extends this insight by working through the rights-based concerns raised by the practice of arranged child marriage within some indigenous Australian communities.

Gatens explains that "normative behaviour cannot be understood, perhaps not even judged, without seeing how it fits within the relevant social context."[50] In the case discussed by Gatens, the arranged child marriage was defended by the man accused by appeal to traditional or customary law. Here the contexts are dual: a dominant Anglo-Australian imaginary developed in the historical context of settler colonisation, and an Indigenous imaginary with various practices comprising customary law. Thus, child marriage could be seen on the one hand as child abuse, and on the other an important way of solidifying kinship ties. Gatens maintains that the rights of indigenous women must be understood by paying attention to competing social imaginaries as well as the place of specific imaginary bodies within them. Thus, we see that the traditional practice of arranged child marriage is complicated by the intersectional experiences of indigenous women: when one lives across two social imaginaries which mark out one's place and role as an embodied subject in sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory ways, how is one to act? How is one to become (recognised as) an agent, as a subject? How does one navigate and alter the normative expectations placed upon subjects such as herself? This question is critical, given that "women are the most visible and significant embodiments of culture,"[51] which is complicated further by the fact that "women who speak out in support of institutional change and women's rights are often portrayed as rejecting their culture in favour of 'Westernization.'"[52] Yet, it is crucial to recognise that the privileging of Aboriginal men's accounts of customary law by the Anglo-(masculine-) Australian legal system in fact *distorts* such law so as to 'justify' the harms experienced by women and girls.[53]

So, we see that the fact of sexual difference emerges as central in discussing "whose imagination, whose innovations, [and] whose challenges to convention have had the force to shift the way we imagine our political communities."[54] In

Gatens' words,

> At base, the normative problem is the very fact of sexual difference, that is, the fact that human life is double: man and woman. Yet, in all cultures, it would seem, one half of humanity, man, has had by far the major say in how and why this fact should be made socially, ethically and politically meaningful.[55]

But so, too, is race a central factor that cannot be abstracted away from, and this is precisely Gatens' point: these minority women's identities "are constructed at the intersection of two of the most fundamental social and political divisions: sex *and* race (or ethnicity)."[56] As she explains in *Imaginary Bodies*:

> Social imaginaries 'link up.' They link up, however, not to form a coherent unchallengable front. On the contrary, different aspects of contemporary liberal sociabilities jostle against each other, create paradoxes of all kinds, and present opportunities for change and political action.[57]

In sum, it is precisely by paying attention to our intersections that we may become alert to contradictions and articulate our reasons for demanding change. These insights thereby retain a connection to her argument against ahistoricity in her 'Critique'—she maintains that "there is no universal Woman" and that "the spur to fight for social change is endemic to the places and times in which actually existing women fight for historically and culturally specific causes;"[58] thus, if we want to change the material conditions of our lives, we must first make the meanings behind our specific normative practices visible, but we must also acknowledge that our history cannot be abstracted away from. Though social imaginaries and imaginary bodies are "the always present backdrop to meaningful social action," *presentness* does not entail a subject's conscious awareness, and so, to change these imaginings, we must bring them (and our history) to the foreground.[59] This is no simple feat, since the ways we imagine ourselves and our place within the world—our rationale for what we do and how we do it—"may be long forgotten."[60] In short, justice requires a twofold response: we must make our imaginaries visible—we must re-member them, and we must also endorse that women, as much as men, are entitled to participate in the reshaping of their cultures and societies—to reshaping the social imaginaries that make their lives meaningful.

STRIVING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE: ENUMERATING SOME TOOLS

For Gatens, imaginaries—both bodily and social—require "working through":[61] imaginaries work at the threshold of a collective affective preconscious that is always embodied, which is why they prove so stubborn to shift. As mentioned above, we must collectively produce new stocks of images in an open-ended manner to reshape the possibilities for understanding ourselves and our proper place in the world. But *how* can this occur? It is perhaps here that Gatens' ongoing commitment to historical specificity, embodiment, and the need to illuminate our preconscious commitments is most evident. The role of affect and its relationship to reason is crucial. In her words,

> *Disaffection* with one's circumstances may result in a radical social disorientation which, though painful, obliges one to take stock of where one is, where one would like to be, and the most likely means of successfully reaching one's desired destination... To acknowledge one's disorientation, one's lack of (proper) place, and that one is not alone in this, is to acknowledge the need to collectively create new maps.[62]

Despite Gatens' explicit statement that "I am not proposing a theory of the imaginary,"[63] and Susan James' statement that "there is no recipe for success,"[64] there are nonetheless tools which can be found in Gatens' discussion in 'Women's Rights.' I extract six for consideration: power, time, contradiction between imaginaries, desire for change, critique, and resonance—though none of these is a necessary nor sufficient condition which can guarantee the desired outcome.[65] Rather than offering us a methodology, I believe that what we can extract from Gatens' scholarship is a provisional lot of strategic approaches that offer us some hope for generating change. In short: our tools to elicit changes in our dominant imaginings may not prove sufficient but they can have *some* effect, and perhaps this is the most we can expect when deriving strategies to interrogate and transform what has become individually and collectively 'second nature.'[66]

First to power: though the point is implicit, I believe that when Gatens asks "who has the authority to define tradition? Who is invited to participate in the reinvention of tradition across time?"[67] this very clearly indicates that bringing relations of social power to explicit attention will be a crucial stage in strategizing over how one will develop their critique of the social imaginary and create new maps (or stocks of images). Next, to time, contradiction, and desire: in Gatens' words,

"competition between different imaginaries"—as in the competing imaginaries of white Australia and indigenous groups—"inevitably generates contradictions over time."[68] This is what permitted the young girl in the case Gatens discusses in 'Women's Rights' to articulate her desire *not* to be placed in an arranged child marriage. Indeed, Gatens explicitly states that "contradictions within and between social imaginaries, coupled with human desires, are the motors of social change."[69] On the importance of critique, we see Gatens stipulate that "deliberate collective resistance to norms, and the imaginaries that support them, will involve pushing [the ambiguities of social meanings] to their limit through the reinvention or reinterpretation of aspects of those imaginaries."[70] This ties into the final factor: resonance. As Gatens' explains, "if particular normative constraints are to be justifiable they will have to be more or less consistent with broader social meanings and narratives"[71]—thus the critical move must be *constructive* rather than *destructive*. It must evolve meaning, not eradicate it.

'CONFLICTING IMAGINARIES IN AUSTRALIAN MULTICULTURALISM': RETURNING TO INTERSECTIONALITY AND WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS

We are left with a niggling question: how to ensure that the changes one seeks to bring about are in fact enabling (i.e. *permit agency*) for a great variety of subjects, including those who historically and contemporarily face oppression, and particularly for those who find themselves located at the intersections of oppressions? This question caused Gatens to return to the example of arranged child marriage in her 2008 article, 'Conflicting Imaginaries in Australian Multiculturalism' (hereafter 'Conflicting Imaginaries').[72] The concern remains that rights for minority cultures "may support discriminatory treatment of individual girls and women within the relevant groups."[73] But, as Gatens rightly asks, "where is the Archimedean point from which one confidently could rank cultures from the most to the least patriarchal," or the most to the least oppressive, and from where one might suggest directives for how less-egalitarian groups might achieve equality?[74] One cannot assume that western liberal feminism provides such a platform of judgement, for it would imply "that [this] feminism's norms are culturally 'neutral'," which, of course, is not the case.[75] As Gatens already emphasised in 'Critique', we are *all* historically and culturally located subjects[76]—and "the line between the embodiment of one's [multiple, overlapping] cultural norms and one's capacity for agency is difficult, if not impossible to draw" when this is taken into account.[77] For this reason, Gatens acknowledges Robert Post in his criticism of Susan Moller Okin: "distinguishing between enabling and oppressive cultural norms is a fun-

damental challenge of liberal multiculturalism, a challenge that has yet to be suc-
cessfully confronted."[78] Gatens' own endeavour to take up Post's challenge starts
from the observation that "agency *must* take different cultural—and historical—
forms."[79]

In the context of multicultural, (post-)colonial Australia at the turn of the 21st
Century, debate as to whether a behavioural norm or social practice is constrain-
ing or enabling for a given actor "will depend on the nature of the cluster to which
the norm is attached and how that cluster figures in broader imaginaries."[80] With
regard to the specific practice of child marriage, it is crucial that women in indig-
enous communities are also consulted about what constitutes customary law.[81] As
Gatens makes plain, the struggles of indigenous women are specific to a context
where colonization and its aftermath have (perhaps irreparably) damaged the
imaginaries of indigenous communities, such that "for some indigenous women
the concern is not that their culture...will become extinct. It is rather that tradi-
tions and laws are being passed on to the next generation in a distorted form
that is deeply damaging to the interests of women and girls."[82] Thus, attempts to
preserve *or* return to *or* to change one's culture should not be seen as a product
of false consciousness on the one hand, or cultural abandonment on the other,
but as a valid expression of agency.[83] It is the practice of engaging the historically
oppressed in consultation and negotiation which is central: whether a practice or
overarching imaginary is *enabling* or *constraining* for certain subjects cannot be
determined in advance, abstracted from history and context.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

Today, as we continue the social project of women's liberation, one cannot deny
that 'gender' rather than 'sex' is the term with the most social purchase. One also
cannot deny that nowadays people use the term differently than they did 1983;
'gender' is frequently used as a synonym for 'women.'[84] Gatens argues that this is
"connected to the original problem" analysed in 'Critique.'[85] Culturally, we have
not yet overcome the unconvincing mind/body distinction against which Gatens'
'Critique' argues vehemently, yet which still implicitly associates the body and
difference with women alone. Indeed, the fact that 'gender' has become synony-
mous with 'women' only signifies further that it remains Man who is posited as
the 'normal' human subject, as though he has no sex (nor race, nor orientation,
etc.) of his own. Subsequently, we are not well-enough equipped to attend to the
deep conceptual roots which perpetuate women's (and other forms of) oppres-

sion in a lasting way. This is why the observations made in Gatens' 'Critique' remain crucial for feminist theory and activism, and why the central insights Gatens argued for in 'Critique' continue to reappear throughout her oeuvre, sometimes in flashes, and sometimes explicitly. The following statement from 'Conflicting Imaginaries'—published a full 25 years after 'Critique'—demonstrates that this is so:

> Inattention to contextual meaning assumes the existence of an ahistorical, acultural, 'essential' individual, whose desires and 'nature' may be distorted, or illegitimately constrained, by her insertion into a specific place and time. This posits 'woman' as a 'universal' whose freedom may be secured by replacing distorting and oppressive local cultural norms with universally appropriate human rights. But there is no universal 'woman' and no 'acultural' individual. This means that the spur for normative change is endemic to the places and times in which actually existing women fight for historically and culturally specific causes.[86]

The fact remains: bodies are not neutral, they are not ahistorical, nor acultural, and they are not passive in relation to their environment. It is through adopting the notions of the imaginary body and social imaginaries that we are able to see that this is so. While Gatens' scholarship shifts its primary focus from bodily imaginaries to social imaginaries over time, the two never come apart. Embodiment remains a crucial fulcrum around which her investigations into liberation, social justice, and human rights spin. Gatens' scholarship not only offers insights into the ways injustice perpetuates (and develops) in contextually specific forms over time, she also offers us (some of) the tools we need in order to attempt social (r)evolution.

> LOUISE RICHARDON-SELF is a Lecturer at the University of Tasmania and an Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow (2019-2021). Her current research project investigates online gendered hate speech using the critical lens of social imaginaries. She has published widely on marriage equality, including her 2015 book *Justifying Same-Sex Marriage: A Philosophical Analysis.*

NOTES

1. It appeared in Allen, Judith and Paul Patton, editors. *Beyond Marxism? Interventions After Marx*. Sydney: Interventions Publications, 1983.

2. Gatens, Moira. *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality*. London: Routledge, 1996.

3. Stoller, in Plumwood, Val. "Do We Need a Sex /Gender Distinction?" *Radical Philosophy* 51 (1989): 2.

4. As Plumwood points out, what one means by 'degendering' matters. It might mean "removing all structure of social difference and meaning attached to male and female biology and bodies" ("Sex/Gender Distinction," 10, original emphasis)—which Gatens believes is impossible and distracts from attempts to address injustices between men and women. But, alternatively, it might mean something more akin to regendering: "the liberation of gender from the shackles of a dualistic (and dimorphic) system" ("Sex/Gender Distinction," 10). This is a fair statement, but couched as a critique of Gatens' argument, it is misguided for two reasons. 1. While it *may* be true that scholarly advocates for 'degendering' really mean 'regendering'—the implication being that Gatens has created a straw man—this says nothing of how *activists* were in fact coming to understand 'gender,' nor what they intended when they advocated a program of 'degendering.' 2. Gatens' argument problematizes a particular notion of gender as predominantly understood at the time (as Gatens saw it). But she does not deny that the concept can be reimagined and put to good use as a feminist concept. This is supported by her later research. In *Imaginary Bodies*, she offers one such alternative account of 'gender': it may be understood "not as the effect of ideology or cultural values but as the way in which power takes hold of and constructs bodies in particular ways" (*Imaginary Bodies*, 70). In other words, "gender is a material effect of the way in which power takes hold of the body rather than an ideological effect of the way power 'conditions' the mind" (*Imaginary Bodies*, 66). And even if gender can (and should) be saved, Gatens' critique still retains crucial insights for feminism today, especially concerning imagination and embodiment.

5. In Walsh, Mary. "Twenty Years Since 'A Critique of the Sex/Gender Distinction': A Conversation with Moira Gatens." *Australian Feminist Studies* 19 (2004): 213—214.

6. In this author's view, Val Plumwood ("Sex/Gender Distinction") makes this error in her critique of Gatens.

7. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 9, emphasis added.

8. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 11. I note that Plumwood also misunderstands the 'imaginary' in the sense intended by Gatens. She states, "It is the body as experienced as well as imagined, and as seen and felt, and what is believed about and to follow from the body, which is relevant, not just as imagined in mental imagery" ("Sex/Gender Distinction," 7—8). The critique is redundant because this is precisely what Gatens means, and Gatens' analysis is aimed at disrupting an easy separation of 'the mental' from 'the physical.'

9. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 11.

10. Walsh, "A Conversation with Moira Gatens," 214. Whilst this insight has become much more commonly accepted in academia, it would be a stretch to assert that this is a commonly shared belief in western societies more broadly.

11. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 7.

12. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 8.

13. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 8, emphasis added.

14. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 10.

15. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 3, emphasis added.

16. For example, in a footnote to 'Critique' she expresses that "Merelau-Ponty has an interesting account of perception as an activity of the body-subject in *The Phenomenology of Perception*" (Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 19, fn 29).

17. Grosz, Elizabeth. *Jacques Lacan: A Feminist Introduction*. London: Routledge, 1990, 15; Gatens, Moira. "Imaginaries." Included in *50 Concepts for an Intersectional Phenomenology*, edited by A. Murphy, G. Salamon, and G. Weiss. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, forthcoming.

18. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 31, original emphasis.

19. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 31.

20. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 32.

21. Gatens, "Imaginaries."

22. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 43.

23. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 44, original emphasis.

24. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan*, 46.

25. Gatens, "Imaginaries," n.p.

26. Gatens, "Imaginaries."

27. James, Susan. "Freedom and the Imaginary." Included in *Visible Women: Essays on Feminist Legal Theory and Political Philosophy*, edited by Susan James and Stephanie Palmer. Oxford: Hart, 2002, 181. Publishing.

28. James, "Freedom and the Imaginary," 185.

29. Whitford, Margaret. *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine*. London: Routledge, 1991, 54. This distinction is uncovered by Whitford in reference to the work of Luce Irigaray, who is another influential thinker for Gatens. However, Gatens departs from Irigaray's ascription of primal importance to the *sexual* imaginary. Gatens' own political theorizing is much more intersectionally robust when it comes to thinking through identity and justice (see especially Gatens, Moira. "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights? Toward an Embodied Account of Social Norms, Social Meaning, and Cultural Change." *Contemporary Political Theory* 3 (2004): 275—299 and Gatens, Moira. "Conflicting Imaginaries in Australian Multiculturalism: Women's Rights, Group Rights, and Aboriginal Customary Law." Included in *Political Theory and Australian Multiculturalism*, edited by Geoffrey Brahm Levey. New York: Berghahn Books, 151—170).

30. Gatens' later engagement with the philosophy of Michèle Le Dœuff also clearly informs this position. While Le Dœuff is interested in "the stock of images you can find in philosophical works," it is her broader observation that we tend to 'think in images' which matters here, as well as the fact that "the particular imaginary employed…tends to organize the fundamental values of that system." See Gatens, Moira. "Polysemy, Atopia, and Feminist Thought." Included in *Michèle Le Dœuff: Operative Philosophy and Imaginative Practice*, edited by Max Deutscher. New York: Humanity Books, 2000, 45, 46.

31. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, viii.

32. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 13. The cultural variation between activities which are normatively expected of men and women is well documented (see, for example, Rosaldo, Michelle Zimbalist.

"Woman, Culture and Society: A Theoretical Overview." Included in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, edited by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere. 17—42. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974, 17—42). This shows that what we collectively make of appropriate masculine and feminine behaviour as it relates to biological differences is not fixed or unchanging. Nonetheless, it is impossible to deny that human reproduction is of vast importance in human societies, and thus, because this activity is so important, it is not arbitrary that the categorisation of humans into sexed types occurs in some way. This by no means requires a dimorphic understanding of sex. It requires only that we acknowledge the different capacities of different bodies.

33. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, vii, 15, original emphasis.

34. Empirical evidence backs up this claim. As Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo ("Woman, Culture and Society") demonstrates, whatever activity it is normative for men to perform, these are the activities which are attributed the most social value.

35. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 15.

36. One of the reasons Gatens was drawn to his work was precisely that there was a dearth of authoritative secondary texts written about his philosophical insights (see James, Susan. "The Power of Spinoza: Feminist Conjunctions. Susan James Interviews Genevieve Lloyd and Moira Gatens." *Hypatia* 15 (2000): 46—47).

37. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 57, emphasis added.

38. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 57, original emphasis.

39. See James, "The Power of Spinoza," 44, 47.

40. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 110.

41. Lloyd, in James, "The Power of Spinoza," 48.

42. Gatens, Moira and Genevieve Lloyd. *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present*. London: Routledge, 1999, 12.

43. Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*, 12.

44. Gatens, in James, "The Power of Spinoza," 56, emphasis added.

45. I believe such a retroactive reading is justified, given that Spinoza was a central figure in Gatens' doctoral thesis, which she was writing at the time 'Critique' was published (personal communication).

46. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 56, original emphasis.

47. Other 'difference feminists' have been interpreted as privileging the morphology of sex over and above other forms of embodied differences, notably Luce Irigaray (e.g. Stone, Alison. *Luce Irigaray and the Philosophy of Sexuate Difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Gatens has argued directly, "insistence on ontological sexual difference leads into the *cul de sac* of essentialism, where sexual difference is privileged over all other difference," which is to be avoided (*Imaginary Bodies*, x, original emphasis).

48. The term comes from Michèle Le Dœuff (see Gatens, "Polysemy, Atopia, and Feminist Thought," 50).

49. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 283, emphasis added.

50. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 283.

51. Rao, in Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 119.

52. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 277.

53. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 164.

54. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 279.

55. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 280.

56. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 162, emphasis added

57. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, xi.

58. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 286.

59. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 277.

60. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 279.

61. James, "Freedom and the Imaginary," 176.

62. Gatens, "Polysemy, Atopia, and Feminist Thought," 56, emphasis added.

63. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, viii.

64. James, "Freedom and the Imaginary," 187.

65. I have written on these in more detail elsewhere (see Richardson-Self, Louise. *Justifying Same-Sex Marriage*. London: Rowman and Littlefield International, 2015; Richardson-Self, Louise. "Same-Sex Marriage and the 'No' Campaign." *Humanities Australia*, 9 (2018): 32—39.

66. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, xi, xiv.

67. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 293.

68. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 287.

69. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 287.

70. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 287.

71. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?" 286.

72. In conversation, Gatens once recounted that she was dissatisfied with her first attempt to wrestle with the issue of women's rights across multiple conflicting imaginaries, hence the second treatment of these issues.

73. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 153.

74. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 158.

75. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 158—159.

76. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 11.

77. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 159.

78. Post, in Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 160.

79. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 160, original emphasis.

80. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 165.

81. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 166.

82. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 166. See also Wohlan, Catherine. *Aboriginal Women's Interests in Customary Law Recognition*. Perth: Law Reform Commission of Western Australia, 2005; and Watson, Irene. "Aboriginal Women's Law and Lives: How Might we keep Growing the Law?" *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 26 (2007): 95—107.

83. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 165.

84. Gatens, in Walsh, "A Conversation with Moira Gatens," 214.

85. Gatens, in Walsh, "A Conversation with Moira Gatens," 214.
86. Gatens, "Conflicting Imaginaries," 158.

thinking without monsters: the role of philosophy in moira gatens

timothy laurie

We must become strong enough to take responsibility for what we are in order to become something else.
—Moira Gatens[1]

Moira Gatens poses questions that challenge the social and institutional worlds that sustain what we call philosophical thinking. This does not mean that Gatens pillories philosophy to secure polemical victories. It does mean that, drawing on Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza's parallelism, Gatens does not presume that the best ideas will always prevail through philosophical argumentation, or that the battle of ideas can proceed indifferently to the embodied conditions of speech and sociability. We are invited to consider not simply whether arguments are true, but to better understand the society, community or polity for which the truth of an argument could hold force. Gatens takes philosophy outside philosophy and reinvents the role of the philosopher in the process.

This article examines the role and purpose of philosophy through Gatens' engagements with four areas of inquiry. Firstly, I locate intellectual disagreement and ideological struggles, which profoundly shape the day-to-day business of philosophical knowledge production, within what Gatens calls "social imaginaries." Secondly, the article examines the relationships between thought and the body, noting the distinctions Gatens makes between Spinoza's parallelism and other efforts to link corporeality to ideas (e.g. contemporary affect theory). The article then considers the ways that social imaginaries and mind/body parallelism may contribute to a reworking of debates within feminist philosophy about the conditions and limits of individual agency. Finally, I consider seemingly monstrous individuals through public debates around acts perceived to violate community norms. Throughout, Gatens invites us to reconsider the communities we form in and through philosophical thinking, including those communities that may decide, at important junctures, that professional philosophers are no longer needed.

PHILOSOPHICAL DISAGREEMENT

Philosophy demands a taste for disagreement. It aids the casual retelling of the history of philosophy as a litany of quarrels, and the more systemic business of evaluating students—knowing the difference between two canonised names is knowing what those names were *really on about*. The adversarial mode carves away the trivial features of philosophy from the more essential matters of principle. To call someone a "Foucauldian," for example, is to present the influence of Michel Foucault as essential to the way this someone thinks. For such an approach to philosophy, thinking begins with essential claims, moves calmly toward inessential examples and situations, and finally toward entirely trivial matters of stylistic presentation. We may, in turn, direct our disagreements toward the interpretation or application of Foucault, or to the choice of Foucault altogether, should we happen to prefer someone else. But we do not say that someone is a Foucauldian simply because they share his interest in prisons. Every person who is imprisoned or works in prisons could, after all, become an overnight Foucauldian. But of course, maybe they can. The difference between the specialist and non-specialist may not be how well a person thinks, or how grounded their discourse may be, but how well the non-specialist's speech can become commensurate with the communicative norms of philosophy.[2] These latter may include a clear demarcation between the (perceived to be) contingent and passing features of speech produced in such-and-such a time and place, and the features of speech understood to be relevant for any-time, any-place, any-people. When we talk about philosophical disagree-

ment, then, we are telling stories about how speech is constructed and mobilised, and how it produces its most important effects. We may disagree with this or that claim generated by a philosopher, but agree that we should treat each other as exactly that—claims-generators, combining and colliding with other claims-generators.

One oft-reviled bundle of claims in contemporary feminist philosophy has come to be labelled "essentialism." In certain institutional spaces, gender essentialists are read as a monstrous type mired in unforgivable analytical sins. Correspondingly, a certain mode of philosophical commentary prides itself on uncovering essentialism wherever it lurks. Spring the monster in its lair and chase it from the village. In *Imaginary Bodies*, Moira Gatens offers a different approach. Closely reading *The Sexual Contract*, Gatens outlines Carole Pateman's influential argument about the fraternalism at the heart of early liberal political thought in Europe. Pateman emphasised the ways that status-based hierarchies organised around the "rule of the father" gave way to a contract-based hierarchy organised around revised political and civil social roles for men, such that "social contract" theories could be understood as simultaneously anti-patriarchal (in the classical sense of the term) and decidedly patriarchal (in the modern sense of the term). Throughout, Gatens documents the vacillating claims in Pateman's work about the origins of gender inequality and offers a sharp criticism:

> [Pateman] assumes a linear chain of causality, where sexual difference, sexual relations and the sexual contract are the successive links which together enchain us all in the tyranny of our current social and political institutions. However… our past is open to constant revision and retelling as our understandings of how we became what we are change. In this sense, one is confronted not so much with a 'chain of necessity,' relentlessly linking the past with the present, as with competing 'sets of narratives' which are open to contestation. [3]

Gatens could have concluded by highlighting this distinction between two competing frameworks, with a nudge toward the latter: history as a linear narrative to be regarded from a transcendent point in the present; or, history as a space of narrative contestation, to be negotiated in and through ever-changing identities in the present. But instead, Gatens makes a second move:

> [Pateman's *The Sexual Contract*] is a partial genealogy of the narratives

that have formed around our socio-political present—it comprises the first moment of genealogy. But it is the second moment which is crucial—it is the critical moment which asks: what form of life is made possible by the telling of such stories? What is the nature of the will and the desire which drive such narratives?[4]

Gatens opens the theme of story-telling and of the possibilities of the imagination. Stories about the origins of gender inequality cannot simply be debunked like the blockbuster clichés exposed by Canadian television program *Mythbusters*. Rather, these stories are social phenomena tied to histories of gendered experience and those efforts made to articulate this experience.

In reading Pateman as a storyteller, Gatens locates *The Sexual Contract* within a history of "social imaginaries."[5] This concept has been popularised in different ways by Cornelius Castoriadis and Charles Taylor, but serves a distinct and original purpose in Gatens' *Imaginary Bodies* and later in *Collective Imaginings* (with Genevieve Lloyd)*:*

> [Every] community exists in time and so will be faced with the necessity to construct, and reconstruct, an imaginary 'we' which founds and maintains any given form of sociability. The wise polity will not be one in which passion, imagination and difference are shed but rather one in which citizens will participate in the ongoing formation of the structures and institutions through which passion and difference are negotiated.[6]

If we are prepared to question essentialism as a way of telling monolithic stories about the singular origins of sexual inequality, then one must be prepared to question the story told about essentialism itself—namely, that it originates in one single, monolithic error, unmodified by its conditions of utterance or transmission. A reductive approach to essentialism (or any other "ism") can lead to critics to unwittingly accepting the most conservative reading of philosophical texts, rather than examining how this reading may have become the preferred one for this community, in this time and place.[7] If essentialism is the monster, Gatens does not chase the monster from the village. Instead, she develops a lucid political analysis about what feminist theory can and cannot do: "[There] cannot be an unadulterated feminist theory which would announce our arrival at a place where we could say we are 'beyond' patriarchal theory and patriarchal experience."[8] Making claims to an undiluted feminist theory, as the endgame of

analysis, is to misunderstand the variety of effects truths may express and produce as they bubble through social worlds. Gatens' work constantly enlarges the spaces available for transformative criticism without negation, reformation without excommunication.

Philosophical disagreement can be understood differently from this viewpoint. The proper object of disagreement *could* be an idea that we attribute to a thinker who simply thinks poorly. Or, an idea can be treated as an index for a social and political world, one that marks our own storytelling with the imprints of history quite beyond the control of any single author.[9] From this latter perspective, philosophy is fundamentally social project, rather than an analytical or methodical project, although of course, analysis and method can still be used to advance social purposes. Its objects and tools exist in and through the affordances of social relations, and its truths exist immanently to these affordances. Gatens' understanding of truth and falsehood is worth quoting at length:

> The capacity to imagine is essential to what it is to be human. To exist as an embodied being in culture is to exist as more than a mind or a rational will. Truth is the wrong register in which to attempt to understand the generation of the kind of meaningful behaviour — supported by social "fictions" — that is vital to all forms of sociability. In this context, imagination and fiction are wrongly conceived as truth's contraries. Rather, it should be acknowledged that sociability itself depends on the power of the imagination to bind together individuals, both temporally and affectively. To exist with others in communities of shared meanings is to be confronted every day with decisions about how to behave, how to pursue one's projects without provoking enmity, and how best to preserve oneself, one's family, friends and goods. Our relations with others are more often sustained by social fictions of various kinds than they are by notions of "truth." Our day-to-day encounters are embodied encounters guided by both habitual and practical orientations toward the general business of living. All this takes place against culturally specific normative backgrounds that are largely taken for granted.[10]

Each social imaginary may contain its own distinct variations, debates, memories, joys and sadness, and so on. While social imaginaries may help to sustain representational practices, imaginaries themselves cannot be evaluated according to a correspondence theory of knowledge: they are constitutive of social realities,

rather than seeking merely to re-present or reflect them.[11] For this reason, Gatens argues that Baruch Spinoza's *Tractus Theological-Politicus* (TTP) should not be read simply as an indictment of religion in the name of reason. Instead, the religious imagination "is a power, rather than a defect, and the knowledge to which it gives rise—though partial or inadequate—is of enormous social utility."[12] To disagree with extant social fictions, simply for the reason that they are not commensurate with our own professional discourse, is to misrecognise the power of imaginaries in sustaining the wider social worlds on which philosophical activity depends.

SPEECH, EMBODIMENT, OTHERS

The approach to social imaginaries presented thus far may be understood, by a sceptical reader, as a defence of moral relativism, political quietism, or both. In prioritising "meaningful behaviour" over questions of truth, do we not abandon our responsibilities as agents involved in concrete struggles over social injustices? By using the concept of social imaginaries to describe both embodied actions and the production of knowledge, important ideals of human freedom and responsibility seem to have been sacrificed. Gatens responds by clarifying the specific role accorded to free thinking in Spinoza's philosophy:

Without necessity, human freedom would remain as chimerical as the assumed freedom of the infant who believes he freely wants milk or the drunkard who believes he freely speaks his mind. Put differently, human freedom would amount to little more than the false assumption that, because we are conscious of our appetites, we must also be their cause. This is a crucial aspect of Spinoza's account of human psychology and the imagination: the "illusion of consciousness" encourages the habit of mistaking the "will" as the origin of our affects, that is, we "experience" the affect but are often ignorant of the chain of causes which determine that affect.[13]

The concept of social imaginaries does not render ideological struggles meaningless, but it does reframe the purpose of such struggles. Rather than relying on appeals to individual "responsibility" to ground human conduct, we look to the multiplicity of causes acting on the individual *such that they can act responsibly*. This holds for good philosophy, too. We should not expect good ideas to appear *sui generis*, but must instead consider the collective conditions by which new kinds of thinking become possible—not always in philosophy, not always in

universities.[14] To further understand why Gatens' concept of social imaginaries is not an argument for the equal value of all ideas, we need to engage in more depth with Gatens' Spinozism.

In the *Ethics* of Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, published posthumously in 1677, "causes" can be understood differently, depending on whether we regard them from the viewpoint of the attribute of thought or the attribute of extension. Mind-body parallelism in the *Ethics* is most succinctly expressed in Book II, Proposition 7: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things."[15] Spinoza invites a consideration of thought and extension as existing in non-hierarchical relation. For example, what Gatens calls the social imaginary is not an idle fiction that grafts itself upon, and therefore obscures from view, the real story of "how society actually works." Rather, social imaginaries express something about the corporeality of society that produces them, which does not make such expression representational. One common reading of this relationship between ideas and bodies is that material relations underpin in the production of ideas, because ideas are derived from things we have heard, seen, felt, and so on. Gatens suggests that the concept of "affect" is used in much this way by Brian Massumi to describe pre-ideological encounters.[16] For feminist scholars, a turn toward affective relations has been useful for authorising embodied forms of knowledge without any need for recourse to metaphysical propositions. Gatens and Lloyd together appear to make an argument of this kind in their commentary on the body politic:

> The embodied presence of women, and other historically marginalised groups, in political, legal and other institutional arenas, is thus crucial if their changed formal status is to be practically recognised. Such recognition can not be reduced to mere cognitive change but must involve an affective and corporeal transformation of the way we experience self and other, identity and community.[17]

This critical appraisal of "mere cognitive change" points toward a contextualist understanding of knowledge production, wherein deep "affective and corporeal" forces underpin the ideological surfaces continue to be the privileged sites of philosophical labour.[18]

However, Gatens' reading of Spinoza introduces two important complications for any conception of the body as the prime mover of ideas. Firstly, by placing ideas

downstream from bodies, we may hope to emancipate ourselves from well-worn struggles over ideology. Rather than the old scholastic debates, it may be that novel, pre-ideological forces—affects, events, things—that will unsettle our received habits of thought. Nevertheless, this can easily lead to a devaluation of social imaginaries, and an overestimation of our capacities to describe the pre-ideological Real.[19] At worst, we may be tempted to dismiss inherited political ideas as mere abstractions, while insisting that our own neologisms have a more profound connection to the thing-stuff of existence. This remains a representational understanding of thought, wherein the significance of ideas is reduced to their fidelity to the objects of experience, and the result may be a reduced capacity to think through alternative social imaginaries. Commenting on the negative freedoms that she identifies in Massumi's affect theory, Gatens notes that "it is freedom *from* power, and freedom *from* ideology, because affect is here posited as an *atopos* that is free *from* signification, representation, and meaning. It does not involve a 'freedom to': to act, to deliberate, to flourish."[20] We need to acknowledge the productive and creative work that fictions can perform in constituting new relations and shared futures.

This leads to a second issue around the role of speech in constructing imaginaries. The capacity of a collective to produce its own fictions is both an enactment of power and an effect of power; in this regard, speech does not just exist downstream from affective and corporeal forces, but is a corporeal activity that shapes how social spaces come to be occupied, used, and changed. For example, in "Feminism as 'Password': Re-Thinking the 'Possible' with Spinoza and Deleuze," Gatens considers the diversity of speech practices that attend many documented instances of sexual assault. Drawing on Sharon Marcus, Gatens notes that "the materialisation of men as aggressors and of women as victims is, in part, achieved through language and those assemblages which support some utterances while disqualifying others (for example, the courts, the police)."[21] There is the flow of words that harass, threaten or intimidate; there are words that accompany physical attacks; there are the words forced through testimony and cross-examination; and there are the everyday, casual social encounters that naturalise ways of speaking and being spoken to. Such speech is certainly political, but not simply as "a struggle over *ideas* and formal status. It also involves the struggle to embody and embed the desires, needs and imaginings of those whom democratic political structures in the present fail to adequately represent."[22]

Speech is not the epiphenomena of embodiment. Society is not held together exclusively by pre-ideological forces of a material, affective, embodied kind, nor can we attribute group formation to collective investments in a single principle, idea, or concept. Rather, Gatens invites an interrogation of historically changing connections, or what Stuart Hall might have called "articulations,"[23] between an arrangement of ideas and an arrangement of bodies. These connections become most pertinent when certain speaking bodies are silenced. Reflecting on the legacies of colonialism in knowledge production, Lewis Gordon also highlights the importance of the corporeal dimensions of speech:

> It is not that colonised groups fail to speak. It is that their speaking lacks appearance or mediation; it is not transformed into speech. The erasure of speech calls for the elimination of such conditions of its appearance such as gestural sites and the constellation of muscles that facilitates speech—namely, the face. As faceless, problem people are derailed from the dialectics of recognition, of self and other, with the consequence of neither self nor other.[24]

The subtlety of Gordon's observation contains important resonances with Gatens' Spinozism. His argument is not that colonised people have had experiences that need to be more accurately described, or that more discussions are needed about colonialism in extant philosophical discourse. Rather, the dialogic imagination of philosophy itself—who speaks about what to whom—exists in parallel with an arrangement of bodies within which certain embodiments of institutional spaces and certain ways of speaking are pushed outside the limits of recognised interlocution. These are not mere metaphors. There are tangible geographical divides and arrangements of urban space that ward off the kinds of interaction often imagined when philosophers talk about "recognising the Other," "encountering the Other," and so on.

In the following two sections, I will explore these issues around embodied difference and otherness in social imaginaries by way of two contemporary debates: the first around the agency of women perceived to be conservative and/or anti-feminist; and the second around the status of "monstrous" acts in relation to collective and cultural norms.

RETHINKING AGENCY

There have been longstanding debates in philosophy, sociology and anthropology about the ontological preconditions for individual self-determination. Gatens' approach to social imaginaries forces a reconsideration of the particular ways that "agency" has been valorised in relation to feminist concerns.[25] As noted above, Gatens rejects the humanist ideal of the individual as autonomous agent unaffected by social relations or historical change. Nevertheless, as Talal Asad has noted, a rejection of the concept of agency does not lessen its significance in contemporary social imaginaries, especially in cases where "triumphalist" stories about agency are used to exalt the virtues of European modernity.[26] Scrutinising the ways that European philosophers have constructed metaphors for political agency and the "political body," Gatens notes that the only properly agential body is imagined to be the man's body, perhaps epitomised by Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan:* "the artificial man incorporates and so controls and regulates women's bodies in a manner which does not undermine his claim to autonomy, since her contributions are neither visible nor acknowledged."[27] Bodies that do not conform to dominant understandings of what a political body is, or could be, are regarded via their distance from the male body-politic.

Despite the dramatic increase in participation of women in politics since Hobbes, social imaginaries continue to constrain understandings of women's political agency. Gatens notes that assessments of female agency continue to turn on some conception of "authentic femininity":

> [The] false/true dichotomization of [authentic femininity] is untenable. It results in the positing of a hierarchy of types of women: the oppressed woman who cannot, because she lacks education or opportunity, see through her condition; the complicit woman who chooses not to acknowledge her condition through fear of losing class privilege and having to accept responsibility for her own life; and the authentic woman who recognizes her oppression and chooses to struggle to overcome it.[28]

Contained within these first two "types of women" is an implied relationship to patriarchy. The woman who lacks authentic self-recognition must, in some direct or indirect way, aid in her own oppression. Such assumptions can be particularly damaging for women who experience intimate-partner violence, given how commonly people assume that "good feminists" can easily leave "bad men."[29] Ques-

tions around embodiment of political ideals also become fraught when members of oppressed and marginalised groups voice conservative or right-wing ideas in the public domain. To think through this, I want to consider a recent example from U.S. politics.

On January 23rd in 2017, at the presidential inauguration of Donald Trump in the United States, a video segment went viral of Melania Trump, the First Lady of the United States (FLOTUS hereafter). The video seemed to show Melania faking a smile for her husband. The fake smile snowballed, from detailed analyses of the frown, to speculation that Melania may be a hostage to her husband, to a Twitter hashtag #freemelania (the hashtag has since faded from prominence). This hashtag built on the "Save Melania" trope that was already visible on placards during the 2017 Women's March on Washington.[30]

This brief cycle of speculation about FLOTUS condensed a thickly layered social imaginary around the terms of gendered agency. In certain renditions of the #freemelania meme, Melania Trump's political agency appeared to be reduced to signs of her relationship to the patriarch—admittedly, a patriarch who has become notorious for making misogynist claims in both private and public. The meme seems to imply that there can be no conservative women thinking conservative thoughts, only varying degrees of entrapment of women by men. Furthermore, references to #freemelania in digital spaces construct FLOTUS through a piecemeal taxonomy of expressions and postures, as if women in politics have forfeited any claim to unified personhood. In the streams of captioned images, we have an online scramble to make sense of what Gatens calls "female bits, fragments to be consumed, taken a bit at a time."[31] The face of Melania: does it *really* smile? The *who* of the subject is lost in the *it* of the face. As sceptical commentators noted at the time, the seemingly pro-feminist stance that women allied with Trump must suffer false consciousness required the deliberate elision of statements and interviews made by Melania Trump herself.[32] Finally, subtending this semiotic objectification and erasure of speech, we have an investment in the monstrosity of Trump, as if he alone were required to "keep her hostage." Rather than being an effect of a deeply misogynist political and social milieu, Trump himself becomes the miraculous pseudo-cause of patriarchy in American politics.

Political caricatures are not intended to accurately capture the real psychic lives of the individuals concerned. Nevertheless, to borrow from Gatens' *Imaginary Bodies:*

Like all caricatures they capture a truth in and through their very distortion. What would it mean to argue that these "caricatures" capture a truth concerning dominant social habits, practices and beliefs—in short, that they capture something about social attitudes to women and marriage that are embodied in our civil existences?[33]

In this #freemelania meme, we can see the operation of a caricature that expresses some deep discomfort with the active participation of women in politics as political agents, rather than as prisoners unable to think through their situation. It does need to be acknowledged that the oppressed can become complicit in their own oppression; indeed, the concept of the social imaginary is particularly useful for thinking through how such complicity becomes part of everyday meaning-making in social worlds. Nevertheless, this important observation can sometimes drift toward a peculiar moralism that places unique burdens on oppressed individuals to prove themselves capable of exercising agency. As Gatens argues in her discussion of the masculinised body-politic in European philosophy, challenges must be made to the schema of intentionality that understands masculinity as coextensive with coherent political *causes*, and femininity with a series of *effects* resulting from an external stimulus. Of course, Melania Trump is a divisive example. The #freemelania memes notwithstanding, FLOTUS does exercise extraordinary political power.[34] Drawing on Gatens' concept of social imaginaries, I want to briefly examine two further examples of agency in relation to different forms of oppression.

Firstly, elective cosmetic surgeries have frequently come under scrutiny as sites where oppressed groups potentially invite their own oppression. Cressida Heyes provides the example of Asian-American women, who are commonly held to account for their choices to engage cosmetic surgery procedures that others perceive to be whitening or "deracialising": "It is quite common to see soul-searching features on whether having eyelid surgery means young Asian women want to look white that castigate those women for their race treachery."[35] In a high-profile incident on *The Tyra Banks Show*, the host "lambasts Liz—a 25-year-old Korean American woman guest—with extraordinary vigour for being deceitful about her own participation in racist norms."[36] At the same time, white American women are rarely scrutinised for choosing similar surgeries organised around the same conceptions of beauty. Joanne Elfving-Hwang and Jane Park document similar issues in the Australian context:

> [The] bodies of Asian–Australian women who choose to undergo cosmetic surgery can only be considered within a binary of racial authenticity and inauthenticity that effectively forecloses the possibility for the Asian–Australian subject to possess any form of agency through surgery. While white subjects are usually ascribed agency as 'competent actors' who have 'carefully weighted up how to position themselves in relation to social and cultural imperatives and opportunities' (Jones 2008, 24), Asian-Australian ones are not afforded this position within the existing Australian cultural imaginary.[37]

In both U.S. and Australian contexts, women are accorded differential capacities to exercise agency, depending on their perceived racial grouping. This happens partly through a general disregard for the diverse imaginaries that give plastic surgeries social meanings, and partly because, as Elfving-Hwang and Park suggest, the concept of agency itself is culturally loaded, with heightened responsibilities placed on marginalised groups to perform agency in "authentic" ways.

Secondly, the suspicion that women from non-white and/or non-European backgrounds may suffer from false consciousness has acquired a distinct character for women engaged in religious practices. This has been especially so in the wake of the United States' "War on Terror" and its attendant rhetoric around the liberation of Muslim women, both in discourses about women in Muslim-majority nations (e.g. Afghanistan) and Muslim women in European nations (e.g. France).[38] Throughout, the metonymically charged trope of the "Third-World Muslim woman," always-already unable to exercise her agency, has been a mainstay of Islamophobic polemic worldwide, and provides a context for Saba Mahmood's critical interventions in the *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*. In an anthropological study of a piety movement among Muslim women in Egypt, Mahmood documents a variety of exchanges between four women in their thirties, who would meet regularly to read the Qur'an and discuss ethical practices in Islam. On one occasion, the women discuss wearing the *khimār* and the *hijāb*, and reflect on the struggles that some have experienced when trying to embody their faith. One of the women, Nama, insists that "you must wear the veil, first because it is God's command [*hukm allah*], and then, with time, because your inside learns to feel shy without the veil, and if you take it off, your entire being feels uncomfortable [*mish rādī*] about it."[39] While noting that many feminist commentators would read this as "obsequious deference to social norms," Mahmood arrives at a different conclusion:

> [If] we think of "agency" not simply as a synonym for resistance to social norms but as a modality of action, then this conversation raises some interesting questions about the kind of relationship established between the subject and the norm, between performative behavior and inward disposition. To begin with, what is striking here is that instead of innate human desires eliciting outward forms of conduct, it is the sequence of practices and actions one is engaged in that determines one's desires and emotions. In other words, action does not issue forth from natural feelings but creates them. [40]

Mahmood would seem to be prioritising bodily practices in ways that resemble Massumi's affect theory. "Natural feelings" are understood to "issue" from embodied actions, such that ideological content—say, ideas about masculinity and femininity—becomes less important than material transformations. On closer inspection, though, these actions also acquire their initial meaning through a social imaginary: that is, the wider social imaginary of Muslim communities in Egypt, and the localised cultures of interpretation exemplified by the women's Quranic reading group. "[Any] discussion of the issue of transformation must begin," writes Mahmood, "with an analysis of the specific practices of subjectivation that make the subjects of a particular social imaginary possible."[41] The collective social imaginary embedded in the women's social relationships supports the routinisation of embodied practices, and this, as Nama puts it, allows the "inside" to "learn."

THINKING WITHOUT MONSTERS

The social imaginary is a fiction-in-progress that produces real effects. Like any good page-turner, it has its heroes and villains. We have already encountered monsters of various kinds. Critics cut their teeth uncovering monstrous essentialisms wherever they may hide, while the monstrous president of the United States imprisons the hapless Melania Trump, who becomes the Bride of Frankenstein writ large. Monsters lurk in body and mind at once. We do not *feel* before we think or *think* before we feel, but rather we inhabit worlds where disgust and repulsion travel wildly across word and page, touch and sight, habit and memory. Disgust is not a pre-political category and monsters do not stumble, uninvited, upon communities of innocents.[42] In this final section, I want to examine two different ways that Gatens has approached acts of violence, drawing on Spinoza's understanding of embodied relationality and the role of the imaginary.

For Spinoza, a body is enmeshed in its encounters with other bodies, and these relations produce affections, or transitions in the state of the body that either enhance its powers of acting, giving rise to joyful affects, or diminish its powers of acting, giving rise to sad affects.[43] We form ideas corresponding to these transitions, but these ideas remain inadequate if we remain ignorant of the causes that determine us to be affected in these ways. When we find something to be repellent, for example we may attribute this affect to the inherent properties of the thing itself, rather than seeking to understand our relationship to it, or that which, within us, is most affected by it. This does not mean that affects are obstacles to understanding, only that inadequate ideas lack a relational understanding of the ways we can be affected or affect others. In this context, "evil" is a name we give for affections that produce in us strong sad affects, and for which we have not yet adequately understood its cause.[44] The attribution of disgust to a social Other that we deem monstrous is an example of an inadequate idea: we experience both joyful and sad affects throughout our everyday social encounters, but we are likely to attribute joyful encounters to our social milieu ("people like us"), while attributing sad affects either to those outside our milieu ("people like them") or those placed outside society altogether ("the monster"). Othering elides our own relation to acts that produce sad affects, and overlooks the multiplicity of relations that cause the other to act in such-and-such a way. Should the concept of evil be retained at all, it could only describe actions borne of passive affects and inadequate ideas—that is, things that people do because they seek no understanding of the causes that determine them to act, or of the wider social relations within which their actions produce effects. In Gatens' reading of Spinoza, "the meaning of human actions as well as the moralities of individuals are not ahistorical constants but rather are developed in particular historical and political contexts," and why correspondingly, the actions we call evil involve relations between multiple bodies, such that "a community of rational beings would assume some responsibility for its particular constitution."[45]

This Spinozist reading of good and evil has direct bearing on notions of moral responsibility for heinous acts. Gatens considers the case of David Helsby, who—according to reports in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1993—had been abusing his wife, and was subsequently murdered by his stepson, Steven Helsby.[46] Gatens considers the Helsby murder alongside the case of Brian Maxwell, who broke his restraining order to kill his ex-wife Marilyn Maxwell. Gatens does not accept the dominant narrative that this violence is monstrous and therefore alien to our sensibilities:

A community of rational beings would look to the structural, as well as to the immediate, causes of violent behaviour and assume responsibility for such causes where appropriate—for example, attitudes to women that are embedded in the customs and laws of the civil body. Perhaps then the construction of men as essentially violent or of the criminal offender as a distinct "species" would be understood as symptomatic of our ignorance concerning the type of body complex of which we are a part. Such an understanding would, in turn, be the harbinger of the death of a "type": the intrinsically and wilfully evil criminal. [47]

This is a compelling analysis of the monster as a moral personage in the social imaginary. The sad affects produced by disgust at monstrosity can lead toward adequate ideas, once we understand that this sadness stems, at least in part, from our complicity as members of a shared community. This is not argument for the lofty, sentimental humanism that Hannah Arendt criticises among those who, during the 1960 trial of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, would seek to discover an "Eichmann in everyone one of us." [48] That bodies exist in relation to one another does not mean that each shares a common sin by analogy. We share things in common with others only because we engage common projects, and we each increase our individual powers by increasing the collective powers of the communities to which we belong. In turn, this demands some degree of community accountability for its members' actions.[49]

In more recent essays, Gatens has complicated the notion of "community" that might be held responsible for individual action. In 'Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?,' Gatens examines an Australian legal case where Indigenous cultural traditions were presented, in questionable circumstances, as an immediate proxy for "unchanging" community norms. Monstrosity becomes, in this instance, a question loaded by intersecting considerations around gender, cultural identity, and institutional power.

In 2001, Jackie Pascoe Jamilmira, an Indigenous resident of an outstation east of Maningrida in Arnhem Land (Northern Territory), was accused of unlawful intercourse with a minor (an adolescent Indigenous girl). In a Court of Appeal defence in 2002, *Jamilmira v. Hales,* the appellant claimed that his actions formed part of a cultural norm of arranged marriage, and supplied evidence of his longstanding arrangement with the girl's parents.[50] This defence resulted in a significant mitigation of his criminal sentence (this was later overturned by the Court of Appeal). In

the evidence submitted to *Jamilmira v. Hales*, no space was made available to hear the testimonies of both men and women in the community. However, Jamilmira's defence did cite the claims of non-Indigenous anthropologists, including studies from 1981-1987 corroborating evidence of traditional marriages in the region.[51] This gave rise to a series of damaging headlines around the case: "Aboriginal men 'twisting customary law'" (*The Sydney Morning Herald*), "Aborigine insists tribal law gives right to underage sex" (*The Independent*), and so on. Delicate conflict resolution with Indigenous communities is often overburdened by such media sensationalism around "Indigenous violence."[52]

Gatens maps the various dichotomies that the media employed to frame the Jamilmira court cases: collective versus individual, Indigenous rights versus women's rights, race versus gender. Linking these dichotomies was the presumption that tradition is an obstacle to be overcome, and that communities must either hold on to traditions or abandon them. Kyllie Cripps and S. Caroline Taylor have subsequently noted that "at no time did any court qualify what was meant by the term traditional," and that the careless usage of "traditional" can imply "that the defendant comes from a culture with knowledge and practices that are immutable ... [despite evidence that] cultural practices are not static and change as the environment changes."[53] These considerations prompt Gatens to consider the ways that traditions are positioned within wider social imaginaries around Indigenous and non-Indigenous identities in Australia:

> The question of the link between culture and agency, or "societal culture" and freedom, is especially pertinent for indigenous peoples who did not choose to share their land and resources with the colonizers, and who continue to survive against all odds... The conditions under which traditions are perpetuated change and so require constant reinvention and renegotiation .... The point is not that if a tradition changes then it loses its claim to "authenticity" or legitimacy. Every tradition that survives does so by changing and adapting to new circumstances. Rather, the salient points remain: who has the authority to define tradition? Who is entitled to participate in the reinvention of tradition across time? These questions are pertinent for women worldwide.[54]

In the Helsby and Maxwell cases, Gatens had questioned our impulses in extracting monstrous individuals from their wider social and cultural contexts. In the case of Jamilmira, however, the notion of "culture" becomes entangled with West-

ern social imaginaries about Aboriginal cultures, which are too often presented as *either* pristine and "pre-colonial" *or* as suffering from perpetual decline.[55] These are problems for the cultural identities of philosophers, as well as for lawyers and anthropologists. Gatens' argument invites re-examination of the discursive role philosophers might play, given that the question, "who has the authority to define tradition?," may not produce answers that preserve a place for professional philosophers. Or rather, it may be that philosophy can make better contributions to intercultural conversations around power and justice, but only once a different kind of "social imaginary" exists for philosophy itself, one that might be more attuned to the collective, material conditions that exist in parallel with the adventures of thought.[56]

This returns us to a distinctive feature of Gatens' work. She takes philosophy outside of itself and makes philosophy vulnerable in the face of what it discovers. We do not often ask whether a philosopher is capable of exercising agency, or whether the collective conditions of philosophical practice may produce uncomfortable gaps between what we say and what we, as a collective, are capable of enacting. Recall that in her anthropological study, Mahmood demonstrated how women can work together, through critical conversation and routinised practices, to arrange their ideas and bodies in ways that support a profound experience of faith and community. We need to acknowledge, with some humility, that much philosophical labour is oriented toward similar ends, and that philosophers may be relatively inattentive to the role of bodily practices in helping the inside to learn. One step in this direction may be, following Gatens, to not allow ideological disagreements, the shaming of abject political figures, or disgust toward acts and behaviours, undermine collective projects for inventing more compelling social imaginaries. These imaginaries would need to support a multiplicity of social meanings attached to different modalities of agency, including those situated within or between different cultural settings. This may mean, in turn, learning to think without monsters.

> TIMOTHY LAURIE is a Scholarly Teaching Fellow in the School of Communication at the University of Technology Sydney. His core research interests include cultural theory, popular music studies, gender and sexuality studies, and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze. He is Managing Editor of *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies*.

NOTES

1. Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 88.
2. On commensuration in critical theory, philosophy and cultural studies, see Lawrence Grossberg, *Cultural Studies in the Future Tense* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
3. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 81.
4. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 87.
5. See also Louise Richardson-Self, "The Reflections on Imagination and Embodiment in the work of Moira Gatens, 1983—2008," *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy*, this issue.
6. Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza, Past and Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 128. See also Moira Gatens, "The Politics of the Imagination," in *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza*, ed. Moira Gatens (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).
7. Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage, 1997), 228.
8. Moira Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 98.
9. On indexical signs see Charles S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955).
10. Moira Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights? Towards an Embodied Account of Social Norms, Social Meaning, and Cultural Change," *Contemporary Political Theory* 3:3 (2004), 282. See also Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy*, 89; Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*, 123.
11. Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*,143.
12. Moira Gatens, "Spinoza's Disturbing Thesis: Power, Norms and Fiction in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*," *History of Political Thought* XXX:3 (2009), 458.
13. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 128.
14. This theme is also discussed in Timothy Laurie, Hannah Stark, and Briohny Walker, "Critical Approaches to Continental Philosophy: Intellectual Community, Disciplinary Identity, and the Politics of Inclusion," *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy*, this issue.
15. Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (London: Penguin, 1996), 119.
16. Moira Gatens, "Affective Transitions and Spinoza's Art of Joyful Deliberation," in *Timing of Affect: Epistemologies of Affection* ed. Marie-Luise Angerer, Michaela Ott, and Bernd Bösel (Zürich: Diaphanes, 2014).
17. Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*, 131-32.
18. See Lawrence Grossberg, "Pessimism of the Will, Optimism of the Intellect: Endings and Beginnings," *Cultural Studies* 32:6 (2018).
19. This issue is also discussed in Timothy Bewes, "The Surge: Turning Away from Affect," *Deleuze and Guattari Studies* 12:3 (2018).
20. Gatens, "Affective Transitions and Spinoza's Art of Joyful Deliberation," 26-27. Emphasis in original.
21. "Feminism as "Password": Re-Thinking the "Possible" with Spinoza and Deleuze," *Hypatia* 15:2 (2000), 72.
22. Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*, 130.

23. See Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structured in Dominance," in *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader*, ed. Houston A. Baker Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth H. Lindeborg (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

24. Lewis R. Gordon, "Disciplinary Decadence and the Decolonisation of Knowledge," *Africa Development* 39:1 (2014): 88.

25. A useful commentary on theories of "agency" in feminist social research is provided in Kelsy C. Burke, "Women's Agency in Gender-Traditional Religions: A Review of Four Approaches," *Sociology Compass* 6:2 (2012).

26. This argument is developed across Talal Asad's survey of "agency" in sociological and anthropological literature. See Talal Asad, "Agency and Pain: An Exploration," *Culture and Religion* 1:1 (2000), 29-60.

27. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 23.

28. Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy,* 88.

29. See Karen Kendrick, "Producing the Battered Woman: Shelter Politics and the Power of the Feminist Voice," in *Community Activism and Feminist Politics: Organizing across Race, Class, and Gender*, ed. Nancy Naples (New York: London, 1998).

30. See Carley Petersen Durden, "Authoring Melania Trump's FLOTUS," in *Women, Social Change, and Activism: Then and Now*, ed. Dawn Hutchinson and Lori Underwood (Maryland, USA: Lexington Books, 2018).

31. See also Gatens, *Feminism and Philosophy*, 9, 10, 24; *Imaginary Bodies*, 24.

32. One interesting public response to "Free Melania" can be found in Megan Garber, "On Pitying Melania," *The Atlantic* (January 25, 2017).

33. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 119.

34. See Durden.

35. Cressida J. Heyes, "All Cosmetic Surgery Is "Ethnic": Asian Eyelids, Feminist Indignation, and the Politics of Whiteness," in *Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Primer*, ed. Cressida J. Heyes and Meredith Jones (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 197n5.

36. Heyes, 197n5.

37. Joanna Elfving-Hwang and Jane Park, "Deracializing Asian Australia? Cosmetic Surgery and the Question of Race in Australian Television," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 30:4 (2016), 397-407.

38. See Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist* 104:3 (2002); Sara R. Farris, *In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

39. Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 157.

40. Mahmood, 154.

41. Mahmood, 154.

42. Michael Richardson, "The Disgust of Donald Trump," *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 31:6 (2017).

43. Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings,* 49. See also "Of the Affects" in Spinoza, 152-197.

44. "[We] desire nothing because we judge it to be good, but on the contrary, we call it good because we desire it. Consequently, what we are averse to we call evil." Spinoza, 175 [EIIIP39D]. See also Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings,* 49.

45. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies,* 118.

46. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies,* 118-119.

47. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 121.

48. Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 286.

49. See "Responsibility for the Past" in Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings,* 136-149. On this reading of the "common" in Spinoza, see Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2011), 43.

50. Kyllie Cripps and S. Caroline Taylor, "White Man's Law, Traditional Law, Bullshit Law: Customary Marriage Revisited," *Balayi: Culture, Law and Colonialism* 10 (2009), 66-67.

51. Sonia Smallacombe, "Speaking Positions on Indigenous Violence," *Hecate* 30:1 (2004); 'Jamilmira v Hales [2003] NTCA 9,' *Supreme Court of the Northern Territory* (*Court of Appeal*) (April 15, 2003), URL: http://www7.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/cases/nt/NTCA/2003/9.html

52. Smallacombe, 49-50.

53. Cripps and Taylor, 66-67. Sonia Smallacombe, a member of the Maramanindji people from the Northern Territory and longstanding Social Affairs Officer at the United Nations, also argues that broad patterns of non-Indigenous representation of Indigenous peoples in Australian legal settings implicitly position Indigenous commnunities as incapable of self-representation. See Smallacombe.

54. Gatens, "Can Human Rights Accommodate Women's Rights?," 292-93.

55. These issues are discussed throughout Chris Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008).

56. See Stephen Muecke, *Ancient and Modern: Time, Culture, and Indigenous Philosophy* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2004). See also Laurie, Stark, and Walker.

re-visioning benedict de spinoza and george eliot through the work of moira gatens
simone bignall

Moira Gatens is widely celebrated as a ground-breaking feminist theorist. More generally, she is a distinguished political philosopher, whose work on the imagination as a productive source of reasoned action and liberation—of active and ethical sociability—enjoys a fecund global influence. Drawing upon key aspects of her feminist and political philosophy, the purpose of this article is to outline, in general terms, the significance of the contribution Gatens additionally and correspondingly makes to Spinoza studies.[1] This is a sustained contribution made over decades, including her 1996 book *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* and the collaborative work with Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza Past and Present*, published in 1999. Gatens' edited collection, *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza* appeared in 2009, and likewise extends the contemporary reach and reception of Spinozan ideas. The impact of Gatens' Spinoza, and the high esteem in which her interpretation of Spinoza is regarded, is also evident in a number of important lectures and talks given during invited fellowships abroad. Amongst these, in 2010 she held the prestigious title of Spinoza Chair at the University of Amsterdam; the lectures resulting from this period were published in 2011 under the title *Spinoza's Hard Path to Freedom*.

Our discussion traverses three parts: the first section of the article considers the Spinozist ontology and ethology that Gatens mobilises in her work on 'imaginary bodies,' and explains how her reading of Spinoza's philosophical system also pro-

vides Gatens with a framework for new thinking about power, freedom and right in a feminist context; part 2 elaborates some consequences of this framework for conceiving the social roles and potentialities of institutions; and finally, the essay outlines some recent directions taken by Gatens towards expanding this theorisation, by refocussing her attention specifically on institutions of genre. Gatens has begun to articulate a Spinozan theory of art, which she elaborates in the context of the "philosophical literature" of George Eliot who, incidentally, also produced original translations of Spinoza's works.

1. IMAGINARY BODIES: POWER, FREEDOM AND RIGHT

Gatens' work is respected amongst scholars of Spinoza for its careful interpretation of the Spinozan system, and its feminist re-assessment of the political and transformative potential of a key ontological and epistemological commitment in Spinoza's *Ethics*. This concerns his premise that the mind is the idea of the body, that mind and body are parallel attributes of a single Substance or Nature; and consequently, that particular ways of imagining, thinking and knowing are intimately woven together with particular modes of embodiment as ways of being in the world.[2] Gatens makes clear the ethical consequences of this ontological commitment, even if such consequences were confounding, to Europeans at least, in Spinoza's own time.[3] Whereas Spinoza is designated a rationalist in view of the way he associates the imagination and the emotions with the "first kind of knowledge," which is "a cause of falsity" and therefore is inferior and will gradually be superseded by the active exercise of reason in the "second" and "third kinds of knowledge"[4], Gatens provides a challenging re-vision and revaluation of the central and productive role played by the imagination in Spinoza's philosophy. In her view, Spinozan imagination is not simply a source of error but, more productively, functions as a necessary aid to reason.

One of Gatens' signal achievements is to bring into sharper relief the possible kinds of freedom and right—and the corresponding potential for empowerment and liberation—that accompany Spinoza's ethics.[5] She does this in consideration of Spinoza's philosophical commitment to substance monism in the principle that the mind is the idea of the body (rather than a separate and distinctive substance). In this respect, her work is important in the context of Spinoza studies for showing how Spinoza's critique of dogmatic theologies and despotic governments, and his treatment of ethics, is intrinsically linked to his views on the cognitive role of the imagination. Gatens' work is furthermore innovative for

its original feminist application of Spinoza's 'ethology' in contemporary political contexts where dominant cultural norms often clash with more formal notions of justice and right. Like Gilles Deleuze and Pierre Macherey, Gatens asserts Spinoza's therapeutic approach to the problem of domination.[6] The concept of freedom in Spinoza does not correspond to the sovereign exercise of free will, but rather refers to the struggle through which an individual or a community strives to understand its sources of determination, endeavours to comprehend and so to orchestrate the relational causes of its being, and so to enhance its affective capacities and individual powers of existence.

Deleuze emphasises how, according to Spinoza's account in the scholia of Part IV of the *Ethics*, affects can be "joyful" if they produce an enriched or more complex state of being in which an individual's capacities or potentiality is enhanced; or they can be "sad," if an individual is impacted in a way that is demeaning, detrimental and weakening.[7] Additionally, affects can be either passive or active experiences of relationship. If affects are passive, they will be unbidden and unselected; they may bring a fortuitous joy, but equally may result in sadness. But if they are active, they will be the result of a developed understanding how bodies can combine or be combined in a joyful manner that enhances their affective potential.[8] In her explanation of the Spinozan system, Gatens provides a necessary correction to the predilection of a certain strain of contemporary Affect Theory that draws heavily from Deleuzian philosophy (and she targets the work of Brian Massumi especially).[9] She is critical of the autonomic theory of affect that claims Spinoza as its precursor, but which problematically reinstates an implied mind-body dualism completely at odds with Spinoza's ontology and epistemology and which, by extension, is incongruent with his ethics and politics (at least as these have been articulated by Gatens and other readers of Spinoza, including Deleuze himself). Massumi prioritises corporeal affect over mental cognition and conceives of affect as a-subjective, autonomic, and asocial in the sense that it is unbound by meaning or signification.[10] For Massumi, freedom is found in the limitless interconnectivity of affect and openness to the endless transformations that result from contact and affective sensation; but as Gatens emphasises, for Spinoza, freedom rather concerns the *reasoned* development of certain kinds of *joyful* affect through the constructive stimulus of the active imagination, rather than the free accommodation of all kinds of affective influence and creative transformation.[11] She thereby reasserts both Spinoza's particular kind of rationalism that allows a productive role for the emotions and imagination, and his political potential. She warns against the potential depoliticisation or passive nihilism that corresponds

with a simplistic philosophy of the social body conceived in terms of the circulation and passionate investment of affect: as principally material without corresponding ideational content, as non-conceptual, a-signifying, un-thought and irrational.

For Gatens, then, freedom from domination by relations that are felt as detrimental and demeaning involves the careful cultivation, through the affective imagination coupled with reasoned deliberation, of "joyful transitions."[12] Rather than being subject to passive affects and the poorly formed or false ideas that accompany them, the free individual strives towards a more active understanding of the conditions enabling considered practices of self-formation and social constitution. Freedom here is much less a wilful state of being unfettered, than it is a developmental practice or an experimental process over time, through which the experiential imagination is actively directed towards coming to understand how complex social relations operate as natural causes of determination. Based on this understanding, the free individual endeavours, as much as is possible, actively to organise or to orchestrate these determining relations through practices of mindfulness and judicious affective comportment. Gatens elaborates how, in this process, the imagination can be a source of misapprehension and falsehood; but it can also (alternatively) be a source of invention and creative cognition that aids the development of adequate understanding.[13]

Writing on the subject of "imaginary bodies," Gatens explains how a person's image or idea of embodiment shapes their subjectivity and influences their potential for various kinds of sociability.[14] "For a Spinozist," she writes, "to think differently is, by definition, to exist differently: one's power of thinking is inseparable from one's power of existing, and vice-versa."[15] How I conceive myself as embodied culturally and historically, my conception of my humanity and that of others, my experiential comprehension of my body's capacities or limitations for joining in sociable relations with other bodies or selves, and my forecasting of the impact of my actions upon those others and of their impact upon me, all will play a vital role in social comportment and the ethical quality of collective life. My capacity to imagine myself in diverse situations and relations with others is a primary resource for my processes of knowledge-formation, moral deliberation and eventual conduct. The adequacy of the embodied ideas I form, together with the adequacy of my affective image of other bodies I encounter, and of the character of the body politic in which we participate, directly influences the quality of my social contribution and my ability to engage others in behaviours that are

respectful.[16] Furthermore, our collective imaginative efforts to comprehend and map the nature of our extensive inter-relations and the ways in which these can be supported by social institutions tempers individual and shared capacities for the predictive amelioration of those relations and institutions into the future, so that they potentially can find a more joyful expression as transparent causes bringing maximal benefit and minimal harm. Individual and collective bodies are, then, not "given" but rather "imagined"—and correspondingly, personal and social imaginaries are shaped by material realities experienced affectively as corporeal constraints and potentiality.

This Spinozist framework enables Gatens to think in a novel way about issues of feminist agency in contexts where women (and men) may experiment using corporeal strategies for transforming misogynist imaginaries. Writing on intimate violence, Gatens explains how acts such as rape rely upon a social context in which female bodies can be imagined as (permissibly) violable according to implicit cultural norms, even when principles of women's corporeal integrity and human rights circulate as sanctioned and institutionalised knowledge in that same social structure.[17] A society's effective resistance to such crimes against women's humanity therefore requires intervention at the level of the social imaginary, just as much as it calls for robust enforcement of the institutions that ostensibly exist to safeguard all bodies from harm. Although women are not responsible for masculinist imaginaries, Gatens points to the activist consequences of the Spinozan principle that ways of being are braided together with ways of conceiving: feminists can make use of the constitutive dimension of the imagination to direct the incremental (or "molecular") transformation of dominant social imaginaries and associated modes of affective comportment that historically and continually have been detrimental and damaging to women. By *imagining* and then *describing* oneself differently, one begins to *understand* oneself and ones' active capacities differently, and then to *feel* differently in relation to others. It becomes possible to create and direct alternate flows of affect and of affection in social relations, potentially also encouraging the emergence of alternative formations of power and knowledge.[18]

Corporeal practices of affective and imaginative agency provide a crucial resource for collective processes of rational interrogation—and possible expansion—of the social limitations imposed when sexist and racist imaginaries prevail, for example when female or black bodies imagine (or are made to conceive) themselves as impermissible in certain spaces, including knowledge spaces. Relational and

systemic transformations can occur when gendered and racialised bodies who are systematically treated inequitably come to imagine alternative existences, and so to seek opportunities that enhance their capacities for becoming visible: appearing and mattering and being heard, in those same situations and locations where previously they have been made to *feel* they shouldn't appear or be taken into account.[19] Here, when realised through the self-conscious effort of creative imagination, the developing adequacy or activity of a reasoned understanding of corporeal right and agency—and a corresponding increase in potentiality or empowerment - triumphs over the passive experience of rightlessness and powerlessness, and possibly prompts a shift in relational capacities, a shift in relations of power. Ways of knowing and ways of being or acting in the world are, then, braided together in ways that are ethically *and politically* significant. Particularly in *Collective Imaginings*, co-authored with Genevieve Lloyd, we learn how a Spinozist theorisation of the complex role played by the imagination in social organisation and liberation implies a whole political theory of institutions and their good governance, which values art and everyday life as imaginative sources of institutional critique, creativity and flourishing just as much as it attends to the juridical and empirical sciences of human social order.

2. INSTITUTIONS AND THE GOVERNANCE OF IMAGINATION

We have seen how Gatens finds in Spinoza a political and an ethical process that turns on the development of active understanding from the productive power of imagination and corresponds with an increased potential for actively determining one's ways of being in associative relations with others. However, it is perhaps still somewhat unclear what Spinoza's intertwining of epistemology and ontology portends for the collective structures, institutions, and processes of political society. Spinoza's idea that "the right of the individual is co-extensive with its determinate power"[20] has influenced some prominent strains of contemporary political thought including Deleuze and Foucault, the Althusser School with Negri and Balibar as key contemporary thinkers, and socialist theology after Feuerbach. Nonetheless, the assertion of equivalence between rights and powers confounds classic conceptions of state sovereignty and political justice, among other things, and provides no apparent solution to some of our most pressing contemporary political problems. For some, this raises doubts about the adequacy of Spinoza's political philosophy.[21] For example, how is the protection of fragile bodies able to be secured, if the right to persevere is linked with a power of endurance? If the power of a sovereign state is aligned with its right, then how are we to think about

contested sovereignties after empire? Gatens, including in her collaboration with Lloyd, makes important inroads to Spinozist political philosophy by drawing out for us the normative philosophy of political community and collective responsibility we may discern in Spinoza's writings.[22] In so doing, she articulates crucial conceptual resources for tackling such troubling and prescient questions.

In her discussion of Spinoza's "hard path to freedom," Gatens highlights the problem of "collective social, political and theological imaginaries whose resistance to critique can be formidable."[23] This is because, for Spinoza, human beings are necessarily social and therefore the opportunities for an individual to actualise his or her power and virtue in becoming free are always socially conditioned. Gatens argues, just as Spinoza recommends individual bodies enact a therapeutic approach to the imagination in a quest for personal liberty through the pursuit of self-other understanding and knowledge of one's determining causes, he likewise encourages a remedial and ethological approach to the collective social, political and theological imaginaries that invest the body politic. "For Spinoza," Gatens writes, "it is the distinction between grasping law as arbitrary command and law as knowledge that marks the difference between human freedom and human bondage."[24] The flourishing of reason and the actualisation of human capacities—the capacity to understand, to be joyful—requires good governance towards collective liberation. Spinoza suggests democracy is the ideal form of government because "the true aim of government is liberty";[25] however, because the remedy of collective fantasies or falsehoods ingrained in a society takes time and general conditions of security and education, in the *Tractacus Theologico-Politicus* he favours both a strong state and organised religion to combat the unruly passions of a multitude that does not have good understanding of its active capacities for self-determination. But at the same time, he urges a cultivated resistance to the monopoly of power by despotic governments and dogmatic theologies. To accommodate this ambivalence, Gatens draws from Spinoza a theory of institutional design. In doing so, she opens up a middle path between interpreters of Spinoza such as Toni Negri, who can seem over-optimistic about the self-generating rationality and revolutionary capacity of the multitude, and readers such as Yirmiyahu Yovel who considers the multitude is by its nature incapable of rising above the passionate imaginary.[26] Gatens argues that on Spinoza's account of good governance, "there should not be any *structural* barriers to prevent the passionate citizen from becoming more reasonable."[27] A secure state, and the rule of law, protected by effective and transparent institutions whose purpose and operation is not mystified but rather is well understood in society, are means by which "a reasonable government can

guarantee the consistency of cause and effect, act and consequence, in all social dealings."[28]

According to Spinoza, belief cannot be compelled.[29] To avoid despotic rule, a state must be able to mediate ideological conflict without favouring a particular set of beliefs over the free exercise of others. Spinoza's approach to this problem is to posit a universal set of organising principles that all citizens must abide by in a well-ordered state, even while each individual is free to interpret these freely and to live by them in whatever way suits.[30] Gatens elaborates:

> The diversity of ways in which the seven principles [of Universal faith] may be interpreted acknowledges the power of the sovereign to dictate what shall count as permissible and impermissible action at the same time that it accommodates the different beliefs of citizens. Without a secure state and a stable moral code the development of human powers and knowledge is impossible.[31]

This Spinozist framework for conceiving the mediating and binding role of the state as it upholds individual freedoms in the exercise of diverse beliefs and supports the incremental and contextual evolution of reason according to differential individual capabilities, bears also upon Gatens' own conceptualisations of political community and public responsibility, social transformation, and law.[32] In an interview published in 2011, she explains the perspective that enables her to sanction universal principles of human right, even while having reservations about the possibility of finding genuine universality in the context of real human diversity:

> an abstract right can become particularised in its implementation... [just like a] musical score is realised, or particularised, every time a particular artist performs it. So there is a score that is written down and universally available, but each performance of it, or actualisation of it, is particular.[33]

In view of the Spinozan understanding that belief cannot be compelled and individuals cannot be *made* reasonable when they lack the kinds of affective capacity, imagination and cognitive framework necessary for active understanding and the pursuit of joyful affection, Gatens considers that social transformation towards more reasonable orders can be achieved only through educational opportunities that enable incremental shifts in belief structures:

Social change happens bit by bit. Individuals can't change until their social political context changes, and the social political context can't change until individuals change. The institutions might change a bit, and because the institutions have changed a bit then the way that individuals who are living under those institutions are formed will change a bit... Possibilities for change are inherent to the context and the powers of the individuals and the groups in that context.[34]

Although social development and the exercise of collective freedom relies upon individual and group capacities for directing transformation in specific contexts of action, the state nonetheless has a responsible role to play in the design of institutions that can effectively support and assist individuals to combine their powers harmoniously and sustain their critical capacities for rational deliberation.[35] Wise polities are those that exhibit a general understanding of the conditions and causes that determine citizens to act; the art of wise government involves demystifying the purposes and general utility of law and other institutions; and it involves building institutions that aim to maximise the rational powers of the multitude through education.[36] Importantly, education here is best conceived as a process of emendation through the use of constructed "exemplars," and through exposure to the varied affective circumstances that constitute diverse (and sometimes conflicting) social imaginaries along with mixed understandings of the determining structures of possible action and of social purpose; its moral dimension consists in the opportunity such an education provides for the expansive development of the sympathetic imagination, when we learn how to take different perspectives and alternative reasons for action into account when deliberating upon our own conditions of determination and choices for action. In this context, one of the key responsibilities of the state concerns the generation and communication of appropriate narratives for the expression of the historical complexity and diversity of the social imaginary, especially as this "endures through time and so becomes increasingly embedded in all our institutions, our judicial systems, our national narratives, our founding fictions, our cultural traditions."[37] In other words, the state is responsible not only for coordinating—and sometimes orchestrating - the regulatory norms that underpin and intersect with all other institutional settings, but also for endeavouring to make transparent to the citizenry that such norms are fabricated from original fictions that have come to exert a persuasive pull upon the social imaginary. These useful fictions are neither universal in their expression of social reality and value, nor essentially or naturally reasonable in themselves. If they are to continue to be accepted as reasonable

patterns for the warp and weft of our collective institutional fabric, they must be perpetually tested according to the experimental tools of adequate understanding furnished by the sympathetic imagination. Thus, Gatens and Lloyd write:

> The social imaginary may be inescapable, but it is not, for all that, fixed. Its reiteration and repetition through time opens possibilities for it to be (re) constituted differently. The collective transformation of the social imaginary cannot be 'thought' voluntaristically or relativistically as pure (re) invention of the past. Rather, it must be thought collectively, which is to say it must be thought and negotiated with actually existing different others in historical time.[38]

This perspective on the embedded but dynamic nature of institutional design and reshaping informs significant aspects of Gatens' political philosophy. For example, it is applied implicitly by Gatens and MacKinnon in their edited collection of critical feminist essays that examine the scope for ensuring that Australian institutions acknowledge gender difference and deliver more equitable outcomes.[39] It also appears in Gatens' work on the connection between social imaginaries, cultural reformation, 'embodied responsibility,' and the potential for narrative transformation, particularly as these apply to exclusionary structures such as patriarchy and colonialism.[40] Throughout her writings, we see persistent evidence of her interest in the normative sway of political ideas that have simultaneous alternate powers: to subdue the passions of the multitude that receives them unthinkingly; or to liberate the rational multitude by revealing more adequate modes of understanding about the conditions and causes that determine social action.

Religion, too, is of interest to Gatens insofar as it can demonstrate an extraordinary normative influence upon individual minds and the collective imaginary. She finds in the works of Spinoza, Feuerbach and Eliot a view that religion is an illusion, but one able to reveal important truths about human fears, motives and aspirations. Though the dogmatic tendencies of religious power must be cause for permanent vigilance, Gatens notes that religion can provide organising principles for the egoistic imagination and the unruly passions. Spinoza insists on the affective (rather than rational) power of religion: it works by "moving men... its aim being to appeal to and engage men's fantasy and imagination."[41] Religion can supply compelling fictional narratives that ultimately can encourage sympathetic, reasonable and ethical conduct, leading to general social equity and harmony. But historical and contemporary evidence shows how religious fictions are charac-

teristically mystifying and typically diminish the active capacity of the multitude for exercising reasoned judgement through understanding the sources of their determination to act. For this reason, Spinoza holds that theology and philosophy are distinct domains of knowledge that have discrete objects, methodologies and aims.[42] In her consideration of human potential for social liberation through the rational organisation of constitutive affect approached through the sympathetic imagination, Gatens attends specifically to the *philosophical* role of "deliberative fictions," including imaginative universal "exemplars" such as the "free man," which she argues can effectively enhance the collective power of human beings to become free.[43] She describes these as fictions that, while affirming their fictive status, nevertheless work to demystify the confusions of the imagination about cause and effect, and means and ends.[44] Unlike religion, then, in which imaginary exemplars function as a substitute for reason, "the philosopher uses the imagination as an aid to reason."[45]

Philosophy can therefore be a source of "deliberative fictions," sometimes extending to state-sanctioned expressions of social purpose and reason in institutional forms, such as aspirational policy statements. In my own philosophical work I have aimed to construct a deliberative fiction around the notion of "excolonialism," as a non-actual but potential form of society that departs imaginatively and qualitatively from the conditions of the colonial-type society that we continue to inhabit in Australia, and in many respects, falsely imagine as our natural or inevitable condition.[46] However, philosophy *per se* is not the only catalogue of "deliberative fictions": in her more recent work Gatens turns to literature, and especially to the "philosophical novels" of George Eliot, to draw out a Spinozan conception of art—that is, a conception of art *as* philosophy - with a role to play in the enlargement of individual and collective freedoms.

3. THE DELIBERATIVE IMAGINATION: SPINOZA AND ELIOT

Throughout her professional career, Gatens has been notably devoted to better understanding the operation and effect of genre on the gendered formation and valuation of scientific, social and moral knowledge.[47] Over the past decade, her investigation of the imbricated epistemological relationship of science and art—of truth and imagination—has been trained closely upon the moral potential of a generative connection between philosophy and literature. Gatens focusses most particularly—though not exclusively[48]—upon the combination of these two genres evident in the writings of Marian Evans, whose fiction was published under the

masculine pseudonym of George Eliot. Gatens' project is not only to elaborate the influence upon the literary Eliot of philosophers including Spinoza and Feuerbach (whom Eliot translated, along with the works of David Strauss),[49] but also to read Eliot as a philosopher in her own right; and thereby to reframe and reconceive philosophy itself, as "a genre and a practice" of thought imbued with considerable methodological diversity.[50] In so doing, Gatens seeks to deepen an appreciation of philosophy's gendered status (thereby extending the feminist philosophical project begun early in her career), "in order to acknowledge the force of the full range of institutions and social conventions at work in genre allocation."[51]

George Eliot is widely celebrated as a "great realist novelist," but her realism has also opened her to charges of naivety in her presentation of a transparently self-evident reality, as well as allegations of bourgeois moralism as an effect of the partisan perspective she unavoidably brings to bear upon her literary observations and orchestrations.[52] Gatens seeks to counter both charges and re-vision Eliot as a naturalistic philosopher whose painstaking accounts of the details and events of ordinary life present everyday images of people confronting common moral problems, and responding creatively to them. Sometimes their responses are deliberately reasoned, in clear-sighted appreciation of the set of determining causes that have brought them to their current situation and the outcomes they hope will prevail; but most often Eliot depicts characters struggling with situations they do not well understand:

> They are fleshy, imaginative and passionate beings who lack self-mastery, self-discipline and self-knowledge and have, at best, only a partial grasp of their context and the complex, interconnected chains of causes that animate both it and their own actions.[53]

This causes them to be affected and to affect others in ways they have not explicitly willed, with outcomes they cannot securely predict. Eliot's characters typically find there is no ready-made moral script to guide their actions. The reasoned solutions they may find will instead be developed through the gradual coming-to-awareness they exhibit in the course of their reflection upon the consequences of the choices they have made. According to Gatens, Eliot is "concerned, in the absence of a God, to give morality a naturalistic grounding. Imagination, sympathy and affect are the components from which she builds her ethical stance."[54] Gatens then considers Eliot's approach to realism as a "self-conscious narrative strategy" that draws on Spinoza's philosophy to "facilitate an understanding of

realism where the capacity to imagine is intrinsic to our apprehension of reality."[55]

Gatens takes very seriously Eliot's own assertion that her novels comprise "simply a set of experiments in life."[56] She avers: "Knowledge is gained through reflecting on and organising our experience. It is this account of knowledge that gives rise to Eliot's distinctive empiricism and her preference for the experimental method."[57] Eliot's approach to literature as experimental philosophy can be understood in two ways. First, her novels present fictional individuals dealing with real-world complex social problems—including anti-Semitism (*Daniel Deronda*), infanticide, sexual exploitation (*Adam Bede*), domestic violence, alcoholism (*Janet's Redemption*), and the right of women to education (*Middlemarch*)—and trialling interventions to specific moral situations. In this respect, Eliot's novels are an imaginative catalogue of moral and social experimentation concerning possible responses to real issues and a creative exploration of the potential benefits and pitfalls of responsive actions. At the same time, her novels reveal the affective motivations underscoring the deliberative processes embarked upon by characters as they struggle experimentally with the worldly situations in which they find themselves. Secondly, Gatens suggests Eliot deliberately sought to represent her moral philosophy through fiction, as a most effective way to engage her readers' sympathetic imagination and provide them with conceptual resources having a potential application in their own real-world comprehensions of, and investigations with, complex social and moral problems. Identifying imaginatively and sympathetically with the characters in Eliot's fictional situations may assist readers to better predict the various possible outcomes of their actions, as they come to better "understand human life and value through careful observation, reflection on experience, and sympathetic comparisons between self and others."[58] Choices made prudently will arise in processes of moral experimentation that must, to a significant extent, proceed in accordance with careful analysis of the determining conditions and in the light of imagined outcomes. Moral decisions can be tempered by the rich resources of imagination afforded to readers capable of sympathising with the experiences of (fictional) others, as they endeavour to pursue favourable endings: the "ideal associations, characteristic of the artistic imagination, help create representations with the force to trigger memory, engage emotion, and provide fresh insight into the subtle interconnections between self, others, and the world."[59] In this way, "the painstaking tasks of observing, collecting and reporting empirical facts" are combined with Eliot's genius for "selection and recombination in order to create a work that shows the human condition in a new light," and "Eliot's ethical realism can be understood as offering her readers

a secular revelation that seeks to challenge the significance of common human experiences and promote love of one's neighbour."[60]

Far from being merely an especially fastidious recounting of the self-evident material world, then, Eliot's naturalism and empiricism is re-visioned by Gatens as thoroughly imbued with attention to that which is not obviously apparent to the casual observer. The intricate detail of Eliot's observations is then reconceived as part of a narrative strategy that encourages readers to look again "at what was thought to be ordinary, uneventful, or mundane, in order to appreciate the extraordinary intricacy of human interconnectedness, or the long chain of causal links between present and past conditions that connect the commonplace to momentous events."[61] This interpretation allows Eliot a significant critical impetus, and indeed Gatens presents Eliot as using her fiction for artfully and deliberately "unsettling and realigning the affective charge of traditional narratives in which moral feeling and action are embedded."[62] She sees this as a methodological consequence of Eliot's distinctive conception of truth in art since, for Eliot, truth does not inhere in the material correspondence of the representation with external reality, but in the adequacy of an understanding of the affective causes and conditions that shape the contexts of judgement and action. Art has a capacity to contribute to ethical judgement by making more visible, or apparent, what we need to see, to experience through the example of others, if we are to become more joyful—that is, more reasonable:

> Art, for Eliot, always involves revelation and vision: seeing anew what was taken to be ordinary... Art is not discovered or found but vividly imagined, realised, materialised, through passion, memory and insight. It is this account of artistic creation that defines Eliot's distinctive realism—a realism that embraces passion, imagination and memory, as the material bases out of which we strive to know ourselves and refashion our contexts of action.[63]

This is the sense in which Gatens understands Eliot conceives her art *as* philosophy, in that it deliberately and self-consciously probes the scope and adequacy of philosophical concepts.

Key among these is the concept of imagination, which is typically sidelined in the history of philosophy as a source of error and falsity. However, for Eliot (as for Gatens), the imagination is central to morality, since the sympathetic imagi-

nation is what connects individuals to each other. Imagination and emotion are fundamental to processes of moral deliberation, because they constitute a basis for moral interaction and the incentive or drive to act ethically.[64] One of Gatens' ambitions is to demonstrate how Eliot's theory of imagination converges with the views of Spinoza and Feuerbach.[65] Eliot distinguishes two kinds of imagination: the first involves arbitrary combinations of observations drawn from fanciful imaginings without attention to reality; and the second involves the disciplined and discerning selection of ideal associations, directed towards expressing a truthful account of reality. Gatens argues, for Eliot, "the power of discerning the difference is the mark of a refined, disciplined imagination and is as important to gaining moral knowledge as it is to gaining scientific knowledge."[66] Accordingly, in direct contrast to frivolous art forms that merely "encourage false sympathies and shallow moral sensibilities,"[67] Gatens claims that, for Eliot, the fundamental purpose of literature is to evoke fellow feeling through the sympathetic imagination. Her novels thereby aspire to provide a conceptual ground for moral community, which relies firmly upon sympathy and aspires towards positive forms of conduct and relationship that express a solution to the key moral philosophical question: how ought we to live?

In the latest phase of her philosophical career, Gatens finds in Eliot an interpretation of Spinoza sympathetic to her own, in which the imagination plays a central role in social formations and in the advancement of moral knowledge. Gatens' philosophical reading of Eliot is both a contribution to Eliot studies, and a contribution to Spinoza studies. Commentators have hotly debated—and often strongly denied—the possibility of defining a Spinozan aesthetics. Yet, through her reading of the philosophical literature of George Eliot, and in the light of her argument that Eliot uses literature to express the Spinozan system in an alternate form, Gatens is able to draw out a theory of art implied in Spinoza's philosophy. However, at the same time, Gatens is careful to insist upon Eliot's unique and innovative philosophical contribution, which cannot be reduced to a mere application of Spinoza's or Feuerbach's insights through the (then) more socially sanctioned feminine form of literary expression. For Gatens, "Eliot's insistence on the importance of historical context to the development and character of morality and religion represents a philosophically significant advance on the views of Spinoza and Feuerbach."[68] Accordingly, for Gatens, Eliot does not simply re-present Spinoza's philosophy in literary form, but rather "develops notions latent in Spinoza's philosophy that open new paths for conceiving of the relation between ethics and art."[69] Gatens' turn to Eliot is, then, a continuation of her longer term

project of feminist philosophical historiography and her questioning of the role of gender in the ascription of genre.

In an interview published in 2011, Gatens remarks how, when bringing previously unconnected writers into association, "something strange happens, and the hope is this relation will engender new possibilities for thought. It allows one to think something new because these writers are not usually brought together or thought together."[70] According to Gatens, Eliot's novels are "exemplars of an interventionist practice that aims to transform the ethical frame of human action through a forceful revisioning of reality."[71] The same could be said of Gatens' philosophy, which is a formidable force for the emendation of the ethical intellect. As an *exemplary* feminist thinker, Gatens' work shines with the careful integrity of someone who seeks to intuit, imagine and reason, as fully as possible, a truthful or adequate understanding of the nature of sexual difference, collective sexual imaginaries, and the complex system of power relations that are their determining causes. Additionally, as an *imaginative* philosopher whose associative methodology creates new possibilities for thought, Gatens presents a re-conception of philosophy as a genre and a practice that strives to exert a creative power capable of changing and reshaping reality itself.

SIMONE BIGNALL is Senior Lecturer in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at Flinders University in Australia. She is the author of *Postcolonial Agency: Critique and Constructivism* (2010) and the forthcoming title *Exit Colonialism: Ethics After Enjoyment*. She has also co-edited *Deleuze and the Postcolonial* (with Paul Patton, 2010); *Agamben and Colonialism* (with Marcelo Svirsky, 2012); *Deleuze and Pragmatism* (with Sean Bowden and Paul Patton, 2014); and *Posthuman Ecologies: Complexity and Process After Deleuze* (with Rosi Braidotti, 2019).

NOTES

1. An essay of this length cannot hope to canvas the full range of debates comprising the field of Spinoza Studies, nor can I ever hope to adequately convey the rich intricacy of Gatens' interpretation of Spinoza. My aim is, then, more modest and circumspect: to outline, generally, some of the shifts in the contemporary reception of Spinoza resulting from Gatens' re-interpretation of his theory of the imagination; and to consider her application of this theory in her thinking about politics, cultural and institutional reform, identity, and issues of gender and genre.

2. Edwin Curley, *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*. Trans. E. Curley. Princeton University Press, 1994, 157: mind and body are 'one and the same thing, which is conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension,'

3. The philosophical separation between mind and body is, of course, the product of a particular cultural milieu, associated especially with Western traditions of thought. Indigenous philosophies, for example, typically consider mind and body as parallel attributes of Nature, or Country, and some Indigenous perspectives on ontology, epistemology and ethics thus find a sympathetic echo in Spinoza's philosophy. See, for example, Simone Bignall, Daryle Rigney and Steve Hemming, "Three Ecosophies for the Anthropocene: Continental Posthumanism, Indigenous Expressivism and Environmental Governance," *Deleuze Studies* 10:4 (2016, 455-478).

4. See Spinoza's *Ethics, part II, especially Propositions XL-XLI*.

5. See especially Moira Gatens, *Spinoza's Hard Path to Freedom*. Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 2011, Lecture 1; and Moira Gatens and Genevieve Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings: Spinoza Past and Present*. London: Routledge, 1999, chapter 2.

6. Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Robert Hurley. San Francisco: City Light Books, 1988. Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Zone Books, 1990; Pierre Macherey, *Hegel or Spinoza*. Trans. Susan Ruddick. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011. See also Aurelia Armstrong, "Affective Therapy: Spinoza's Approach to Self-Cultivation" in *Ethics and Self-Cultivation: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*. Eds., Mathew Dennis and Sander Werkhoven. London: Routledge, 2018, 30-46.

7. Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy*, 255-272.

8. Ibid.

9. Moira Gatens, "Affective Transitions and Spinoza's Art of Joyful Deliberation." *Timing of Affect: Epistemologies, Aesthetics, Politics*. Eds. M. Angerer, B. Bosel, M. Ott. Zurich: Diaphanes Verlag, 2014, 17-33.

10. Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," *Cultural Critique* 31 (1995, 83-109); Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2002.

11. Gatens, "Affective Transitions."

12. Gatens, "Affective Transitions."

13. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies. S*ee esp. "Epilogue."

14. Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*. London: Routledge, 1996.

15. Moira Gatens, "Through a Spinozist Lens: Ethology, Difference, Power" *Deleuze: A Critical Reader*. Ed. P. Patton. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, 168.

16. On the constructed image of the body politic see, in particular, Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*. Chapter 1.

17. Moira Gatens, "Through a Spinozist Lens"; Gatens *Imaginary Bodies*. Chapter 8.

18. Gatens, "Through a Spinozist Lens," esp.179-183.

19. The American civil rights movement, for example, owes much to the corporeal stubbornness

of Rosa Parkes, who in conceiving of herself as equal and rightful and so refusing to relinquish her seat, assisted the ascent of an alternate social imaginary of civil equality. For an embodied account of Indigenous experiences of anthropological knowledge, and of the potential for the decolonisation of such knowledge through the affective junctures of 'the cultural interface,' see Martin Nakata, *Disciplining the Savages, Savaging the Disciplines*. Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007.

20. Benedict Spinoza, *Theological Political Treatise*. Trans. R.H.M Elwes. New York: Dover, 1951, 231.

21. E.g. Edwin Curley, "Kissinger, Spinoza and Genghis Khan," *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza*. Ed. Don Garrett. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

22. See especially Moira Gatens, "Spinoza's Disturbing Thesis: Power, Norms and Fiction in the *Tractacus Theologico-Politicus*," *History of Political Thought* 30:3 (2009, 455-468); and Gatens and Lloyd, *Collective Imaginings*. Esp. chapters 3 and 4.

23. Gatens, *Spinoza's Hard Path*, 21.

24. Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, 115-116.

25. Spinoza, *Theological Political Treatise*. 259.

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52. Moira Gatens, "Cloud-Borne Angels, Prophets and the Old Woman's Flower Pot: Reading George Eliot's Realism alongside Spinoza's 'Beings of the Imagination,'" *Australian Literary Studies*, 28:3 (2013, 1-14), 1.

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55. Gatens, "Cloud-Borne Angels," 2.

56. George Eliot, *The George Eliot Letters*. Ed. Gordon Haight. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954-1978, Volume 1, 162.

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colonial mind, colonised body: structural violence and incarceration in Aotearoa
elese b. dowden

The Aotearoa New Zealand prison structure, like many other Western institutions, is fundamentally an oppressive state enterprise that serves to marginalise Indigenous peoples both as a symptom and as a mechanism of colonisation. As of June 2018, there are 10,435 prisoners in New Zealand jails, and just over half of all prisoners are Māori, with the second majority (31%) being European, and the third majority (11%) being Pasifika peoples.[1] When we compare these numbers to the New Zealand demographics—14.9% Māori, 7.4% Pasifika, and around three-quarters being of NZ European descent—there is strong evidence to demonstrate that racial inequalities, and attendant histories of colonialism and dispossession, play an important part in shaping the New Zealand carceral justice system.[2] While some prisons have Māori Focus Units and Māori Therapeutic Programmes, this article argues that the prison structure as a totality remains a fundamental part of a settler colonial project. In particular, the carceral system is an extension of wider practices, wherein the New Zealand government forces upon Māori a Pākehā[3] worldview and perpetuates Māori alienation from people and place through forced assimilation.[4] As Chris Cunneen and Juan Tauri have argued, settler colonialism is "actively created and maintained through processes of dispossession, and policies of disenfranchisement and social and economic exclusion,"[5] and for my purposes in this article, the focus will be the logics of dispossession that shape patterns of Māori incarceration.

The first section draws on Lorenzo Veracini, Jared Sexton and Patrick Wolfe to discuss some of the specific features of settler colonialism, and then turns toward Nelson Maldonado-Torres' and Lewis Gordon's respective works on coloniality to consider the ways in which Western epistemologies perpetuate harms against Indigenous peoples. In discussing different perspectives, I then begin to outline what Māori worldviews look like according to prominent Māori thinkers such as Moana Jackson, Ani Mikaere, Juan Tauri, Tracey McIntosh, and Margaret Mutu. In the final section, I offer a brief discussion on the Treaty of Waitangi (*Te Tiriti o Waitangi*) and consider the implications of decolonial thinking for the carceral justice system in Aotearoa New Zealand.

THE TREATY OF WAITANGI AND THE COLONIALITY OF BEING

An important entry-point to New Zealand's colonial history is the Treaty of Waitangi and its legal, political and social legacies for Māori communities. This treaty between Māori and colonial British settlers, signed in 1840, signified a partnership between the two parties.[6] The agreement guaranteed active protection for Māori, entailed in the concepts of *kāwanatanga* and *rangatiratanga*, which loosely translate as "governorship" and "chieftainship," respectively.[7] Despite the treaty, the British colonial appetite for land led to the brutal conflicts of the New Zealand Land Wars, which lasted from the 1840s through to the 1890s. Māori land continued to be confiscated by the British Crown well into the twentieth century, and the Māori population was significantly diminished: by 1896, the number of Māori in Aotearoa had declined by at least 150,000, the result of both direct combat and disease brought by settlers.[8] The violence against Māori communities since the Treaty of Waitangi has slowly been acknowledged in provisional ways. The Waitangi Tribunal was established in 1975 as a "permanent commission of inquiry that makes recommendations on claims brought by Māori relating to Crown actions which breach the promises made in the Treaty of Waitangi."[9] This history has enduring implications for understanding the carceral logics of coloniality in the present, to which I will return later.

The British Crown invasion of Aotearoa New Zealand and consequent practices of colonial expansion bear an enormous responsibility for continuing harms against Māori peoples. To understand these harms, we must distinguish between settler colonialism and classical colonialism. Patrick Wolfe famously argues that settler colonialism, as distinct from other practices of warfare or conflict, is "premised on the elimination of native societies... the colonizers come to stay—invasion is

a structure not an event."[10] In Aotearoa New Zealand, the colonisers never left. Instead, the colonisers have invaded Indigenous space and hold Māori captive through neo-colonial means of oppression and marginalisation. As Jared Sexton writes:

> 'You, go away' can mean the removal of the native population, its destruction through direct killing or the imposition of unliveable conditions, its assimilation into the settler colonial society, or some combination of each... settler colonialism may exploit the labour of the colonized en route, but the disappearance of the native is its *raison d'être*.[11]

As part of this horrific "logic of elimination," Wolfe argues that forced assimilation is a key facet of settler colonialism and identifies a range of pressures colonisers create for Indigenous peoples to adopt settler way of being.[12]

A key facet of settler colonialism is the British Crown's legal presumption of *terra nullius* (Latin for "a land without people"), such that strong Māori expressions of sovereignty and autonomy have been historically significant in fighting against the colonial project in New Zealand.[13] As Arena Heta of Ngā hapū o Kāingapipiwai (a Māori community) puts it, "Te Tiriti [the Māori version of the Treaty] allowed Pākehā to immigrate, to live amongst us, and to trade. There is nothing in Te Tiriti that gave them the right to govern us or be our sovereign."[14] At the same time, Ani Mikaere notes that the response to public debates about sovereignty from Pākehā communities has involved "selective amnesia... denial and distortion of the truth... an obsession with looking forward rather than back... and the determination to cast oneself in the role of victim."[15] Rather than acknowledging the fundamental instability of British Crown claims to sovereignty in New Zealand, many Pākehā cast themselves as victims, making claims that Māori have been overcompensated for historical wrongs and that affirmative action policy disenfranchises non-Māori peoples.

There have been important, although certainly limited, efforts to challenge the colonial logics of assimilation. To illustrate, let us consider the 1987 Māori Language Act. Under the New Zealand legal system, the British Crown (and the government that legislates on its behalf) had initially attempted to prevent Māori from speaking Te Reo Māori. Policy and legislation gradually began to change to support biculturalism in the 1970s and 1980s: by 1987, Māori was registered by the government as an official language of New Zealand, and in 2018, Māori language

week is celebrated widely.[16] In many respects, such celebrations are important for strengthening the relationships between Māori and non-Māori communities, and at least superficially appear to acknowledge the need to repair the historical harms of colonial dispossession. However, policy change is no substitute for significant institutional overhaul, and does not necessarily signify any government commitment to decolonisation. While on one hand, the Māori Language Act is enormously positive in enabling language rejuvenation and rehabilitation, on the other hand it can sometimes serve to undermine Māori sovereignty, by placating the majority non- Māori public with narratives of State-driven bicultural harmony. As Tracey McIntosh, Dominic Andrae and Stan Coster note, "Māori as *tangata whenua*[17] have always resisted the pressures of colonial, post-colonial and Settler-state policies—once assimilationist; then bicultural and allegedly autonomous—and have sought to demonstrate and give fully independent voice to their own social, political, economic and cultural viewpoints."[18] In this context, State-driven bicultural initiatives remain necessary, but never sufficient, for engaging issues around Māori political autonomy, if the State is unable to acknowledge its own foundational complicities in colonial dispossession.

How can we make sense of this dual tendency of the State to both deny Māori political autonomy and affirm the specificity of Māori cultural identities? In thinking about the historical transmission of settler colonial violence in New Zealand, Lorenzo Veracini makes an analogy between viruses and colonial relationships. In Veracini's view, colonial relationships, like viruses, "can be reproduced vertically (one is born into it—colonized people can only give birth to colonized offspring)" as well as "horizontally (through the colonial 'encounter' and the resulting subjection of colonized peoples)."[19] Viruses, like colonialism, mutate and can be highly resistant to antiviral treatments because of their changing shapes and forms. In this sense, coloniality persists because of its ability to adapt and change to work against new forms of resistance. Part of this adaptation involves reframing the enduring instruments and institutions of colonial rule as non- or post-colonial: "Most importantly, colonial ideologies often see colonialism as something intrinsically temporary, a system of unequal relationships that will run its course until it will itself establish conditions appropriate for its supersession."[20] Fantasies of untroubled progress notwithstanding, coloniality continues to function as a virus, invisible but for its symptoms, operating silently at the very core of being. This invisibility is what allows seemingly benevolent acts of a colonial government, such as the expansion of rights or the promotion of cultural diversity, to be (mis) read as signs that colonialism itself has disappeared from the political horizon. To

understand the ways that coloniality may still shape a range of institutions in New Zealand, I turn to what Nelson Maldonado-Torres refers to as the "coloniality of being."

As already indicated, "coloniality" can be understood as distinct from colonisation. For Maldonado-Torres, coloniality "refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labour, inter-subjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations."[21] Expanding this meaning, the "coloniality of being" allows Maldonado-Torres to illuminate the ways in which the long-term impacts of colonisation manifest in the daily experience of both colonisers and colonised peoples. He traces the intellectual problems around coloniality through René Descartes, whose Cartesian meditations form the basis of a wider historical Western phenomenology that considers body and mind as separate entities. Maldonado-Torres highlights and argues that "a certain scepticism regarding the humanity of the enslaved and colonized sub-others stands at the background of the Cartesian certainties and his methodic doubt."[22] The Cartesian division between mind and body, of reason over physicality, as Maldonado-Torres puts it, "[provided] a new model to understand the relationship between the soul or mind and the body; and likewise, modern articulations of the mind/body are used as models to conceive the colonizer/colonized relation, as well as the relation between man and woman, particularly the woman of colour."[23] To extend the aforementioned metaphor, coloniality is the viral form of colonisation, the disease that seeps noxiously into everything around it. If colonialism is the colonial government and its tools of repression, the viral coloniality of being prevents or obscures efforts to question the wider historical circumstances and legacies of colonial repression. To the extent that this violence remains unquestioned, the logic of elimination is left unchecked.

The coloniality of being has implications for knowledge production, both in relation to academic scholarship and in relation to other forms of institutionalised, bureaucratic knowledge. When coloniality is not examined, and when "method-ological approaches to knowledge construction are treated as inherently 'value neutral' and 'apolitical,'" colonial institutions are able to hide the structural bi-ases that reproduce systematic harms.[24] Consider the example given by Kukutai and Walter:

> Indigenous population statistics and the categories that inform them are

not value neutral. Such data emerge from, and are given meaning through, the dominant frameworks of the settler state societies that produce and use them. Decisions on what data are collected, on whom, when, how, and in what format, are not simply matters of administrative choice. Rather they are social, cultural and political artefacts with the power to define and exclude. This claim is more than semantics. Official statistics have a lived impact for Indigenous peoples in both Aotearoa and Australia; from perceptions of who we are, to the policy outcomes derived from those statistics.[25]

While gathering data on human flourishing is useful for determining whether policies are working, it is important to be wary of the ways in which that data is collected, phrased and presented. Many programs that purport to assist Māori communities are coordinated around Pākehā ideals, which means that while these programs and policies attempt to improve Māori affairs, they may unwittingly be exercises in recolonisation and assimilation. This is particularly important when governmental norms around employment or vocational 'success' ignore or exclude participation within Māori communities, as Ani Mikaere highlights:

> A person of Māori descent who is healthy, prosperous and well-educated but who does not participate in Māori society could not be regarded as a success in Māori terms. To the extent that assimilated Māori generally do not identify as Māori at all, they move to the Pākehā side of the equation and represent the ultimate success of the colonisation project.[26]

The conflict between Pākehā institutions and ways of understanding wellbeing, and those of Māori communities, becomes acute in the case of the carceral system, which is the final focus of this article.

COLONIALITY, INCARCERATION AND TIKANGA MĀORI

In more ways than one, the coloniality of being shapes the contexts through which Indigenous and minority groups of oppressed peoples are incarcerated (examples can also be found in Australia and the United States).[27] The replication of Western colonial carceral systems across the world has caused enormous devastation to Indigenous groups, and in many ways, simply extend the more 'spectacular' forms of violence associated with frontier conflict and invasion. For Cunneen and Tauri, "criminalisation and punishment [are] central to the operation of the

colonial state in its governance of Indigenous peoples," and "open warfare [has been] replaced by more regulatory forms of control."[28] Prisons in New Zealand demonstrate a neo-colonial commitment to the oppression of Māori in dividing and separating *whanau* (extended family) and communities. One example of this is the Māori Focus Units and Māori Therapeutic Units. Riki Mikaere has investigated the effectiveness of these units, which are presented by the Department of Corrections as a way to prevent Māori reoffending by demonstrating a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. The language around reporting on the Māori Focus Unit programmes is cold, clinical, and strongly dependent on normative psychological profiling.[29] Western psychometric testing and therapy is employed in the units despite the commitment to *tikanga Māori* (broadly translated as 'Māori law'), including a "Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles," which is "a self-report measure designed to assess thinking styles understood as supporting criminal lifestyles."[30] This metric presupposes that the incarcerated individual has some inherently criminal disposition, and draws attention away from the social and historical variables that lead Māori to be overrepresented in New Zealand prisons.

Like many state mechanisms, the metrics and surrounding assessments fail to appreciate the colonial circumstances and wider institutional failures which lead to disproportionate Māori incarceration. The Department of Corrections claims that inmates involved in their Māori Focus Unit programmes are "expected to lead pro-social, non-offending lifestyles following release from prison," but the same institution acknowledges that there has yet to be any "research evidence which confirms the linkage between these intermediate and longer-term outcomes."[31] Furthermore, practices such as solitary confinement can be actively detrimental to any future rehabilitation. A report by Sharon Shalev for the New Zealand Human Rights Commission report found that there was an "overrepresentation of ethnic minority groups in solitary confinement and restraint incidents," with Māori and Pasifika peoples comprising 80% of solitary confinement.[32] In this way, Māori prisoners are likely to experience the most deeply traumatizing facets of incarceration, a fact acknowledged in a 2017 Waitangi Tribunal report, which found that "the Crown has a Treaty responsibility to reduce inequities between Māori and non-Māori reoffending rates in order to protect Māori interests."

The dynamics of privatised incarceration further exacerbate these issues. A man who wishes to be known only as "Dave" has spent 15 years total in New Zealand prisons across 40 years, and describes solitary confinement at Mt Eden Correc-

tions Facility,[33] one of the largest and oldest prisons in the country, in the following way:

> There were rats, cockroaches. you just sit there… it's really challenging psychologically. They feed you but it's not the same as in the general prison population; I would get half a cabbage, raw, two potatoes, a piece of bread and a mug of water. They'd send you there for 7 to 14 days… some guys get taken out of the after three days because they're just [too messed up]. You hear them all night, screaming and the rest of us… would be shouting out '…kill yourself.'[34]

During its period of privatisation, Mt Eden Corrections Facility attracted criticism due to a range of high profile incidents. In 2015 a man "was beaten up by four prisoners and dropped off a balcony while in jail… he [sued] Serco [a private prison operations company] for $500,000, alleging gross negligence on their part."[35] The government resumed control over Mt Eden Corrections Facility in recent years, after further stories like this emerged from the prison. People Against Prisons Aotearoa, a prison abolitionist movement, criticizes Serco for their active complicity in violence as part of the company's efforts to capitalize on incarceration.[36] Privatising and monetising incarceration can create a dangerous conflict of interest in the way that prisoners are treated, especially if the result is a decrease in money spent on each prisoner to ensure safety and wellbeing. The privatisation of prisons and the corresponding lack of adequate services for rehabilitation has disproportionate impacts on Māori communities,[37] private companies such Serco have no mandate to address the issues around social and historical justice that shape patterns of Māori incarceration.

In 2015, Tom Hemopo filed an urgent statement of claim to the Waitangi Tribunal because of the disconcertingly high reoffending rates by Māori. He also raised issues around the prejudice and difficulty Māori families and communities face as a result of high incarceration rates.[38] The Tribunal found that the Crown and the Department of Corrections was not fulfilling its obligation to Māori under the Treaty, which was supported by the fact that Corrections had "no specific plan or strategy to reduce Māori reoffending, no specific target to reduce Māori reoffending, and no specific budget to meet this end."[39] Hemopo argued in his statement of claim that:

The normalisation of the disproportionate number of Māori offenders causes social harm by reproducing inter-generational inequalities. The prejudice to Māori caused by the high rate of Māori reoffending extends to the offenders' *whānau, hapū, iwi* and, particularly, to their children.[40] [Hemopo] submitted that the high rate of Māori imprisonment also leads to the normalisation of this situation and the perpetuation of the stereotype that Māori are inherently criminal.[41]

In this context, it becomes important to engage with Māori perspectives of coloniality and justice to further critique settler colonialism and the prison system in New Zealand in connection with Indigenous worldviews. The notion of *tikanga Māori* describes a body of "values developed by Māori to govern themselves—the Māori way of doing things."[42] Mason Durie, a prominent Māori lawyer and leader, argues that *tikanga Māori* as a value system enables a flexible, mutable adherence to principles that are adapted across time:

> While custom has usually been posited as finite law that has always existed, in reality customary policy was dynamic and receptive to change, but change was effected with adherence to those fundamental principles and beliefs that Māori considered appropriate to govern the relationships between persons, peoples and the environment.[43]

Further to this, Hirini Moko Mead explains that *tikanga* are:

> ... tools of thought and understanding. They are packages of ideas which help to organise behaviour and provide some predictability in how certain activities are carried out. They provide templates and frameworks to guide our actions and help steer us through some huge gatherings of people and some tense moments in our ceremonial life. They help us to differentiate between right and wrong and in this sense have built-in ethical rules that must be observed.[44]

Mead gives the example of "purify[ing] oneself through cleansing with fresh water following proximity to death," where breaching *tapu* instead might involve a supernatural punishment.[45] Underpinning this approach is the pervasive concept of *whanaungatanga*.[46] Far from aiming to separate people from their communities and the outside world, *whanaungatanga* instead "embraces whakapapa (genealogy), and focuses on connection, understanding and relationships."[47]A law com-

mission report into Māori justice worldviews notes that:

> In traditional Māori society, the individual was important as a member of a collective. The individual identity was defined through that individual's relationships with others. It follows that tikanga Māori emphasised the responsibility owed by the individual to the collective. No rights endured if the mutuality and reciprocity of responsibilities were not understood and fulfilled.[48]

Western societies tend not to emphasize community and connections between people in this way, and therefore pursue justice through individualising carceral practices. Mass incarceration is clearly at odds with *tikanga Māori*, and particularly with the concept of *whanaungatanga*. Families of all kinds may be separated by the prison system—prisoners are, after all, husbands, wives, mothers, grandparents, fathers—and this disturbance in family structure may further cycles of trauma and poverty, which perpetuates Māori disenfranchisement.

A well-known Māori proverb reads as follows: "Hūtia te rito o te harakeke, kei hea te kōmako e kō? Kī mai ki a au, 'He aha te mea nui i te ao?' Māku e kī atu, 'He tāngata, he tāngata, he tāngata." This is commonly translated as, "*If the heart of the flax is pulled out, where will the bellbird sing? What is the most important thing in the world? It is people, it is people, it is people.*"[49] In continuing to separate and oppress by dividing Māori from communities, culture and land, the coloniser pulls out the heart of the *harakeke*.

CONCLUSION: PEOPLE AS PROBLEMS AND PEOPLE FACING PROBLEMS

White colonial powers have cast Māori communities in New Zealand as 'problems' to be solved. Lewis Gordon writes of the process of colonisation:

> New kinds of people came into being, while others disappeared... they are Indigenous to a world that, paradoxically, they do not belong to. These people have been aptly described by Du Bois as "problems." They are a function of a world in which they are posited as illegitimate although they could exist nowhere else... Such people are treated by dominant organisations of knowledge... as problems instead of people who face problems. Their problem status is a function of the presupposed legitimacy of the

systems that generate them.[50]

In this context, we can understand New Zealand prisons as colonial institutions that serve to generate 'problem people.' Cunneen and Tauri note that "colonialism can be considered criminogenic to the extent that it actively produces dispossession, marginalisation and cultural dislocation."[51] In the previous section, I drew upon Gordon, Cunneen and Tauri to reinforce the notion that colonialism creates disenfranchisement and cultural dislocation. Western settler colonial systems and methodologies do not adequately cater to Māori, and in this sense government institutions have failed Māori communities. As part of this neglect, settler colonial Pākehā power structures have created and perpetuated a myth surrounding Māori as 'problem people.' Rather than considering the ways in which coloniality and invasion have impacted Indigenous peoples, Pākehā narratives and discourses across public institutions perpetuate the notion that Māori have failed to assimilate into settler colonial culture. For example, Moana Jackson writes that:

> Reasons for non-normative behaviour by members of the minority culture, the Māori, are sought in instances of non-assimilation, or in specific cultural mores of the Māori, they are not sought in the cultural norms of the Pākehā which are impacting upon Māori people. Thus an explanation of the high rate of Māori theft was sought, albeit incorrectly, in an alleged Māori value. It was not sought in a questioning of the relevant Pākehā values or systems.[52]

While there are indications that legislation and policy in Aotearoa is moving towards biculturalism, the failure to afford Māori the power promised under the Treaty of Waitangi, especially in relation to justice and incarceration, tells a different story. For this reason, I have argued throughout this article that the carceral justice system in New Zealand has served and continues to serve as an extension of settler colonial values which oppress Indigenous peoples to perpetuate Pākehā privilege. For future research, we may benefit from understanding coloniality not simply as a set of overt commitments to colonial projects, but as a viral movement that works its way through the epistemological and institutional formations of settler colonial society in Aotearoa New Zealand.

> ELESE B. DOWDEN recently completed a PhD research project entitled "Reconciling the Impossible: Forgiveness and Grief in Contemporary

Rwanda, New Zealand and Australia" at the University of Queensland, Australia. Her research interests include settler colonial studies, gender, popular culture, forgiveness, trust, existential phenomenology, and the philosophy of trauma and affect.

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dissolving the consciousness in *satori*: merleau-ponty and the phenomenology of suzuki's embodied buddhism

adrian moore

INTRODUCTION

Ontological dualism describes a range of philosophical frameworks that broadly conceive the mind as separate from the world in a discontinuous and absolute way, and its influence in philosophy is commonly attributed to René Descartes' effort to establish the "objectivity" from the viewpoint of the rational thinker, the *cogito*.[1] Descartes proposes that the mind does not occupy space or have physical dimensions, and is therefore independent of physical forces. By contrast, the world of objects and bodies is composed of physically extended matter and subject to physical forces.[2] Descartes' ontological dualism has been challenged by many traditions, including Spinozist parallelism, Bergsonian vitalism, and the group of philosophers associated with phenomenology, including Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Focusing on the work of Merleau-Ponty and his concept of *écart* (as well as *flesh*), this article argues that the philosophical challenge to ontological dualism within European philosophy dovetails with the philosophical traditions identified with Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki's Zen Buddhism. Suzuki, who practiced Zen under the tutelage of Soyen Shaku during his university studies,[3] translated many texts from Japanese into English, and introduced much of this literature to Europe and the United States. Suzuki has faced criticism for his essentialist approach,[4] but his physiological perspective nevertheless

provides a framework of embodied Buddhism that correlates strongly with Merleau-Ponty's ontology. In particular, Suzuki's account of the experience of *satori* can be related to the Merleau-Ponty's own conception of consciousness, which allows for post-dualistic conceptions of thought and the body.

To develop this argument, this article will focus on the role of the body in mediating the separation of self from the world in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. This requires some understanding of intersections between phenomenology and Gestalt psychology, and their shared conceptual relation to the Hindu concept of Māyā. Having discussed the body as a point of significance to phenomenology, being both the very constitution of our existence in the world and also the method through which we discover and encounter meaning, the article will turn to a discussion on pre-personal and personal consciousness, focusing on Merleau-Ponty's view of embodied knowledge, and the 'mental self' as derived from what he calls *praktignosis*. Finally, these concepts will be shown to have deep similarities to particular contemporary articulations of Zen thought, including the engagement with a lived/living world (a common perceptual framework of "self-division"). The article will here offer a phenomenological reading of *satori*, primarily as conceived through the interpretations offered by Suzuki.

It is important to emphasise from the outset that Merleau-Ponty is not articulating a "Western Buddhism", in the manner that Arthur Schopenhauer had attempted (I will discuss this below). Rather, I want to suggest that certain themes made explicit in Suzuki's conceptions of experience can help us better understand more implicit or obscure aspects of Merleau-Ponty's thought, and visa versa.

THE BODY IN MERLEAU-PONTY'S PHILOSOPHY

The Body is the site of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, retaining a central significance throughout the entirety of his work. The Body is not an object and instead "is the condition and context through which I am able to have a relation to objects".[5] Merleau-Ponty envisages the body as an event in motion, rather than an inert mass of biological matter to be animated by a conscious mind. Merleau-Ponty differentiates the body from external objects because it is entirely unable to be observed externally; rather, it is the totality of the constitution of experiences, and "what prevents its ever being an object, ever being 'completely constituted,' is that it is that by which there are objects".[6] The problem of considering the body as an object separate from the subject is the error inherent to the Cartesian

tradition in Western philosophy—that is, the fallacy of securing an impersonal perspective that can maintain its distance from that which is observed. For his part, Merleau-Ponty challenges ontological dualism by presenting consciousness as the relation between self and world, rather than as a position elevated above the physical world.

Within this conception of the Body and consciousness, the mind is not a non-spatial object "in" or the body, but rather becomes the condition of mediation between the body and the world it inhabits. We arrive here at a theme central to Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (*Le Visible et l'invisible, suivi de notes de travail*, first published in 1964): the motion of *écart*,[7] which is used to describe the movement from "the visible to the the invisible", or from the seen world to the unseen mind. The self tries to both *know* itself and *be* itself, insofar as it attempts to possess and know its own embodied consciousness. In this way, the self becomes both an agent of knowledge and an object of its own knowledge, creating an internal division that cannot be overcome. This division or "moving away" from self becomes the foundation of our temporal existence.[8] This phenomenological view of the human subject's relationship to the world posits knowledge as a relation to an experienced body schema, rather than as a synthesis of successive and varied impressions (as suggested by the Kantian tradition). A distinction must therefore be made between *being in* space and time and the dynamic process of *inhabiting* space and time. As David Morris explains "in virtue of my habits, I do not live and move in relation to things as grasped by objective science within geometrical space; I live and move in a space of practical things correlative to my anticipations".[9] Merleau-Ponty's description of this experiential framework is derived from clinical applications of Gestalt psychology, to which I now turn.

GESTALT: THE 'MĀYĀ' OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

The construction of an external environment through a body schema is an emergent, tertiary property of consciousness. This property is a focal point of Gestalt psychology, which provides an important touchstone for Merleau-Ponty's contributions to phenomenology.[10] The fundamental basis of Gestalt is that the mind perceives the world first as a whole, and fills in details later, rather than the world appearing as the synthesis of its parts. For example, one cannot learn a musical instrument by learning each note and time signature from a book, and then proceeding to combine these elements individually into a musical composition. Like reaching for an object, "the movement of my hand towards it, the straightening

of the upper part of the body, the tautening of the leg muscles are enveloped in each other. I desire a certain result and the relevant tasks are spontaneously distributed amongst the appropriate segments".[11] To play the piano, the individual tasks of playing the keys and controlling the pedals, are not dictated by the mind, but performed spontaneously by the synthesised body. Indeed, overthinking the application of any of these elements individually is likely to disrupt the continuation of the others. One has to, so to speak, *be* their hands and feet, rather than a conscious subject attempting to command them. In this way, the specialised function of analytical consciousness is distinct from the holistic perceptions of bodily consciousness. This implies that the internal distinctions of perspective and the ability to discern between objects in the world is an emergent property of mind.

The origins of the theme of holism in Gestalt theory can be found, at least in part, within many already existing traditions outside Europe. The Vedantic concept of Māyā, like the psychological descriptions of Gestalt theory, "signifies the illusory character of the finite world".[12] The philosophical concept of Māyā, meaning illusion or magic, has been associated with many of the philosophical and religious traditions of the Indian sub-continent, but in the context of this discussion its most important development was into the realm of Buddhist psychology. For example, in the Tibetan Mahāyāna system of Śan kara (c. eighth century), or "union with Brahman" (meaning the ultimate cosmological reality), entails "the dissolution of appearances – an end to the realm of *māyā* along with the world of plurality and difference."[13] This begins to build a picture wherein the ordinary awareness of differentiated reality is an illusory apprehension of an holistic reality. This Tibetan tradition later contributed to Zen Buddhist conceptions of the ultimate reality of emptiness, and the manner in which the mind relies on this emptiness in the construction of the awareness of form.[14] These factors of Zen philosophy will be discussed further below in relation to Suzuki's interpretation of Rinzai Zen, but for now, the involvement of Māyā in German philosophy will briefly be considered.

Māyā has been consciously engaged with by many philosophers who were influential in the development of the modern "psychological sciences". As one important point of connection, Douglas Berger has extensively investigated the influence of the Vedantic concept of Māyā on the thought of 19th century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer.[15] Broadly, Schopenhauer conceived of Māyā as an illusory perception of the world: "epistemologically, māyā entails an erroneous perception of things and a fallacious assessment of their nature; axiologically, it is the

inauthentic valuation of world and other; metaphysically, it is the mere phenomenal appearance of a noumenal reality".[16] The concept is later mentioned in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy* (1872), in which the author claims that when the symbolic faculties of mind are roused to their most extreme intensity, the fundamental Oneness of existence demands the "destruction of the Veil of Māyā".[17] Both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche give an interpretation of the Indian concept of Māyā which sees it as an illusory veil separating the self from the world,[18] deceiving the subject as to the nature of their perceptions and obscuring the intrinsic, primal oneness of the world as flesh. In his posthumously published text *Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche also alludes to the holistic perspective which would come to characterise Gestalt thought. Nietzsche purports that "every idea originates through squatting the unequal. As certainly as no one leaf is exactly similar to any other, so certain is it that the idea "leaf" has been formed through an arbitrary omission of these individual differences, through a forgetting of the of the differentiating qualities[19]". This is then posed as a process of dissimulation, the concealment of truth from oneself in service of the preservation of the ego, a self-preserving resistance to the synthesis of all phenomena. Nietzsche's description of this affective-functional relation to the experience of difference is adversarial in posture, yet conceptually similar to the mode of being which Merleau-Ponty terms *écart*, or separation: "This conception derives from *Gestalt* as transcendence, that is, as the horizon of differences, as it is a pregnancy of meaning established in the constitutively unfinished movement of its expression. In the same way, silence marks a discontinuity in continuity that makes reflection possible."[20] This describes the core ambiguity of the experience of being, that of being both a whole and a multitude, a drive to consider oneself as a complete entity, juxtaposed against the lived experience of dynamism in an evolving world. The Vedantic and Buddhist antecedents of European phenomenology are still emerging in detail, and deserve more discussion than can be included here.[21] For now, this discussion has sought to establish a similar non-duality, between whole and discriminated particulars, in the theory of mind across these divided epistemic and cultural contexts.

THE PERSONAL AND THE PRE-PERSONAL

Throughout his phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty identifies a core ambiguity in the human experience: the tension between pre-personal and the personal aspects of consciousness. As indicated above, the pre-personal explicitly pulls the body as *flesh* into the realm of philosophy, and this fleshly body is required to adopt a

certain state in order to be receptive to experiences in the world. Laurence Hass points to the common reflex test, in which a doctor taps a patient's knee in order to elicit a physical reaction. In an active state, with the muscles tensed, the reaction cannot be invoked, so in order to become receptive to the test, the patient must adopt a mode of being that is *object-like*.[22] In this example, the mode of objects is not merely stasis, but rather inertness. If the leg were to remain tensed – that is, actively immobile – the reflex test would be ineffective (this is also why the phenomenon will not occur if the patient is, say, walking). This object-like capacity of the body gives rise to Merleau-Ponty's concept of the *flesh*, or the experience of reciprocal receptivity between the body and the world:

> [Flesh] is primarily a perceptual structure: the encroachment and overlapping of phenomena within perception lead us to the assertion that flesh is a new word for being. As a product of perceptual experience, the origin of flesh is within the perceiving body: sentient bodies *become* flesh through auto-affection, and non-sentient bodies *become* flesh through their being perceived.[23]

This account of the flesh in stark contrast to Jean-Paul Sartre's dualist account of the human subject, wherein the immanent world is said to flow towards or away from the Self, which in turn comes to be oriented toward an Other.[24] This characterisation of intersubjective human relations can be contrasted with Merleau-Ponty's account of a more touch-focused relationship to the external world. Rather than focusing on Self-Other relations, the concept of *flesh* in the work of Merleau-Ponty is best understood in terms of horizons, or the partially revealed aspects of self and world that present as open to perceptual experience: "in reality, beings themselves are present to us as a horizon, that is, there is only so much of a being that is present to us at any given time, and there will always be aspects of the being that are just beyond the horizon of its presence".[25] The horizon as a geographical feature is a meeting point between the earth and sky. One does not experience the world as a consciousness peering out from the domain of the body, but as the unfolding of the world unto the sky, making the self an aspect of the field in which it participates. The use of tools can therefore be seen as an attempt to broaden one's horizons. The subject learns to understand the affect on the tool as an affect on the self, in essence expanding the horizon of self to include the tool in the experience of the body rather than as acted on by the body: "[habit] is always composed of motoric and perceptual elements in an inextricable mixture".[26] For example, through the use of a fork or of chopsticks, one engages a novel inter-

action between the utensil as self and the world. Similarly, the piano becomes an active part of the pianist's body-perception. Further examples are given in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*:

> When the typist performs the necessary movements on the typewriter, these movements are governed by an intention, but the intention does not posit the keys as objective locations. It is literally true that the subject who learns to type incorporates the key bank into his [*sic*] bodily space.[27]

The habit-body is an extension of the body schema and an entwining of both the physical and perceptual modes of the self. It is through this expanding of the experiential horizon that consciousness arises: "Our bodily experience of movement... provides us with a way of access to the world and the object, with a *praktognosia* which has to be recognised as original, and perhaps as primary. My body has its world, or understands its world, without having to make use of any 'symbolic' or 'objectifying function.'"[28] It therefore follows that perceptual synthesis "is not purely cognitive; it is a moving activity".[29] Abstract knowledge can then be conceived of as a kind of static "external world schema" that is imposed over direct experience. This conceptual overlay can take the form of language, political ideology, or mathematical interpretation, but ultimately this abstracted knowledge is secured in relation to bodily knowledge, for it and through it. Hyong-Hyo Kim observes that Merleau-Ponty's philosophy "never leaves phenomenology of body. As a result, the liberation of the ultimate level of truth is not part of it, even though he gets through the logic of dependent co-arising".[30]

Using the works of Merleau-Ponty, this article has so far constructed a view of the emergence of consciousness from the experience of the body. In the following section, I examine Zen, a philosophy-religion derived from intersections of Buddhist and Taoist teachings, which provides accounts of the mind-body relationship that resemble Merleau-Ponty in important ways. In particular, this analysis will continue with the discussion of Zen *satori* in terms of Merleau-Ponty's conception of the personal and pre-personal.

ZEN, ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE DOCTRINE OF NO-MIND

"Buddhism" describes a long enduring and highly varied set of intellectual and cultural traditions, often tied to the social and political contexts of its emergence and popularisation. My focus here will be the work of Suzuki, who in turn draws

on traditions associated with the "Golden Age of Zen" in China,[31] and on subsequent themes in the Japanese Zen schools of thought (specifically the Rinzai tradition). Suzuki's own philosophical and historical studies of Zen practice and development, including the influential essay collection *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (1927), slightly predated the most influential publications of Merleau-Ponty. Suzuki's Rinzai reading has been chosen due to the emphasis this School has placed on direct experiences, the radical nature of the transition into enlightenment and its conception of "no-mind" which will be presented as a dissolution of the personal/pre-personal. The development of Zen as a confluence of Buddhist and Taoist practices and ideas also allows for a conception of transcendence in a non-dualist mode, which opens onto a key concern of the phenomenological tradition.[32] There are further social and political elements to the development of Zen, including those aspects influenced by contact with Confucian thought, that remain beyond the scope of the present article. For the purposes of my discussion, the embodied aspects of the Buddhist and Taoist components of Zen philosophies will be the focus.

Zen Buddhism arrived in Japan by way of the Golden Age of Ch'an Buddhism in China,[33] as one of the Buddhist schools of Mahāyāna.[34] The Indian Buddhist Monk, Bodhidharma, is credited with introducing this specific method of practice during the Liang Dynasty.[35] Despite broad differences between Mahāyāna, Theravada and the earlier Indian Buddhist traditions, these disparate schools are fundamentally engaged with the central unifying concept of Enlightenment.[36] Enlightenment is described by Suzuki in the broader Zen tradition as a kind of 'waking' to the reality of one's existence, or perhaps more accurately, to the reality of one's non-existence. Enlightenment seeks to contest the egoistic sense of self as the foundational source of morality, suffering and evil. This soteriological distinction traces back to traditional Indian accounts of the Buddha's life, where upon attaining Enlightenment (*prajñā*), Gautama Buddha intuited that "the existence of self is an illusion, and there is no wrong in this world, no vice, no evil, except what flows from the assertion of self".[37] Suffering is a unique mode of consciousness which arises from a fundamental misunderstanding, wherein the mirage of a Self blinds us to the undifferentiated continuity of the living-world. If an organism acts destructively towards its environment, in truth it is acting destructively towards itself as an integrated part of that environment. Understood in this way, Enlightenment is not a doctrine to be known, nor a faith to be held, but rather, "involves the reintegration of subject and object until they are once more completely infolded, until object is lost in subject and the appearance of any object

has ended."[38] The varied schools of Buddhism seek to grapple with this psychological and metaphysical paradox, each offering a methodology designed to lead the Self to its own dissolution. Traditionally, these pathways are constructed through scholarly dedication or meditative practices, often a mixture of the two. For his part, Suzuki argued that Zen stands at a radical breaking point with traditional Buddhism.[39] He argues that Zen is the outcome of particular Chinese interpretation of the doctrine of Enlightenment, and that Zen is a pragmatically oriented awakening to the living-world in contradistinction to a static knowledge of it.[40] In an essay derived from his own time as a Zen Buddhist Monk in Japan, 'Practical Methods of Zen Instruction' (1927), Suzuki notes that the often posed question of 'What is Zen?' is difficult to answer, because it involves a kind of qualia that defies scholarly instruction.[41] The teachings of Zen masters, at least in Suzuki's reading of the Rinzai tradition, do not involve instructing one how to live by the virtue of Zen, but rather demonstrate the absurdity of attempting to do otherwise: "Their methods are naturally very uncommon, unconventional, illogical and consequently incomprehensible to the uninitiated."[42] This rejection of canonical, static truth can be traced to the first patriarch and "spiritual father" of Zen, Bodhidharma, who introduced the notion that simply learning doctrines through the emulation of masters is a self defeating process. While not the author of any texts on Buddhism, Bodhidharma's disciples documented and collected accounts of his thoughts on the nature of enlightenment (*prajñā*). One of these texts, translated as the "Bloodstream Sermon" (1987), proceeds in the following way:

> To find a buddha, you have to see your nature. Whoever sees his nature is a buddha. If you don't see your nature, invoking buddhas, reciting sutras, making offerings and keeping precepts are all useless. Invoking buddhas results in good karma, reciting sutras results in a good memory; keeping precepts results in a good rebirth, and making offerings results in future blessings—but no buddha.[43]

It is not enough, therefore, to study the texts of Buddhist sages, or engage exclusively in the practice of *zazen* (座禅), translated from Japanese as "seated meditation", without the corresponding break with dualistic methods of thinking.

Meditation with the aim of a totally "silenced" mind was widespread throughout the early history of Buddhism in China.[44] Some subsequent representations of meditative practice, especially in its wide popularization outside Buddhist contexts, emphasise the notion of a silenced mind as an unblemished mirror which

reflects the world without prejudice. However, Suzuki argues for caution around such characterisations of meditative traditions, lest they reproduce the very dualisms that Buddhist practices seeks to alleviate: silence versus noise, clean versus blemished. In Suzuki's interpretation, Hui-neng, the sixth and final Patriarch of the "Golden Age of Zen", likened this separation of the uncleaned and the cleaned mind to any other dualistic structure:

> They have evidently forgotten that the self-nature is not a somewhat whose Body can be reflected on our consciousness in the way that a mountain can be seen reflected on the smooth surface of a lake. There is no such Body in self-nature, for the Body itself is the Use; besides the Use there is no Body.[45]

Hui-Neng's contention is that the constitution of Body is its Use, and that the Use is the incarnation of Body. A non-dual approach that can be understood in terms of Merleau-Ponty's assertion that the self cannot be apprehended as object, as it is the onto-epistestemic precondition by which there are objects. Suzuki concludes that this onto-epistemology is central to Hui-Neng's metaphysics:

> Self Nature, Otherwise expressed, is self-knowledge; it is not mere being but knowing. We can say that because of knowing itself, it is; knowing is being, and being is knowing. This is the meaning of the statement made by Hui-neng that: 'In original Nature itself there is Prajñā-knowledge, and because of this self-knowledge. Nature reflects itself in itself, which is self-illumination not to be expressed in words.[46]

In Suzuki's reading of Hui-neng, the mind is a tool for "discrimination", with the blunt mind discriminating crudely, while the sharper mind dissects in more subtler nuances: "By 'discrimination,' therefore, is meant analytical knowledge, the relative and discursive understanding which we use in our everyday worldly intercourse and also in our highly speculative thinking."[47] This discrimination, the separation of the world into forms, is the foundation of the illusion of ego, and the ego seeks to concretise these discreet forms in a desperate defence of its own existence as a discreet being. As noted above, Enlightenment is broadly considered an awakening to the reality of one's existence, in order to overcome the illusions of the discriminating mind. Bret Davis argues that this does not exclude plurality, as Enlightenment is still an experience within the midst of the living world: "The true *samādhi* of oneness does not exclude an engagement with the plurality of

things in the world, but entails a non-duality of equality and differentiation and a stillness in the midst of movement."[48] However, this does not mean that practices of discrimination can simply be overcome by pointing to the fictitious nature of dualisms. To remove one half of a dualism is to create two dualisms: "if we cut a bar magnet in halves, so as to take off its north pole, we find only that each half has now north and south poles as before."[49] Similarly, to cleanse the mind from impurity to purity via meditative states, conceived in opposition to non-meditative states, is merely to expand the dualisms in operation. To articulate a non-duality in language, a system of division and classification, is to make of it a dualism, a Zen and not-Zen.[50] In the spirit of avoiding this duality, Hui-neng propounded a doctrine of sudden awakening, *satori*, where the self-nature is discovered ontologically, rather than rationally or epistemologically. The final section of this article will examine the relationship between *satori* in Suzuki and *flesh* in Merleau-Ponty.

SATORI: DISSOLUTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS INTO FLESH

In the Rinzai tradition, *satori* can be broadly understood as the experience or understanding of *kenshõ*, the realisation of non-distinction between self and world, the fundamental integration of organism with environment, transcendence with immanence, body with mind.[51] This is demonstrated in an encounter between the sixth patriarch, Hui-Neng, and a monk from a rival school, Zhicheng, wherein Hui-Neng is reported to have "Only when there is not a single *dharma*[52] that can be apprehended can one posit the myriad *dharma*s. To understand this doctrine is called 'the body of the Buddha'. It is also called *bodhi* and nirvana, and emancipated perceptual understanding".[53] From this point of view, Hui-Neng is critical of what he sees as quietistic meditation, which makes the error of trying to apprehend purity as if from a distance, to cling to it as a thing. In his commentary, Suzuki argues less for purity than for "the opening of *satori*, or at acquiring a new point of view as regards life and the universe." In phenomenological terms, we could understand this a heightened awareness of the world's affectivity to and through oneself.[54]

The relationship between the outcome of the moment of *satori*, and Merleau-Ponty's conception of *flesh* is striking. Recall the above descriptions of *flesh* as an affectivity, where "sentient bodies *become* flesh through auto-affection, and non-sentient bodies *become* flesh through their being perceived."[55] This reorientation from an intellectual to an affective relationship between subject and world, is how Suzuki engages with the purpose of the apparently paradoxical Koans which are

posed to Zen disciples, to demonstrate the lack of ability with which logical and analytical language can approach the fundamental reciprocity and inter-relativity of the living world. This can be seen in the famous koan from the Platform Sutra, in which Hui-Neng encounters two monks arguing over whether a flag is moving or it is the wind that is moving. Hui-Neng responds that it is neither, but rather the mind that moves.[56]

Further, for Suzuki's affective interpretation of Zen, the use of the koan should be read in the context of "Ch'an meditation [which] is not aimed at cutting off the empirical world, as some Indian yoga systems may be. On the contrary, it seeks to engage deeply in experience by minimizing mental analysis and evaluation."[57] This is to say, that the koan is an instrument of Buddhist practice, and is thus informed by the concrete factors of dharma. As in Hui-Neng's above commentary, there cannot be only one true meaning of a koan, as there cannot be only one true dharma. Koans then, are a performative method of affective engagement between the cognitive subject and the lifeworld as it appears to that subject. Stephen Heine's analysis reveals that within the koan, "the encounter might oppose two kinds of religiosity, one communing with spiritual realities in a *mysterium tremendum* and the other dismissing transcendent symbols and advocating the here and now; but the distinction between the two tended to be overcome by their interplay in the dialogue as a whole."[58] Suzuki's assertion that the koan is fundamentally incomprehensible has been interpreted as a continuation of the political traditions of iconoclasm that abounded in the foundation of Zen practice in China,[59] however in terms of this discussion of the embodiment of Zen and the phenomenology of practice, it is fair to view Suzuki's claim of incomprehensibility in terms of the the affective dispersion of an analytic 'distance' from the world as experienced in the 'sudden awakening' associated with the Rinzai school. It is incomprehensible only in the manner of qualia, that is, untranslatable into linguistic terms.

The Koan illuminate the limitations of reasoning that begins with empty or incoherent abstractions. In doing so, the Koan orient the mind towards the generative space of non-being, a dissolution of the *personal* ("being") into the *pre-personal* ("becoming"). Once the self is recognised as pre-conditioned by the affective and reciprocal 'opening up' of body and world into each other, the emptiness of non-being takes form in a dialectic with the living world and the transience of perpetual becoming is no longer a source of existential anxiety. Rather, non-being is generative emptiness that "enables the forms of reality to be such as they really are, to be in their 'suchness'."[60] This "emancipated perceptual understanding"

is pre-conscious being, separate from attachments of conscious discrimination.[61] The primary ground of being is the dialectic of perception, the motion of the visible to the invisible through which the world of appearances is constituted. It is against the perception of appearances as permanent, particularly the appearance of the ego, that *satori* orients one's experience, to borrow from Suzuki. The great emptiness of *écart* is experienced as the relief which allows subjectivity to emerge in contrast to the appearance of perception. Hui-Neng explains that "one's enlightenment (one's Way, *tao*) must flow freely. How could it be stagnated? When the mind does not reside in the *dharmas*, one's enlightenment flows freely."[62] The normative aims of Buddhist practice, the cessation of suffering, or the cultivation of spiritual being, are thus predicated on this moment of radical re-orientation to the pre-personal body, and the bodily habituation of the intimate being-world dialectic. This separates the aim of Buddhism from Western interpretations of spiritual practice, disregarding the search for one's "true self" or higher being and rather aiming to re-invest one's being in the primary ground of self knowledge. This puts Merleau-Ponty's rejection of classical psychology in the same ontological space as the experience of *satori*:

> The body catches itself from the outside engaged in a cognate process; it tries to touch itself while being touched, and initiates 'a kind of reflection' which is sufficient to distinguish it from objects, of which I can indeed say that they 'touch' my body, but only when it is inert, and therefore without ever catching it unawares in its exploratory function.[63]

This is the revelation, the emancipation from "thingness", the realisation of one's "suchness" as part of an inter-affective whole, that is achieved by *satori*: "Satori may be defined as an intuitive looking into the nature of things in contradistinction to the analytical or logical understanding of it".[64] Through this revelation, one comes to inhabit the living world, rather than to apprehend it, and the discriminating, analytic consciousness is reintegrated into the functionality of the body-affectivity, the pre-personal *praktignosia*.

CONCLUSION: INTERCULTURAL PHENOMENOLOGIES OF THE BODY

This article has sought to elaborate on similarities on perceptual modalities in both Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology and Suzuki's interpretation of Ch'an and Zen Buddhism. While few direct dialogues exist between these two disciplines, some historical links have been identified in the work of the German precursors

to existential philosophy. In constructing this link, central concepts from Merleau-Ponty have been juxtaposed with Suzuki's reading of traditions taught by the Zen patriarch, Hui-Neng. The striking similarities include a perceptual-substance as the framework of being, *flesh* in the work of Merleau-Ponty and the living world of *Prājnā* in the Zen canon. Further, both systems of thought emphasise a direct engagement with the world that involves inhabiting the environment, rather than encountering it as an externality.

Clearly, Merleau-Ponty and Suzuki engaged with different fields of thought, and were situated within thoroughly distinct cultural and linguistic contexts. Some minor cross-cultural points have been raised, including the impact of Buddhism on German phenomenology and psychology, and the common apprehension of a 'psychological intermediary' in the perspectives of Gestalt psychology and the Indian philosophical concept of Māya. However, these scholarly links have been elaborated elsewhere, and this study has aimed particularly at the role of the body in the respective ontologies of Merleau-Ponty and Suzuki. This comparative phenomenology of the body allows intellectual bridges to be built, as well as allowing for a reflective examination of the silences inherent to our own accounts of experience. This study in particular has illuminated the knowledge of the body and its critical importance to the outcome of philosophical inquiry. As one's consciousness ceases the effort of distinguishing itself from experience, to become the seeing, rather than that which sees, a fundamental reconciliation with the world is made, on the level of primal, pre-personal *praktignosia*. Whether in response to the spiritual afflictions of attachment and suffering, or in the nihilistic field of wartime Europe, the fundamental afflictions of philosophy and psychology that plague the conscious subject are best resolved on the level of body-world affectivity.

> ADRIAN MOORE is an author and PhD candidate in the school of philosophy at the University of Queensland. His thesis examines Friedrich Nietzsche and Albert Camus' revaluations of morality within nihilist politics, with particular emphasis on their use of non-dual structures of aesthetics and metaphysics from classical Eastern and Hellenic cultures.

NOTES

1. René Descartes. *Meditations and Other Metaphysical Writings*. Camberwell: Penguin Classics, 2000, 25-27.

2. Descartes, 148-150.

3. Esben Andreasen, *Popular Buddhism in Japan: Shin Buddhist Religion & Culture*. Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1998, 56.

4. Hu Shih, "Ch'an (Zen) Buddhism in China Its History and Method." *Philosophy East and West* 3 (1953, 3-24).

5. Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1994, 86.

6. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1965, 92.

7. 'Gap,' 'difference' or 'disparity' in French.

8. 'It is in better understanding perception (and hence imperception)— i.e.: understand perception as differentiation, forgetting as undifferentiation. The fact that one no longer sees the memory = not a destruction of a psychic material which would be the sensible, but its disarticulation which makes there be no longer a separation (écart), a relief. This is the night of forgetting. Understand that the "to be conscious" = to have a figure on a ground, and that it disappears by disarticulation – the figureground distinction introduces a third term between the "subject" and the "object." It is that separation (écart) first of all that is the perceptual meaning. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible followed by working notes*. USA: Northwestern University Press, 1968, 197.

9. D. Morris, 'Body' in *Merleau-Ponty: Key concepts*. UK: Acumen Publishing, 2008, 118.

10. A. Harrison, "'At Arm's Length': The Interaction Between Phenomenology and Gestalt Psychology" in *Phenomenology and Science*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 2.

11. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 149.

12. S. Radhakrishnan, "The Vedanta Philosophy and the Doctrine of Māyā." *International Journal of Ethics* 24 (1914, 431-51).

13. Douglas Duckworth, "Tibetan Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna" in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 106.

14. B. Davis, "Forms of Emptiness in Zen" in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

15. D Berger, *"The Veil of Māyā": Schopenhauer's System and Early Indian Thought*. Binghamton: Global Academic Publishing, 2004.

16. Berger, 63.

17. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*. London: Penguin Classics, 1993, 21.

18. There were additional comments about Indian philosophies in the Schopenhaurian scholarship with which Nietzsche would have been familiar, including the works of Hartmann, Dühring, Mainländer, and Bahnsen. For insightful commentary on Nietzsche's encounters with texts on Indian thought, and the relative lack of exposure to Chinese or Japanese Buddhism, see Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Reading About Eastern Philosophy" in *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 28 (2004, 3-35).

19. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Truth and Falsity in an Extra-Moral Sense*. New York: Institute of General Semantics, 1992, 62-63.

20. Maria Carmen López Sáenz, "An Approach to Comparative Phenomenology: Nishida's Place of Nothingness and Merleau-Ponty's Negativity." *Philosophy East and West* 68, no. 2 (2018, 508).

21. Of particular interest is the research of Stephan Atzert, who has extensively studied the relationships between Buddhist thought, Schopenhauer and Freud.

22. L. Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2008, 80-81.

23. Emphasis in original. Bannon's paper gives several interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's conception of *flesh* in the context of environmental philosophy: his study goes on to criticise *flesh* as a perceptual phenomenon and endorses a Heideggerian ethic based in 'wildness' as a better understanding of the relationship between *flesh* and nature. B. Bannon, 'Flesh and Nature: Understanding Merleau-Ponty's relational ontology' in *Research in Phenomenology* 41 (2008, 341).

24. J-P Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*. Abingdon: Routledge Classics, 2003, 278.

25. Bannon, 340.

26. E. Casey, "Habitual Body and Memory in Merleau-Ponty" in *Man and World*. Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1984, 285.

27. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 145.

28. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 140-141.

29. Morris, 116.

30. Hyong-Hyo Kim, "Merleau-Pontean "Flesh" and Its Buddhist Interpretation" in *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*. USA: Lexington Books, 2009, 43.

31. John C. H. Wu, *The Golden Age of Zen*, Teipi: United Publishing Center, 1975.

32. See also Jay Goulding, "Merleau-Ponty and Asian Philosophy" in *Merleau-Ponty and Buddhism*. USA: Lexington Books, 2009, 243.

33. Ch'an is the Chinese pronunciation of the common character for Zen (禅).

34. Mahāyāna: A Pāli word translating roughly to 'The Great Wheel' [Emmanuel, Steven, M. 'Introduction' in *A companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 2.] which denotes the forms of Buddhism which spread eastern and northern Asia, in contrast to the 'Southern Buddhist' school of Theravāda, which translates to 'The Doctrine of the Elders'. [Andrew Skilton, 'Theravāda' in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, 72.]

35. D.T Suzuki, "History of Zen Buddhism from Bodhidharma to Hui-Nêng (Yeno)" in *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. London: Souvenir Press, 1927, 176.

36. Sanskrit: प्रज्ञ (*prajñā*). Japanese: 見性 (*kenshō*), 悟り (*satori*). Mandarin: 開悟 (*Kai Wu*).

37. P. Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1994, 41.

38. T. McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative studies in Greek and Indian philosophies*. New York: Allworth Press, 2002, 575.

39. Suzuki, "History of Zen Buddhism", 163-164.

40. Suzuki, "History of Zen Buddhism", 163-164.

41. D.T. Suzuki, "Practical Methods of Zen Instruction" in *Essays in Zen Buddhism*. London: Souvenir Press, 1927, 267.

42. Suzuki, "Practical Methods of Zen Instruction", 271.

43. R. Pine, *The Zen Teaching of Bodhidharma*. New York: North Point Press, 1987, 11-13.

44. Davis, 199-200.

45. D. T. Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-mind*. Maine: Weiser Books, 1972, 43.

46. Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-mind*, 40.

47. Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-mind*, 51.

48. Davis, 202.

49. A. Watts, *Tao: The Watercourse Way*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1975, 95.

50. Ronald Green, "East Asian Buddhism" in *A Companion to Buddhist Philosophy*. Hoboken: Wiley-

Blackwell, 2013, 124.

51. Green, 123.

52. Sanskrit (धर्म). In Buddhism, *dharma* refers to the concrete factors of existence: "not so much an ethical concept as one of cosmological theory, *dharma* bears some relationship to the Greek *logos*, meaning the principle or law governing the universe". *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy,* 2nd rev. ed., s.v. "Dharma."

53. J. McRae [trans], *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch.* California: Numata Centre for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2000, 93-94.

54. Suzuki, "On Satori - The revelation of a new truth in Zen Buddhism" in *Essays in Zen Buddhism.* London: Souvenir Press, 1927, 237.

55. Bannon, 341, emphasis in original.

56. McRae, 38.

57. Green, 123.

58. John C. Maraldo, "Liberating the Koan" in *Journal of Chinese Religions* 31 (2003), 171.

59. Maraldo, 173.

60. Davis, 190.

61. J. Kockelmans, "Merleau-Ponty on Sexuality" in *Journal of Existentialism* 6 (1965, 13).

62. McRae, 57.

63. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 93

64. Suzuki, "On Satori," 230.

radical dialectics in benjamin and fanon: on recognition and rupture

anisha sankar

Elsewhere I have cited at length a few incidents culled from the history of colonial expeditions ... it seems that I was pulling old skeletons out of the closet.
—Aimé Césaire, Discourse on Colonialism, 1950

INTRODUCTION

As a contribution to broader inquiries into epistemic decolonization and anti-colonial politics, this article examines radical dialectics in both Frantz Fanon and Walter Benjamin, two theorists whose work can be read as revolving around the notion of rupture. The argument proceeds in three parts. The first part focuses on Fanon and Benjamin's respective treatments of recognition, and their turns away from narratives that reinforce recognition on the terms of those in power. Second, the article turns toward two different kinds of recognition: recognition in good faith and recognition in bad faith. I argue that recognition in good faith must rely on a notion of rupture, and that for both Fanon and Benjamin, rupture offers a way to break away from structures of power. Both theorists also share

similar views regarding the nature of dialectics at a "standstill," in which rupture is suspended, hindering dialectical historical movement. Third, the article shows that the convergence between Fanon and Benjamin's respective notions of recognition and rupture can strengthen each other's theoretical investigations, and that this convergence may have implications for contemporary anti-colonial politics. I refer to Glen Coulthard's thesis of decolonization to contextualize this argument, and to illustrate the potential relevance of Benjamin in an anti-colonial project. Coulthard's thesis can be read as putting into contemporary practice both Fanon's demand for the rupture of a Manichaean colonial reality, as well as Benjamin's notion of messianic time. Finally, I offer some concluding remarks on the nature of dialectical reason, taking into consideration Fanon and Benjamin's contributions to its revision, and its relevance for anti-colonial politics today.

It is important to note two issues at the onset of this discussion. The first is that, by placing Benjamin and Fanon in dialogue, there is a risk of simply using a European philosopher to "legitimate" Fanon's political thought. I make this clear in the last section of this article, where I clarify the opposite sentiment: Benjamin's political project can only continue to be relevant if we are able to put him in relation to an anti-colonial politics.

Second, I refer to the "anti-colonial" throughout this article. There currently exists a vast breadth of decolonial, postcolonial and anti-colonial methods that belong to different epistemological and political projects. In this context, I have characterized this particular dialectical method as "anti-colonial" in the spirit of a politics that acknowledges the convergences and differences between decolonial and postcolonial thought (both influenced, at least in part, by Frantz Fanon formative scholarship), but remains committed to the abolition of colonial projects and colonial thinking as a key task of critical inquiry.

I. ON RECOGNITION

The underlying notion of recognition is central to the dialectical method. For both Fanon and Benjamin, it is recognition—or more specifically, the absence of recognition—that forms the foundation for a radical dialectics. George Ciccariello-Maher points to Fanon regularly being pigeonholed into recognition studies, and suggests that a more accurate ascription would be "nonrecognition studies."[1] Explicit in Fanon is a reconsideration of the Hegelian dialectic of recognition that is reworked to suit the colonial landscape, in which nonrecognition is a critical

component. In Benjamin, the absence of recognition is explored in relation to its historical erasure, and the emancipatory potential of an authentic recognition manifests for Benjamin through the concept of redemption. Through investigation of this theme of nonrecognition, we can better understand the specificity of rupture in each author's work.

The observation by Ciccariello-Maher contests the move made by contemporary scholarship to collapse Fanon's narrative of decolonization into a framework of recognition. This elision of Fanon's work into a familiar Hegelian paradigm distorts his key reformulation of dialectical thought and dilutes his radicalism. To read Fanon through a framework of recognition can suggest (quite misleadingly) that the struggle for indigenous self-determination in a context of settler colonialism requires vying for legitimacy through the political order created by colonialism itself. For example, Charles Taylor, a prominent theorist of the politics of recognition, describes recognition as a "vital human need," and argues that misrecognition (say, for marginalised groups and indigenous peoples) can lead to debilitating self-hatred.[2] However, to put the focus on recognition can take away from the asymmetrical relationship of power the oppressed share with the system of colonial power. Rather than advocating for mutual recognition, Fanon could be described as a theorist of *rupture*. One site of rupture exists for Fanon at the ontological level. In other words, the site of being becomes a site of contradiction and struggle for the colonized subject, as they lack "ontological resistance" in relationships under conditions of racism and/or colonialism.[3]

Fanon's idea of ontological resistance and the corollary notion of rupture comes directly from his reconsideration of the Hegelian master/slave dialectic. In G.W.F. Hegel's formulation of the dialectic, there is an "absolute reciprocity" inherent to the relationship between the so-called master and slave, which entails their codependency.[4] Fanon understands recognition in the Hegelian formulation as follows:

> It is in the degree to which I go beyond my own immediate being that I apprehend the existence of the other as a natural and more than natural reality. If I close the circuit, if I prevent the accomplishment of movement in two directions, I keep the other within himself. Ultimately, I deprive him even of this being-for-itself. [5]

Reciprocity (as being-for-others) is inherent to a smooth, functioning Hegelian dialectic of recognition. The status of the colonized subject, however, makes absolute reciprocity and codependency unattainable. This is a direct result from the material violence and dispossession that colonialism relies on, as well as the invasive psycho-affective implications of racist ideologies. In a passage that has become a key touchstone for his relationship to dialectic thought, Fanon writes that

> for Hegel, there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work … The Negro wants to be like the master. Therefore he is less independent than the Hegelian slave. In Hegel the slave turns away from the master and turns toward the object. Here the slave turns toward the master and abandons the object.[6]

The ontological subjugation, as an effect of the individual and institutional power of colonialism, reduces the colonized subject to a status of "less-than-being". The master does not see an independent self-consciousness in the colonial subject, but a source of exploitable labour.[7] As a result, the affirmation of selfhood derived from mutual recognition is unattainable within racist settler colonial societies, unless this relational structure of exploitation is dissolved or overcome.

However, the racist dimensions of settler colonialism are not limited simply to an exploitative division of labour. Fanon articulates the psycho-affective transformation of the individual under colonialism with the following logic:

> There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men.
> There is another fact: Black men want to prove to White men, at all costs, the richness of their thoughts, the equal value of their intellect.[8]

The psycho-affective transformation undergone here is such that the colonized subject internalizes the white-black dynamic, in places where "white" and "black" have become the categories through which the coloniser and colonised have come to understand themselves. The desire of the colonised to be recognized grows from within this internalization, and relies on a demand not to overthrow the system that enforces this dynamic, but rather on a desire to become the Master themselves. For Fanon, this kind of Hegelian recognition forecloses the possibility of rupture, and without rupture, there cannot be a breaking of the colonial relationship that creates the need for recognition itself. From this viewpoint, the

dialectics of recognition are Eurocentric, insofar as they are unable to accommodate the moment of rupture and contradiction, which results from a misunderstanding of, or refusal to engage with, the relationship between settler and colonized in a colonial landscape.

Ciccariello-Maher has already described of Fanon's dialectics as staying truer to the spirit rather than to the word of Hegel, in reworking the dialectics of recognition to suit a colonial context.[9] Wendy Brown has also drawn a parallel regarding Benjamin and Karl Marx, gesturing to Benjamin as a theorist who offers a "reenactment" of Marx, rather than departing from him.[10] This dual ascription is on the basis of their commitment to a dialectical conception of history, but emphasises the fluidity with which they use dialectical analysis as a malleable tool, rather than a rigid methodology. Both critique Hegel and Marx whether implicitly or explicitly, while remaining true to the central concern of a dialectical political praxis. The relevance of Ciccariello-Maher and Brown's comments points to Fanon and Benjamin's shared concern with dialectical thought. Where Fanon's concern is initially with the individual's ontological negation, Benjamin's concern is with the contradictions inherent to the myth of progress, to which I now turn.

Benjamin pinponts the same weaknesses of a Eurocentric dialectical methodology as Fanon, but instead targets the teleology and determinism embedded within the dialectic of Marxist historical materialism. This offers not only a radicalisation of the dialectic methodology, but achieves this following the same formula as Fanon's critique of the dialectics of recognition. In this regard, I argue that Benjamin, alongside Fanon, can be read as a theorist of rupture.

Benjamin's use of Marxism arises particularly from a focus on class and historical consciousness. It is important to note here the influence of György Lukács, whose writings on historical materialism stand as a point of reference for his critique. Benjamin aligns himself with Lukács, with both holding that the inner contradictions of capitalism will necessarily implode, but that the question remains whether this will be as a historical inevitability, or at the will of the working class. If the social relations of production within capitalism are to be overturned, Benjamin argues this must be at the hands of the working class, which is contingent on the attainment of class consciousness.

Benjamin's approach to historical transformation puts an emphasis on human agency, and contains within it a critique of scientific Marxism. Lukács summa-

rizes scientific Marxism as follow:

> The essence of scientific Marxism consists... in the realization that the real motor forces of history are independent of man's [*sic*] (psychological) consciousness of them... history is precisely *the history of these institutions,* of the changes they undergo *as* institutions which bring men together in societies. Such institutions start by controlling economic relations between men and go on to permeate all human relations.[11]

The scientific Marxist characterization of history is an inadequate explanation for Benjamin, because it relies on a linear and teleological conception of time as constituted through epochs. In *The Arcades Project*, Benjamin writes that "one of the methodological objectives of this work [is] to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress."[12] Benjamin retains a commitment to a dialectical conception of history, but sees the weaknesses of the narrative of progress to which it remains parasitic as needing reconceptualization. This leads to his secularization of the concept of messianic time, which is used to contest linear historical narrativisation. Messianity is a conception of time that understands the entire past and present as now-time (*jetztzeit*): "History is the subject of a construction whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time [*jetztzeit*]... [a] leap in the open air of history is the dialectical leap Marx understood as revolution".[13]

We can link Benjamin's interest in history and his critique of linear historicism to the problems of recognition and rupture discussed above. Bound up in Benjamin's notion of messianicity is the idea of redemption, which he describes as a "secret index" encoded in the past.[14] The political implication is that revolutions, as authentic forms of political transformation, redeem past struggles and conflict. Benjamin's concern for the victims of history—those not lost to the past but waiting like ghosts for redemption—plays out in a desire for collective emancipation, which cannot happen on the terms of historicism. This is because the narrative of progress here undermines the capacity for emancipation by shutting off the past, effectively sealing it away as chapters in history. Consider Benjamin's sixth thesis in "On the Concept of History," in which he states that "articulating the past historically does not mean recognizing it "the way it really was. It means appropriating a memory as it flashes up in a moment of danger."[15] For Benjamin, the passive nature of historical contemplation is insufficient for a radical politics. By focusing on nonrecognition, and turning to rupture instead, we can see how Ben-

jamin looks to radically rework historicism instead of substituting the direction of its gaze. It is not through acknowledgement of historical injustice within the framework of linear progress towards Europe that can ever truly redeem the past. Recognition must be on the basis of a radically reformulated conception of time, that is not history *per se*, but now-time, with the emphasis placed on messianic power as a radically active force.

Benjamin expands on the theoretical move described above throughout *On the Concept of History.* He configures his critique around social democracy: for Benjamin, social democracy wants to be recognised by the mechanisms of power, so conforms to, and assimilates into, the doctrine of progress. This has three dangerous consequences which lead to social democracy being understood as a threat. Firstly, the social democrats faith in technological development was mistaken as "constituting a political achievement."[16] Modernisation is therefore taken to mean progress at the expense of its effect on workers, ignoring how technological development and its commodities could actually be of benefit to the working class. Secondly, in "recognizing only the progress in mastering nature, not the retrogression of society," the social democrats subscribed to the domination and exploitation of nature, and by extension, labour.[17] Progress is measured without consideration of nature and labour, as its narrative is used teleologically and in blind faith. Finally, social democracy "already displays the technocratic features that later emerge in fascism."[18] Benjamin here acknowledges that the culmination of the subscription to the narrative of progress in a totalising move to power by way of the exploitation of natural resources and human labour. To the extent that the social democrats desire recognition as a means to an end, they subscribe to the ideological narratives dictated by power—in this case, the myth of progress.

There can be no resistance within the desire for recognition by the frameworks handed down by structures of power. A total break with the system is needed. In Benjamin's words, a "state of emergency" must be declared.[19] Historical consciousness, as an emancipatory objective for a radical politics, must take on a radically new meaning that locates it entirely outside of the given framework of progress. An entirely new comprehension of time and history must be found, and here Benjamin—like Fanon—turns to the notion of rupture.

II. ON RUPTURE

This article has referred thus far to recognition and nonrecognition without prop-

erly clarifying what authentic recognition might look like. To do this, I will here define recognition as being either in "bad faith" or in "good faith". Popularised in the work of French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, "bad faith" is considered as a form of active deception, as lying to oneself.[20] In this sense, it is an escape from what Sartre considers to be the 'choice' of freedom. Recognition in bad faith suppresses the point of rupture as a means of reconciling combative struggle. It depends on being recognized on the terms of the oppressor, and thus recognition in "bad faith" is a "choice" against a break with the systems of power. Drawing on both Sartre and Fanon, Lewis Gordon argues that

> from the existential phenomenological standpoint, freedom and humanity are regarded as one. Since freedom and human being are regarded as one, we can translate bad faith into more prosaic language as the effort to hide from human beings. The effort to hide from human beings takes at least two forms: rejection of the humanity in others and rejection of the humanity in oneself.[21]

Gordon's definition helps to establish a politics of recognition in bad faith as a "rejection of humanity" in oneself and others. In contrast, the concept of recognition in good faith relies on nonrecognition and therefore rupture. Good faith requires a complete break with the systems that have birthed oppression, and allows for the reinstatement of humanity to both colonized peoples and the victims of history—the subjects of Fanon and Benjamin's concerns, respectively. Rupture, as they key to recognition "good faith," characterizes moments of combative struggle within dialectical analysis. Fanon and Benjamin both identify in such rupture the quality of being 'suspended' in history and locked in time; that is to say, each envisions dialectics at a standstill. Rupture acts here as a marker of weakness within the linear thread of material history, providing the vantage point from which transformation may be pushed forth. Good faith therefore has a temporal dimension—it arrests historical narrative, while bad faith succumbs to it.

In this context, let's re-examine Fanon's treatment of rupture. For Fanon, recognition in good faith is a politicized phenomenon, given that a material situation governs one's capacity to realise one's freedom. Rupture exists as an active, combative tension at the centre of a contradiction of forces, but can be trapped at the points where its realization is suppressed. But Fanon's understanding is such that colonialism induces a dialectical stasis that renders rupture immobile. To this extent, there is a temporal dimension latent within Fanon's treatment of rupture.

Recognition in bad faith follows a logic of substitution. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, this theme is developed in Fanon's warnings against neocolonialism. The period post-independence in an anti-colonial struggle, he cautions, carries with it the risk of the "native" bourgeoisie substituting itself in the gap left by the former settler colonial bourgeoisie: "there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place."[22] The logic of substitution helps to determine the way in which the colonial world is "a motionless, Manichaean world,"[23] and for this reason, Fanon warns that "independence … is not a word which can be used as an exorcism."[24] In this way, Fanon reaches the following conclusion:

> The immobility to which the native is condemned can only be called into question if the native decides to put an end to the history of colonization—the history of pillage—and to bring into existence the history of the nation—the history of decolonization.[25]

Decolonization for Fanon is synonymous with a dialectical movement of history and must follow the "dialectical requirement" of rupture if recognition in good faith is to be achieved.[26] Without rupture, dialectics are at a stand-still: "Today, we are at present at the stasis of Europe. Comrades, let us free from this motionless movement where gradually dialectic is changing to the logic of equilibrium."[27] Focusing on the content of rupture, Fanon turns to revolutionary violence. Fanon's opening discussion of *The Wretched of the Earth* emphasises that "violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his interiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect."[28] He means, of course, violence *to* the structure of colonialism. This conception of violence frees colonized subjects from the dialectical stasis to which racism has confined them, acting as a medium through which rupture functions. Fanon's notion of violence serves the same purpose of reinvigorating dialectical movement through the formation of collective bonds: "the practice of violence binds [colonized subjects] together as a whole, since each individual forms a violent link in the great chain, a part of the great organism of violence which has surged upwards in reaction to the settler's violence in the beginning."[29] Collective violence acts here with a rehabilitative dimension, building solidarity and a sense of national consciousness in opposing the colonial enemy as a nation. Violence that gives way to a national movement derives its strength by totalising the "weaker" efforts toward liberation that came before it, and asserts itself as combative struggle in the face of its passive counterpart of recognition in bad faith. In this context, Fanon's

discussion on violence highlights the importance in privileging rupture, and the movement of history *through* rupture, within dialectical analysis.

Furthermore, Fanon argues that a radical multiplicity of ruptures might emerge from the same historical dialectic, which distinguishes his thought clearly from progressive discourses (especially those inspired by Marxist-Leninism) that suppose a linearity of "revolutionary" struggle. This is made possible through the method by which Fanon reconsiders Hegel's master/slave dialectic, and by his demand to move away from the epistemologies and institutions established by an imperial Europe. This new history must be on the terms of what, at the time of Fanon's writing, was described as "the Third World": "if we want humanity to advance a step farther, if we want to bring it up to a different level than that which Europe has shown it, then we must invent and we must make discoveries."[30] This is written as a warning to not follow in the wake of Europe, which leaves behind it "an avalanche of murders."[31]

We can now consider similarities and differences between Fanon's and Benjamin's accounts of rupture and recognition in good faith. If rupture is a moment of tension built from the contradictions that inform it, then for Benjamin, the essence of rupture within history is understood in the following way: "where we see the appearance of a chain of events, he [the Angel of History] sees one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before his feet."[32] Returning to the idea of dialectics at a standstill, dialectical movement for Benjamin is frozen on the grounds that the rupture is only seen by the Angel of History, as rupture is suppressed by means of the myth of progress. Regarding the notion of revolutionary agency in Fanon, Benjamin offers an equally powerful emphasis on pushing the point of rupture to its absolute breaking point:

> Marx said that revolutions are the locomotive of world history. But perhaps things are very different. It may be that revolutions are the act by which the human race travelling in the train applies the emergency brake.[33]

To extend the metaphor, the train does not move dialectically, but is trapped in a movement that renders its movement neither forwards nor backwards. The emergency break to which Benjamin refers is the moment at which the rupture suppressed can no longer maintain its hold. At this point, rupture gives way to messianic time, and historical chapters seemingly sealed away in the past return with full force into the immediacy of the present: "what characterises revolution-

ary classes at their moment of action is the awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode."[34] The explosion is what Benjamin calls a "dialectical leap," a term used in his analyses of the French Revolution and its self-perception as Rome incarnate. According to Benjamin, this is a "tiger's leap into the past. Such a leap, however, takes place in an arena where the ruling class gives the commands. The same leap in the open air of history is the dialectical leap Marx understood as revolution".[35]

Benjamin's convergence with Fanon can be established on the basis of the shared temporal specificity of their treatment of rupture. Benjamin understands without rupture, nothing is able to change. Despite appearing to move forward, the 'progressive' train in Benjamin's metaophor is actually at a stand-still. Bad faith uses the myth of progress to look backwards down the narrow, linear path of the tracks that produced oppression and exploitation in the first instance. By contrast, the explosive nature of rupture immediately collapses the myth of progress. Messianic time demands recognition in good faith, in order for the recognition of history and historical injustice to be truly redemptive.

In a similar vein to Fanon, Benjamin also looks to violence as a political phenomenon that emphasises the explosive nature of rupture. This is specifically manifest in the idea of divine violence, which enacts justice in its intervening role in institutionalized or structural violence.[36] It exists outside of any legally endorsed violence, and in its spontaneous bursts, it makes visible the injustice of existing legal frameworks. Although divine violence for Benjamin cannot be a means to an end, it still has historical significance in signifying a collective will to political change. To this end, divine violence exists in parallel to Fanon's conceptions of revolutionary agency, which manifests spontaneously outside of a well-articulated political project of resistance. It is for this reason that Fanon looks to the rural peasantry as the revolutionary class. Because of their physical isolation from the cities, Fanon points out that the constitution of the native peasantry "obeys its own logic, and neither the brimming activity of the missionaries nor the decrees of the central government can check its growth".[37] In Benjamin, divine violence reveals a momentary flash in the underlying sentiments of an oppressed population, pure in its opposition to all laws.[38] Both Fanon and Benjamin converge in terms of the momentary, explosive nature of rupture, particularly in terms of its reliance on spontaneity.

The critique of the Eurocentric myth of progress must be central to any Fanonian analysis. Through the pervasive discourse of delivering colonised peoples from "savagery" towards "civilization," colonising logics of progress have paved the way for imperial subjugation. The metaphor of Benjamin's "emergency brake of history" represents one way to think through new sites of non-teleological rupture, and may be a valauble touchstone for extending Fanon's project of developing a distinctly anti-colonial dialectics. To look then to Fanon's demand for a Manichaean inversion of coloniality requires dislocating ourselves from a narrative of progress. In this context, we can place in conversation Benjamin's theory of history as messianic time with Fanon's notion of a rupture suspended. The following section links this conversation to contemporary scholarship on decolonial thinking and politics, focusing on the work of Lewis Gordona and Glenn Coultard, who each rework Fanonian themes in important ways.

III. CONVERGENCE IN THOUGHT

In *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man,* Lewis Gordon makes clear an intention to not draw a causal relationship between the philosophies of Fanon and Sartre, stating that "it is not our intent to continue the long tradition of treating the thoughts of black philosophers as derivatives of white ones."[39] The same problem of subordinated theoretical identity applies to this discussion on the convergence in thought between Fanon and Benjamin. To avoid an attempt at trying to further legitimize Fanon using yet another philosopher, we need to recognise that Fanon does not necessarily need Benjamin to strengthen this thesis on decolonization, as he has already incoporated into this a dialectical theory of history. It may therefore be more fruitful to consider what Fanon can do for Benjamin. While Benjamin has exposed the contradiction of the myth of progress, using Fanon to pull him into postcolonial analysis further strengthens the politicized, secularized nature of messianity. To subject Benjamin to the scrutiny of anti-colonial thought shows the strength of the active potential of messianity within an anti-colonial project. For Benjamin to remain relevant, we must be able to put him in relation to Indigenous contexts and perspectives on coloniality. To do so, I put Fanon, Benjamin and Glen Coulthard in conversation, because their ideas converge to challenge a singular, teleological and determinist dialectic. Furthermore, each of these theorists can be read as offering a foundation for reclaiming a dialectic methodology for anti-colonial and decolonial praxis that considers the complexity, multiplicity and open-ended potential of dialectic ruptures. I want to argue here that an authentic and informed conception of "decolonization" may challenge a linear

and teleological narrative of historical time. Benjamin's redemption may take on two varying meanings in respect to this process, in regards to the redemption of a nation or land to its Indigenous population(s), and in regards to the epistemological and historical redemption that comes with decolonial projects post-independence. Importantly, it sketches a grounds on which Benjamin's notion of redemption, conceived as recognition in good faith, can be put in relation to the fundamental question of land.

First Nations philosopher Glen Coulthard provides an opportunity through which to more clearly illustrate the relevance of Benjamin's messianic thinking and Fanon's good faith to these issues. Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks* offers a critical, explicit response to the politics of recognition, but also stands as a thesis of decolonization in its own right. Coulthard argues against a liberal politics of recognition, a framework within which he identifies that Indigenous struggles are largely fought today. For Coulthard, the violence of colonialism in so-called liberal societies exists in more insidious forms than its prior methods of overt domination, which had included (at their worst) genocidal policies to erase the lives, histories and worlds of First Nations peoples. It is this same violence which emerges, in Coulthard's analysis, in the form of the politics of recognition, which serves the interests of colonial power instead of the liberation of colonised peoples. Indigenous struggles continue to be fought within the governmental and legal infrastructures imposed by the settler state in order to claim back land, instigate economic development initiatives, and secure self-government agreements.[40] Drawing on Fanon's reconsideration of the master/slave dialectic, Coulthard warns that a politics dedicated solely to mutual recognition promises "to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend."[41] Coulthard does not therefore advocate the recognition of Indigenous peoples as a primary goal, but rather for radical political and economic transformations that are actively redemptive at their core. Not only does the struggle for recognition in bad faith reproduce the configurations of colonial state power, but it also reproduces colonial logics, such as the myth of progress. Recognition in good faith, by contrast, requires the rupture from colonial logics, from the myth of progress, and from the implicit metaphysics of linear time on which it relies. Coulthard advocates for recasting the radical imagination towards not only toward the future, but also for a present praxis informed by the struggles and knowledges of the past. This demand involves the unsealing of the "chapters" locked into colonial history, as suggested by Benjamin's phrasing above. As a re-

sult, Coulthard offers an entry point for Benjamin's messianity to find its way into contemporary anti-colonial praxis.

It is important to note here that Coulthard's own political theory relies on First Nations metaphysics and knowledges, and he does not need Benjamin to compensate for any lack in his critical frameworks. However, Coulthard's articulation of a rupture from colonial logics helps to think through possibilities for re-reading and reworking "redemption" and "messianic time" in new political and intellectual climes. We also need to acknowledge that messianity harbors remnants of the Eurocentric notions that Benjamin was trying to overcome, by abstracting the concept of time itself from the question of land.[42] Such a theoretical problem is beyond the scope of this article, but could certainly warrant further investigation.

CONCLUSION

I want to finish by returning to the work of Lewis Gordon by way of his discussion of Audre Lorde. It is a well-known adage that for Lorde, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house."[43] This is commonly understood as a rejection for recognition (in bad faith), and that theoretical tools borrowed from the powerful cannot or should not be re-tooled as resources for resistance. Gordon has a twofold analysis of this approach. While praising Lorde's rejection of philosophical Eurocentrism, Gordon also points out the limit of this metaphor. While it focuses on the destruction of the house, it leaves room to focus on the production of a new house, by which he means the overall goal of building freedom:

> Why ... would people who are linked to production regard themselves in solely destructive terms? Yes, they want to end slavery. But they also want to build freedom. To do that, what they may wish to do with the master's tools is to use them, along with the tools they had brought with them and which facilitated their survival, to build their own homes. [44]

Gordon appears to suggest the provisional use of the master's tools, as well as the tools colonized and enslaved subjects may already have developed and "which facilitated their survival."[45] Gordon's approach seems to make room for Benjamin, as a theorist of rupture who may be one voice (among many others) for the creation of new tools that can link together both European epistemologies and those of colonised, enslaved and subjugated peoples.

Fanon's own concluding remarks in *The Wretched of the Earth* supports Gordon's turn to the creation of freedom, by emphasising the invention of new concepts and tools for collective emancipation, rather than those set by European standards: "humanity is waiting for something other from us than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature."[46] Read alongside Fanon and Coulthard, Benjamin's voice can acquire new valence for dialectic analysis and anti-colonial thinking. Even if we are to take up the task Fanon has issued in leaving behind the constructs of colonial European thinking, we might still look to dialectical reason to envision emancipatory change.

In line with the reading of Fanon and Benjamin presented in this article, the relevance of dialectical methodology to anticolonial politics and thought is contingent on its privileging of rupture in the practice of recognition in good faith. If the aim is to reinvigorate the dialectic stagnancy that characterizes a global political crisis and colonial oppressions, then it is important to focus on the anti-colonial and decolonial stasis first. This is a particularly urgent demand given that, as Coulthard has shown, it is the colonial state continues to promote capitalist exploitation and the assimilation of Indigenous peoples into liberal social democracy at the cost of self-determination. It is through the rejection of recognition in bad faith that redemption for such struggles can become a historical possibility.

ANISHA SANKAR recently completed her Masters in sociology at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. She has a previous MA from the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Catalonia in political philosophy. Her research interests are based on areas relevant to the project of epistemic decolonization.

NOTES

1. George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2017, 57.
2. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, A. Gutmann (ed.), Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, 27.
3. Full quote for clarification: "For not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man. Some critics will take it on themselves to remind us that this proposition has a converse. I say that this is false. The black man has no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man." See: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.* London: Pluto Press, 2008, 83.
4. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.* London: Pluto Press, 2008, 169.
5. Frantz Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth.* London: Penguin Classics, 2011, 169.
6. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks.* London: Pluto Press, 2008, 172 (footnote 8).
7. The connection between coloniality and labour is discussed throughout Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race.* London: Verso, 2016.
8. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth.* London: Penguin Classics, 2004, 12.
9. Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics,* 68.
10. Wendy Brown, *Politics out of History.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001, 165.
11. György Lukács, *History and Class-Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971, 47, emphasis in original.
12. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project.* Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1999, 460.
13. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings Vol. 4 1938-1940,* trans. Edmund Jephcott and Others, ed. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2006, 395.
14. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 390.
15. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 391.
16. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 393.
17. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 393.
18. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 393.
19. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 392.
20. See: Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: A Phenomenological Essay on Ontology.* New York: Washington Square Press, 1966.
21. Lewis Gordon, "Racism as a Form of Bad Faith," in *The American Philosophical Association* 99, no. 2 (spring 2000).
22. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 41.
23. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 40.
24. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 250.
25. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 30.
26. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 250.
27. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 253.
28. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 74.
29. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 73.
30. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 254.
31. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 252.
32. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 392.
33. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," appendix.
34. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 395.

35. For original quote, see Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," 395.

36. For a full discussion of Benjamin's notion of divine violence and its relationship to imposed law and justice, see Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Peter Demetz, trans. Edmund Jephcott. New York: Shocken Books, 1986.

37. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 103.

38. For a more detailed discussion, see Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," 277-300. See also: Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin, An Aesthetic of Redemption*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1994; Rolf Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill," in *The Arcades Projects* by Walter Benjamin, ed. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 1999.

39. Lewis Gordon, *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. New York: Routledge, 1995, 14.

40. Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks*, 3.

41. Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 3.

42. The differences between 'temporal' and 'spatial' thinking across Indigenous and non-Indigenous modes of thought are discussed in Vine Deloria Jr., *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Publishing, 1992, 63.

43. See Lorde discussed in Lewis Gordon, "Problematic People and Epistemic Decolonisation" in *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, ed. Nalini Persram. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007, 135-136.

44. See: Lewis Gordon, "Problematic People and Epistemic Decolonisation" in *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, ed. Nalini Persram. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007, 136.

45. See: Lewis Gordon, "Problematic People and Epistemic Decolonisation" in *Postcolonialism and Political Theory*, ed. Nalini Persram. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007, 136.

46. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 154.

precarious time: queer anthropocene futures

briohny walker

As a term intended to name a new epoch, the Anthropocene is intimately entangled with questions of time. This paper suggests that the onset of the Anthropocene marks the failure of anticipated capitalist futures, and in doing so generates subjective futurelessness and disorientation. To read these experiences for their ethical and political potential, I bring Marxist and decolonial readings of the Anthropocene into contact with queer theory concerned with temporality and futurity. Bringing these frameworks together allows for an interpretation of the loss of capitalist futures within the Anthropocene and positions this as a political opportunity for the elevation of alternative future imaginaries. Queer theory provides an example of how failure and futurelessness can be read as rich with political possibility. Further, it demonstrates methods for locating, interpreting and drawing upon diverse cultural and intellectual archives to identify alterative images of the future and clarify strategies for their pursuit. Structurally, this account begins by investigating the origins of capitalist images of the futures through reviewing histories and ideologies of capitalist time and exploring how they participate in the production of, and are disrupted by, the Anthropocene. This paper then mobilises queer temporalities in order to revision the Anthropocene as the failure of capitalist reproduction. Framing this as a refusal, I seek differing models of futurity within queer theory and other marginalised discourses, including black and Indigenous futurisms. Finally, I suggest that queer theories of grief and loss may help guide processes of transi-

tion between differing future imaginaries. The image of the Anthropocene that emerges is that of an end of times; but as I suggest, if the times ending are the times of capitalism, new futures are overdue.

INTRODUCING: THE ANTHROPOCENE

The Anthropocene is contested; debate continues around the term itself, the time period it designates and the phenomena it names. According to the Anthropocene Working Group (a group of mainly Earth System scientists), the name "Anthropocene" was originally suggested to mark a proposed new geological epoch in which "human imprint on the global environment has… become so large and active that it rivals some of the great forces of Nature in its impact on the functioning of the Earth system."[1] However, interest in the term has since strayed from its geological origins. It has become a kind of cross-disciplinary zeitgeist term used variously for discussing and debating the relationship between human and nonhuman beings and forces, and the current era of environmental crisis.[2] The Anthropocene refers, famously, to the era of climate change, but also to the era of nuclear testing and nuclear bombs; the era of disposable plastics; of widespread pollution of the land, air, and water; of ocean acidification; and of mass extinction. Further, it promises to be the era of continuing sea level rises, climate refugees, and resource wars. On a geological scale, these transformations have only just begun. But they have begun: as climate researcher Dr Phil Williamson said in a recent interview about climate change and the Northern hemisphere heat waves of 2018, "this is definitely not a case of crying wolf, raising a false alarm: the wolves are now in sight."[3]

Anthropocene discourse is vast and cross-disciplinary and grinds along numerous friction points.[4] Critical literature around the Anthropocene includes inquiries into questions of agency and responsibility[5] and related attempts at reorienting understandings of human beings as "biological agentso," "geological agents" or a "species."[6] Critics argue that the term thus can exaggerate and oversimplify the story of human agency, giving the impression that (a) human beings are in control of what is happening[7] and (b) that responsibility for the current ecological crisis is shared equally by all humans,[8] or even that it is an inevitable outcome of humanness.[9] These disagreements play out, for instance, in arguments around the starting date of the Anthropocene. The date suggested in 2016 by the Anthropocene Working Group in is the mid-20th Century, correlating with the "Great Acceleration."[10] Political conservatives such as the Ecomodernists

favour far earlier starting dates, gesturing towards the deep human past and directing the conversation towards grand narratives accumulating in a "good Anthropocene" defined by the continued progression of capitalism and technology.[11] This renders the Anthropocene as an unavoidable event and assigns its cause to "human nature." In doing so, it reframes environmental destruction as a foreordained and ethically neutral process, locating contemporary ecological woes as an uncomfortable moment in a broader human timeline which continues towards greater fulfilment of ambitious techno-capitalist destiny.[12] This reading of the Anthropocene does not aim for, or inspire, political change.

Unsurprisingly, alternative accounts have been offered. These can be seen in contestations about differing potential starting dates, most often connected to moments in capitalist development. Theorists often pair these suggestions with proposals for non-Anthropocene titles for a post-Holocene epoch, the most popular of which is "Capitalocene," used by Marxist theorists Donna Haraway[13], Jason Moore[14] and Andreas Malm,[15] among others. By focusing on the environmental impacts of capitalism, Capitalocene theory brings into view specific sets of events, behaviours and institutions that have generated (and in many cases, continue to generate) mass environmental degradation. Capitalocene theory also has a better capacity to name the great inequality in the distribution of benefits and damages otherwise masked by the homogenisation of humankind inherent in the term Anthropocene.

A great diversity of opinion remains amongst those who agree on the significance of capitalism to the story at hand. Some thinkers, such as Paul Crutzen, propose a 17th Century start date, which correlates to the Industrial Revolution. This would serve to highlight connections between contemporary environmental devastation and a specific history of resource exploitation under capitalism, hinging on the use of fossil fuels.[16] Capitalocene theorist Jason Moore instead sees the rise of (preindustrial) capitalism in "the long 16th century" as the true source of the current state of crisis of the coproducing entities of nature and capital. As Moore points out, power relations and techniques of control over human and ecological forces developed within early capitalism were required to set into motion the processes that would later interact with fossil fuels and technological developments and generate industrial capitalism.[17]

Moore describes capitalism as the outcome of the interlinked exploitation and appropriation of "labor-power, unpaid human work and the work of nature as

a whole." Here "unpaid human work" refers to reproductive labour, as well as slavery and colonial exploitation.[18] Colonialism is central to this account, because it creates the conditions for paid and unpaid labour, as well as the nonhuman resources that have driven capitalism from the outset. This is of great political significance, shattering illusions of the Anthropocene as an equal creation of all humanity and therefore revealing that responsibility is not evenly distributed. In their article "On the importance of a date, or decolonizing the Anthropocene," Heather Davis and Zoe Todd insist upon periodisation based on the onset of Western[19] Colonisation of the Americas.[20] Significantly, they ask: "[i]f the Anthropocene is already here, the question then becomes, what can we do with it as a conceptual apparatus that may serve to undermine the conditions that it names?."[21] In response to this appeal, this paper draws inspiration from Capitalocene theory, while maintaining an attachment to the imperfect term "Anthropocene" in order to participate in, and put to work, the broader conversations that are already on the move. I seek to leverage the concept to further reveal the reproductive processes of capitalism, the temporalities these processes generate, and how these temporalities work to obscure and perpetuate their origins in the exploitation of human and nonhuman materialities.

THE ANTHROPOCENE AS A BREAK IN CAPITALIST TIME

I argue that the Anthropocene causes a disruption that results from, but in turn alters, capitalist time. To dig into the rich potential of this transformation, it is useful to consider two major themes that arise in research concerned with time and capitalism: abstraction and future-facing linearity. These themes underpin core capitalist concepts of constant growth and progress. The abstraction of time has played a vital role in the extraction and coordination of labour. Drawing from "methods of temporal regulation" of monastic and military origins, capitalist time regulates the movements of workers and the rhythms of work days "penetrate[ing] the body and with it all the meticulous controls of power."[22] Capitalism binds time to work, and in doing so calls into being measurable time, set apart from subjective times experienced in the body or cyclic processes of the more-than-human world.[23] In coordinating human subjectivity and work, this quantification of time shapes interaction with the materiality of the nonhuman world, which has also undergone related processes of abstraction[24] on the road to being re-conceptualised as a source of exchangeable, inert resources. The resulting detachment of the temporal organisation of daily life from locally embodied rhythms and specificities allows for the invention of "universal" time. The

globalisation of standardised time is a longstanding component of colonialism, overwriting and undermining diverse non-Western temporal ontologies.[25] Viewed in its historical context, "standardised time" is revealed as a Western colonialist imposition and part of a broader flattening, abstraction and homogenisation of time under capitalism.

It is through these processes of abstraction that the future-facing linearity of capitalist time emerges. Only once time has conceptually disconnected from materiality, and therefore material limitation, can foundational capitalist fantasies of constant growth and progress gain ideological traction. Investigations into the origins of this divide reveal complex histories through which the material reproduction of capitalism has fallen from view, as both the sources of value and the disposal of waste products have been (and continue to be) obscured. Fossil fuels have played a powerful and unique role. In *Fossil Capital*, Andreas Malm details the specific physical attributes of coal that contributed to this process. For Malm, the "spatiotemporal profile" of coal as (seemingly) "dis-embedded, solitary, fissiparous" rendered it an ideal energy source for "the tournament of self-sustaining growth" that ignited early industrial capitalism.[26] In other words, aspects of coal's materiality allowed it to function as though it was source of endless energy, abstracted away from its material origins and devastating by-products. This abstraction bolstered an illusory image of endless growth, as did the arrival of many of the raw materials of early Western Industrial capitalism from geographically distant colonise lands.

Vanished also within linear temporalities are processes of human reproduction. Marxist feminist Silvia Federici writes that capitalism, as a "social system of production... does not recognise the production and reproduction of the worker as a socio-economic activity... but mystifies it instead as a natural resource or a personal service."[27] Thus, reproduction is harnessed in the service of production and pulled into a capitalist futurity. Other, potentially cyclical readings of reproductive time are obscured when reproduction operates to support the renewal of working men's bodies "for re-entry into the time of mechanised production and collective national destiny."[28] The overlaying and disruption of Indigenous temporalities under colonialism also occurs in part, at least, at the level of reproduction. Sex, gender and reproduction are vital grounds for the existential elimination of Indigenous populations at the heart of, in particular, settler colonialism, via projects such as forced sterilisation and child removal, working as elements of the "naturalisation of settler colonialism" via the "indigenisation of settlers."[29]

These operations of the reproduction of capitalist futures again are hidden from sight as by absorption into the natural, further promoting capitalist temporalities of unceasing advancement and prosperity without material limitation.

The significant material changes of the Anthropocene interrupt capitalist conceptions of time as abstracted and linear. Mass environmental degradation reveals a biosphere unable to support endless exploitation. Anthropocene time has a linearity of its own, in that it seems increasingly clear that the future will not resemble the past. However, this has a very different experiential texture to the linearity of constant growth within capitalism. That is to say, time feels different in the Anthropocene. A temporal vertigo is generated through the shifting time scales of this epoch.[30] Also unsettling is the eerie disruption of chronobiological cycles; the hard finality of extinction; the haunting of the past and, significantly, the fearsome unreadability of the future.[31] Here endless growth is exchanged for unstable futures. The material limits vanished under capitalist projects of abstraction are becoming visible in the Anthropocene in the form of increased precarity. Heightened economic and environmental precarity are symptomatic of shifts and changes that reveal the failing of some dominant narratives of futurity to correlate with material possibility. Some of what Lauren Berlant calls "good-life genres" are becoming harder and harder to call into being.[32] It is becoming increasingly clear that some imagined futures, interwoven with individual subjectivities in the form of narratives of future possibility, will never arrive. In particular, imagined capitalist futures that hinge on the plausibility of endless growth appear more and more impossible.

The expression of capitalist futures for individuals and communities varies widely and includes progress narratives, work ethic, and meritocracy. To draw from contemporary Australian examples, these might manifest in ideas around family, home ownership, career paths, acquisition of consumer goods, and possibilities for accruing wealth within lifetimes and across generations. For many people, including many people in Australia, but even more so for large numbers of people living in the Majority World, goals such as these have never been achievable. In many instances, these goals may not be desirable. And yet, under global capitalism, they still have a kind organising power; they function like an ethic, in that they guide choices and contain criteria for success and failure. These goals have a structuring role for broad economic and political decisions, including those of development[33] and for the political rhetoric used to justify them. The arrival of the Anthropocene can be read as an indication that these futures are failing in part at

least because they are based on capitalist dreams of constant growth that are at last hitting up against material limitation. Here capitalist time falters—good riddance to it—but dominant visions of the future falter along with it. Such loss to accustomed resources for self-narrativisation can produce profound disorientation and a sense of *futurelessness*. This collapse into the present[34] impacts capacities for planning and thus for collective movements. A potential conundrum of precarious Anthropocene time emerges as a heightened need for political action (in order to build new, more sustainable, more just futures) paired with a reduced capacity for the kind of organisation that such actions requires. In order to work through this failure of capitalist futures and the futurelessness that it engenders, this paper now brings these problems into contact with queer theories of temporality and futurity.

QUEER TEMPORALITIES: QUESTIONING REPRODUCTION

Queer theory provides a valuable collection of resources for engaging with Anthropocene futuresless. A diverse area of study, queer theory is rich with accounts of risk, loss, and survival, including stories of building new ways of living and creating a self when dominant societal success narratives fail. Using queer theory to talk about environmental issues aligns this research with "queer ecology," a cross-disciplinary area of thought that brings ecological theory together with insights from feminist philosophy, gender studies and ecofeminism, and currently exists most prominently as a subset of ecocriticism. While this paper does not contain great engagement with queer ecology, it is inspired by and stands in reference to, in particular, the work of Greta Gaard and Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands. Greta Gaard's interrogation of the relationship between the "natural" and the reproductive is influential,[35] as is her insistence on the importance of building coalitions[36] and alliances.[37] Mortimer-Sandilands argues for the possibility of "queer ecological sensibility," that is, she believes that queer perspectives offer "important and unique" insights into ecological issues.[38] The remainder of this paper represents my efforts to foster a queer ecological sensibility in relation to questions of Anthropocene time, pulling together various areas of queer theory to think through the connections between the reproductive processes of capitalism, environmental degradation, and corresponding feelings of futurelessness. I will focus in particular on discussions of time within queer theory, which are oriented around deviation, survival and the generation and endurance of different modes of living, even in the face of violence and existential threats.

Of distinct interest for this endeavour is those strains of queer theory that provides grounds for reading entanglements of reproduction and futurity. In particular, work within the "antisocial turn" in queer theory investigates the disruptive potential of reproductive failure or refusal. Also known as the "antirelational turn," this movement of thought originated with the writing of Guy Hocquenghem in the 1970s[39] but most was famously developed by Leo Bersani in *Homos*.[40] Bersani critiques the assimilationist potential of an overly constructionist queer politics[41] and orients instead towards the "self-shattering" and boundary dissolving possibilities of sex (particularly sex between men)[42] and the "anticommunitarian impulses" that he describes as being "inherent in homo-ness."[43] This account supposes a capacity for homosexual desire to disrupt "the reproduction of the social order,"[44] due to "infecundity" of (some) gay sex[45] and the (related) "politically unacceptable and politically indispensable choice" to disobey societal norms and live "an outlaw existence"[46] in "opposition to community."[47]

Following Bersani, Lee Edelman is perhaps the best-known theorist within the antisocial turn. In his polemic, *No Future*, Edelman reveals the entwining of future imaginings with heterosexual reproduction, creating "reproductive futurism"[48] or "heterofuturity."[49] The temporality of reproductive futurism is organised around the figure of "the child."[50] In this (overwhelmingly Lacanian) account, the child, as an image of the future, closes the gap between the self and subject formed at the arrival of the signifier. In other words, the idea of the future, as embodied in the child, allows for an escape from the alienation created by individual access to meaning through language and other symbols. In this account, politics is inherently future oriented and built around the sustaining and ordering power of fantasy:

> Politics ... names the struggle to effect a fantasmatic order of reality in which the subject's alienation would vanish into the seamlessness of identity at the endpoint of the endless chain of signifiers lived as history.[51]

For Edelman, following Lacan, the "death drive" is the surplus both internal to and outside of meaning that threatens the ongoing coherence of the symbolic order. Within heterofuturity, queerness plays this role. Edelman's central argument in *No Future* is that queers should embrace this disruptive power: "queerness attains its ethical value precisely insofar as it accedes to that place, accepting its figural status as resistance to the viability of the social."[52] Many who are drawn to Edelman's account of reproductive futurism balk at this point. This includes

some queer ecological thinkers who have turned to Edelman's account of hetero-futurity as a source of conceptual vocabulary for understanding nonreproductive relations to the future,[53] for reading the changing figure of the child in relation to "ecological disaster"[54] and for critiquing "environmental agendas grounded in heterosexist, pro-reproductive rhetoric."[55] While making valuable use of Edelman's work, these theorists resist his searing negativity and refusal of the future itself.

I argue, however, that Edelman's passionate rejection of the future offers a valuable resource to guide anti-capitalist Anthropocene ethics and politics. This is particularly the case if the future in question is understood as a dominant, hetero-reproductive, *capitalist* future. Indeed, when "[c]apitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable,"[56] it is easy to mistake capitalist futures with all potential futures. But this offers the opportunity for an interesting reading of the Anthropocene. If, as I have suggested above, the Anthropocene is evidence of a failure of the capacity of capitalism to continue to reproduce itself, then the environmental collapse it describes appears here as a kind of queer ecological childlessness. Read through the power of Edelman's negativity, this can be seen as a refusal on behalf of the more-than-human world to continue to reproduce capitalist futures. In doing so, the Anthropocene functions like the death drive, threatening the symbolic order of capitalism. What would it mean to *affiliate* oneself with this death drive, this refusal of capitalist futures? What would it mean to politically side with ecological failure, and declare that a capitalist future is no future at all? The Anthropocene is revealed not as an unfortunate side-effect of capitalism, but as an eruption of the hidden yet unavoidable excess corrupting its most vital logics of production and reproduction and revealing the bankruptcy of its promised futures.

BEYOND REFUSAL: QUEER FUTURITIES

The loss of capitalist futures does not have to mean the loss of all futures; the rejection of these particular imaginaries does not require the refusal of futurity itself. Rather, it may clear the way for the arrival of alternative ways of thinking and living through time. In *No Future*, Edelman hardly touches upon the existence of any world beyond middle-class, white America[57]; he thus is unable to account for vital aspects of the workings and potentialities of reproduction and futurity. As a result, he mistakenly identifies white, cisgendered, hetero-reproductive middle-class futures as the only possible futures. Through this reading, the failure of these dominant images of futurity is therefore a loss of the future itself. However, as

Jack Halberstam points out, failure can be more than an end point; it may contain liberating potentials. In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam draws from Edelman to connect hetero-reproductive futurism with capitalism, but sees the refusal of this way of seeing the future as an opening into alternate possibilities.[58] Halberstam discusses queerness as a liberating "gender failure" and suggests that, along with other failures to meet with heteronormative capitalist success markers (such as "wealth accumulation" and winning of all sort) it "allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behaviour and manage human development."[59] That is to say, leaving behind hetero-capitalist ideas of success might open up new and interesting ways of living and being. The conceptualisation of alternative ways of life provide invaluable fuel to the radical imagination in search of possible avenues for movement. Judith Butler points out: "Possibility is not a luxury; it is as crucial as bread."[60] Further, she talks of the role of fantasy:

> fantasy is part of the articulation of the possible; it moves us beyond what is merely actual and present into a realm of possibility, the not yet actualized or the not actualizable....The critical promise of fantasy, when and where it exists, is to challenge the contingent limits of what will and will not be called reality. Fantasy is what allows us to imagine ourselves and others otherwise; it establishes the possible in excess of the real; it points elsewhere, and when it is embodied, it brings the elsewhere home.[61]

The search for elsewhere may even lead to queer utopian thinking, as can be seen in the work of José Muñoz. A great believer in alternative futures, Muñoz engages with conceptions of queer temporalities in his work on "queer futurities," which, in reply to Edelman, he describes as a realm of potential "primarily about futurity and hope."[62] He says:

> Queerness is... performative because it is not simply a being, but a doing toward the future. Queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.[63]

Muñoz reads queer aesthetics for "blueprints...of a forward-dawning futurity" and believes that art can help us see "the not-yet-conscious." He situates queerness in the future but reads the past to find the way. Muñoz searches queer art of the past—the 60s and 70s—for traces of their "world-making capacity."[64] Calling for a rewriting of the relationship between the past and the future, Muñoz suggests the

possibility of drawing alternative futures from the world as it stands. From here it is possible to argue that to be queer is not just to refuse the primacy of certain modes of reproduction, but to take on others; not just biological reproduction, but also cultural, often in the creation of alternative archives (such as the famous "Lesbian Herstory Archive" in New York) and lineages of information. Eve Sedgwick, wrote of the powerful motivation given to her work by the desire to help young queers survive, and of the powers of cultural objects, "of high or popular culture or both" to become "a prime resource for survival" for young and isolated queer people.[65]

Other models for queer futurity can be found in diverse queer kinship structures, including queer parenthood through fostering, adoption, surrogacy, DIY fertility practices and, increasingly, medicalised fertility services.[66] There are many queer lineages to be traced within and alongside hetero-reproduction via the influence of other family members as disruption to the nuclear family as closed structure of vertical inheritance[67] as well as teachers, carers and friends. Consider also the use of queer theory to discuss kinship, connection and entanglement between humans and the more-than-human.[68] Inspiring also are conversations on radical love that extends beyond biological bounds[69] and in radically non-teleological concepts empathy.[70] In search of feelings of possibility, it is worth considering that the capacity of queer children to deviate from the line that constructs a straight identity, despite social pressures towards conformity;[71] reproduction has the capacity to do more than recreate and reinforce previous conditions. Significant also is the threat that each new generation poses to the existing social order, and the extent of enculturation required, often under great duress, for each generation to continue the rhythms, rituals and reproduction of the worlds they are born into.[72] By revealing the richness and multiplicity of queer relatedness and reproduction, these examples offer material for images of the future beyond hetero-reproductive norms. While these are not necessarily anti-capitalist[73], the capacities of queer individuals and communities to create modes of life that diverge from dominant norms provide valuable examples for the creation of alternative futures.

MULTIEPISTEMIC FUTURES

The opening of potential futures via examples of queer futurity and relatedness prompts the question; what other archives exist for the construction of alternative future visions, through which to orient the reproduction of different ways of

life? Even within the West, capitalism is not totalising and monolithic, but rather often "at loose ends with itself" and interspersed with "non-capitalist activities" such as cooperatives and volunteer work[74], as well as prefiguratively anti-capitalist projects such as communes and free universities, which set out to activity create and preserve alternative values and futures.[75] To suggest, as Edelman seems to, that all futurity is capitalist, Western, and hetero-reproductive, is to silence the resistance, perseverance and futurity of other ways of being. In addition to dismissing alternative queer futures and the textures of anti-capitalist resistance projects, this oversimplification of futurity has colonial connotations.

As Ghassan Hage explains, for any model of interpreting or shaping the world "there is always an excess";[76] while Western capitalist temporalities and futurities are globally dominant, they are not universal, and (as discussed above) their dominance is contingent on historical and ongoing violence and oppression. To treat this dominance as total is to ignore the persistence of other ways of being, including black, Indigenous and other non-Western ways of being, which are sometimes starkly at odds with capitalist goals. Any attempts at building anti-capitalist future imaginaries (including the queer, ecological visions that fascinate this paper) that do not take this into account risk re-inscribing white Western dominance. This is particularly significant in regard to the aforementioned role of colonialism in the creation of capitalism and therefore of the Anthropocene, a connection so profound that Potawatomi scholar-activist Kyle Powys White refers to climate change as "intensified colonialism."[77]

Reproductive futurity is again a valuable register through which to consider both the active repression of alternative ways of being under global capitalism, and the resistance through which they endure. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Geonpul tribe of the Quandamooka nation) points out that white Western dominance requires constant "reaffirming and reproducing."[78] Within and against these processes of continued dominance, other ways of being persist. To fail to engage with these realities is to miss opportunities to connect with and support living alternative futures. It is also to miss the significance of understanding the reproduction of resistance demonstrated, for example, in an American history of black women understanding "the unpaid work that they do for their families" including "teaching children survival skills … as a form of resistance."[79] This is reproduction, and reproductive labour, orienting towards alternative futures.

Work around Indigenous futurities further reveals the future as a realm of rich possibility. Nēhiyaw/ Cree activist and scholar Erica Violet Lee, writes that "[f]ar from being tragic or doomed, as Indigenous communities we are working toward our futures daily... Thanks to the work of generations, Indigenous futures have never been so clear and bright."[80] Violet Lee is clear that changes are required for these futures to flourish, highlighting the "ongoing colonial violence that still suffocates Indigenous lives." She says, "Indigenous futures look like the resurgence of our languages, our knowledges, our governance systems, and journeys home to our traditional territories." Significantly, Violet Lee explicitly connects these futures to environmental sustainability, and writes, "[a] key requirement for any of these futures to exist is a healthy world capable of sustaining our futures."[81] When the health of the world, in turn, relies upon alternative future visions, multiepistemic literacy[82] and the creation of the material and political conditions to support a richly "pluriversal" world[83] are vital points of focus.

TOWARDS ALTERNATIVE FUTURE IMAGINARIES

Drawing on these different intellectual traditions, the ground for alternative future imaginaries is revealed to be rich and complex. As a parting question, I ask, through what processes might reorientation[84] toward different future imaginaries occur? For many, especially for those historically best served by the vast inequalities of capitalism, the loss of imagined capitalist futures is deeply disorienting. What is being lost is not just an idea of how life might otherwise have proceeded, but a sense of identity, an ontology, and an ethics; at stake are concepts of self, of what the world is, and of how to select certain courses of action as superior to others. Resistance to such a loss for the sake of identity coherence is easy to anticipate. Imagined futures are difficult to relinquish—this is the case even while that which is being lost refers to what is impossible to obtain or is a cause of great harm. Lauren Berlant introduces the term "cruel optimism" to describe the situation in which "something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing."[85] This is "a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility."[86] Significantly, for Berlant,

> an optimistic attachment is cruel when the object/scene of desire is itself an obstacle to fulfilling the very wants that bring people to it: *but its life-organizing status can trump interfering with the damage it provokes* (emphasis added).[87]

For the vast majority of those entangled with them[88], capitalist imagined futures may be read as such cruel optimisms. They do work for those who pursue them—even as, as evidenced by the onset of the Anthropocene, they destroy capacities for survival, these fantasies help order and structure subjectivities. As they are based on unsustainable and deeply unjust modes of production and distribution, it is both desirable and inevitable that capitalist futures are lost. If transitions to new imagined futures are to be successful, it is also important to treat these losses seriously. For those absorbed by them—tangled with them, constituted through time towards them — the process of moving beyond them is not going to be easy or painless. This shift requires discernment in order to differentiate between, on one hand, dangerous cruel optimisms, and on the other, sustaining fantasies and imaginings of better worlds that rise from or pull into being real political potentiality. There is literacy-building work to do here; queer theories of grief and mourning provide possible resources for this project.

Shifting futurities will require dealing with emotional pain, fear and grief. What does it mean to "let go" of lost futures? What can be learnt from such losses? Writing about mourning, Judith Butler says:

> I think… that one mourns when one accepts the fact that the loss one undergoes will be one that changes you, changes you possibly forever, and that mourning has to do with agreeing to undergo a transformation the full result of which you cannot know in advance.[89]

Butler is talking about the loss of loved ones, but the questions are transposable: How do I grieve for the loss of the futures I envisioned? Who will I be on the other side of this grief? For Butler, in the experience of grief, "something about who we are is revealed."[90] She is talking about the way that the loss of a loved one reveals the way that human subjectivity is, in part, constituted by a social world. Perhaps the grief experienced when mourning visions of particular futures also teaches something about subjectivity. This grief teaches the importance of imagined futures for the temporal coherence of a subject. When (as in the Anthropocene) the grief experienced is for independence from material limitations, it teaches interdependence and entanglement as vital cornerstones for viable futures.

At this juncture, one thing is certain: the future will be truly different from the past. An emergence from capitalist abstractions and corresponding future imaginaries is not, and cannot be, a "going back." While strategies and inspirations

from the past may prove useful, new conditions will require new responses, and as the Anthropocene promises to be unpredictable and heterogeneous in its outcomes, so too will political strategies need to be situated, diverse and flexible. A difficult future lies ahead, but hopefully not one without possibility. Political opportunity exists within the very experience of precarity and futurelessness, as it reflects increasingly pressing evidence that current dominant systems of production, reproduction and organisation, long unjust and undesirable, are in their most fundamental logics unable to continue indefinitely to participate in the ongoing recreation of the future. Queer ecological sensibilities offer one avenue of exploration as they draw attention to all that lies in excess of these systems. Through processes of affiliation with the nonhuman world and attention to other marginalised discourses and ways of life, queer ecological sensibilities reach toward the potentiality of such excesses and in doing so project alternative imaginaries. In relation to these imaginaries, precarious Anthropocene subjects might extend towards futures currently hidden from view and, in doing so, bring better worlds into being.

> BRIOHNY WALKER is a PhD candidate at the University of Tasmania in Philosophy and Gender Studies, with interests in feminist philosophy, queer theory, anti-capitalist politics, the Anthropocene and the transformative potential of education. Briohny is a cofounder of Brisbane Free University and Queering Health Hobart.

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90. Butler, *Precarious Life*, 18.